

mentioned a few times that the Amorites, while a distinct people to themselves, were so outstanding in wickedness that the term came to be used generally of evil people.

Verses 12, 13. The hornet or wasp was simply one of the visible means which the Lord used to accomplish his purpose. Of course the Israelites were expected to do their part but their sword and bow unaided by the Lord would not have accomplished the desired result. This is proved by the fact that their efforts failed after God withdrew his help later. While this paragraph is chiefly about the events on the west of the Jordan it incidentally reverts to the case of the two Amorite kings on the east, (Og and Sihon) to include them in the matter of the hornets.

Verse 14. The quotation from the Lord is dropped for the time being and Joshua directly exhorts the people to their duty. He tells them to put away the gods which their fathers had served on the other side of the flood (Euphrates), and in Egypt. The tendency toward idolatry was still manifest among them and some strong language is used.

Verse 15. A careful reading of this verse is necessary to avoid serious misunderstanding. Before telling them to take their choice between gods, he lays down the supposition that they do not intend to serve the Lord. Now then, if they decide to reject the Lord it is taken for granted they intend to serve idol gods. If so, then take their choice between the gods their fathers served the other side of the flood (Euphrates) and the gods of the Amorites or wicked nations in the land where they are now. That would be logical. If they are determined to be idolaters, then it would not make any difference as to which gods of the heathen they chose. But Joshua did not tell them to "take their choice" between good and evil, as it sometimes erroneously taught.

Verses 16-18. The people responded favorably and agreed to serve the Lord. They furthermore gave him credit for their successes in Egypt and the present country.

Verses 19, 20. These two verses must be considered together to avoid another misunderstanding. The central thought of the whole passage can be seen at a glance by segregating the words as follows: "Ye cannot serve the Lord," "if" "ye serve strange gods."

This doctrine is exactly the same as Jesus taught when he said "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." (Matt. 6: 24.)

Verse 21. The people again insist on their determination to serve the Lord.

Verses 22-25. As visible evidence of their sincerity Joshua demands they put away the strange gods. They agreed and then he made a covenant to that effect with them.

Verses 26-28. Of course this covenant was a special agreement between the people and Joshua and attested by recording in a book and by erecting a stone or pillar. Upon the conclusion of this agreement the assembly was dismissed and the people returned to their various possessions.

Verses 29, 30. Some time after the events of the preceding paragraph the time came for Joshua to die. He was 110 years old at death. His burial took place in the spot having been assigned to him. (ch. 19: 50.)

Verse 31. The main thought we may get from this verse is that people seem to need the immediate influence of teachers and leaders to keep them in line. Hence, it can be understood why God has always had some lawful representative between him and his people, in all of the Dispensations.

Verse 32. The request made by Joseph is recorded in Gen. 50: 25 and is here being fulfilled. Paul refers to this subject in Heb. 11: 22.

Verse 33. High Priests served until death. (Num. 35: 25.) Now that Eleazar is dead his son, Phinehas, will serve in his stead.

JUDGES 1

General remarks: On numerous occasions the children of Israel were told that God would give them success over the nations then occupying the land they were to possess. That promise was based on the condition that no mixing would be done with those idolatrous people. Persistent opposition against them must be maintained and no covenants were to be made. God would not do all of the work miraculously, but they must cooperate by fighting the enemy. It was also stated to them that if they failed to do their duty along this line, the nations would be suffered to remain in the land to become thorns and pests to them. This warning was overlooked and the children of Israel allowed the heathen nations to remain in the land. True to his warning, the Lord used these

heathen tribes as instruments of chastisement for his people. He would permit them to fall under the oppression of some one or more of these nations and they would be thus penalized for a time. When the punishment had gone as long as God deemed wise he would raise up some man among the Israelites to champion their interests. That man would be empowered to wage battle or other form of opposition and rescue them from their oppressor. He would rule and lead them for a period until they got "on their feet" so to speak. Soon they would forget the Lord and it would be necessary again to let them fall into the hands of an oppressor nation, and again some one would need to be raised up to deliver them. This kind of national experience went on for 450 years according to Paul in Acts 13: 20. The men thus raised up to deliver the children of Israel were called "judges." The book we are now beginning to study is the history of this period and hence the name used as title of the book.

Verses 1-4. See comments at Josh. 13: 1 for light on this passage. The "battle of occupation" is now before the children of Israel and that is why they ask for special instructions from God. The means of communication between the Lord and the people does not appear here. The priests were supposed to act in such capacity. For this information see Mal. 2: 7; Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 17: 9. We have previously seen that Simeon had his possession allotted to him out of the territory originally assigned to Judah. (Josh. 19: 1-9.) In harmony with that it is here stated that Judah called upon Simeon to join him in this action, for occupying their joint lot.

Verses 5, 6. The treatment here given this wicked king was in reprisal for the way he treated others, as will soon be seen.

Verse 7. This wicked man had taken 70 kings into his grasp. It should have been understood by him that captives deserved to be treated humanely. He had been cruel to them and had mutilated them as described. Not only this, but instead of feeding them even in an ordinary manner he compelled them to find their sustenance by gathering (gleaning in the margin) what they could under the table of their captor. When he was given a like treatment as to his body, he understood the reason and stated it so. After this, he succumbed at the headquarters of his captors.

Verse 8. This verse accounts for the statement at close of preceding one.

Verses 9-11. The tribe of Judah is proceeding to carry out the actions of occupation and this paragraph is a mention of some of the particular spots they attacked.

Verses 12-15. Some of the history of those times was somewhat distributed without strict regard for chronological order. Thus the events of this paragraph have been already recorded in Josh. 15: 16-19 which see.

Verse 16. The father-in-law of Moses was a Midianite as to his general blood. But the Kenites were a smaller unit of that race hence the mention of the name here. These people were more or less associated with the children of Israel all along on account of the friendliness that had been shown God's people by their common ancestor. The city of palm trees was Jericho. (Deut. 34: 3.)

Verses 17, 18. Judah and Simeon are allies in the work of occupation and thus are here said to have attacked these cities located among the Canaanites and Philistines.

Verse 19. It is generally understood that God's power is unlimited as far as ability is concerned. He was supposed to assist the Israelites in overcoming their enemies. Then why was there an apparent failure in one place on account of some human obstacle? This must be explained by consideration of the condition on which God promised to help his people overcome. See general remarks at beginning of this chapter. Since the obedience of his people was partial, God's help would be partial only and thus the Israelites would be the ones limited, not the Lord. To illustrate, should a father penalize a wayward son by cutting down on his allowance, then the son would be limited in the purchasing power he would have. Things desired that cost more than others would have to be done without. So here, since the help God extended to the people was cut down on account of their lack of full obedience, they would be unable to overcome the enemies who were the best fortified.

Verse 20. Hebron was a desirable site and had been given to Caleb. (Num. 14: 24.) Like the others, he must occupy it. The sons of Anak were giants' sons and would be strong foes, but there is no indication of failure. All this agrees with the statements in preceding verse, for Caleb

"wholly" followed the Lord and hence the help given him from the Lord would be complete.

Verse 21. See general remarks at beginning of this chapter and those at verse 19.

Verses 22, 23. "To descry" means "to spy out." Before taking this place the men of Joseph's descendants sent spies to learn the conditions.

Verses 24-26. Most of the important cities were walled against invasion. Therefore it would be an advantage to find some secret way of entrance. The spies here saw a man emerging from the city and would know he understood the conditions. On promise of personal liberty he gave them information which led to the overthrow of the city. True to their promise they let the informant go and he went to the community of the Hittites and built a city which he called Luz. We will remember this was the original name of the city of Bethel, from which this man was now expelled.

Verses 27, 28. For explanation see general remarks at beginning of the chapter and the ones at verse 19.

Verses 29-35. All of these verses are here grouped into one paragraph because the explanation of the whole passage is to be found as above. The general remarks at beginning of the chapter and at verse 19 should be carefully read in connection with this.

JUDGES 2

Verse 1. Bochim was a town not far north of Gilgal and got its name from the circumstance of weeping recorded below. The statement is here made of God that he would never break his covenant with the people. As already learned many times, that covenant was based on their obedience to the Lord's requirements. If these are disobeyed then the covenant would automatically be void.

Verse 2. The requirements mentioned were that they make no league with the inhabitants of the country. They must throw down the idolatrous altars and have nothing to do with the evil practices. But they had not obeyed the commands of the Lord and were not able to give satisfactory explanation of their disobedience.

Verse 3. Because of this disobedience God will carry out his warning to let the heathen remain as snares to his people, to punish or oppress them.

Verses 4, 5. Upon hearing this sad announcement from the angel the people fell to weeping. The word "Bochim" is from a Hebrew word that means "the weepers," and hence, the name applied to this place. The immediate effect as to actions upon the people now was to offer a sacrifice to God. Whatever favorable acceptance this tardy action may have had at hands of God, it did not change the grand decision to penalize the nation for their general attitude of disobedience so long practiced.

Verses 6-9. This is another one of the passages out of chronological order. See Josh. 24: 28-31.

Verse 10. This verse is also a reflection on the conduct of the people after the death of Joshua and the elders who outlived him. It is another statement as an introduction to the general history about to be started.

Verses 11-13. *Baalim, Baal, Ashtaroath*. As critical explanation of these words I shall quote definitions from the lexicographers: "Baal, Baalim. The chief male deity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, as Ashtoreth was their chief female deity. Both these names have the peculiarity of being used in the plural."—Young. "Baal, a Phoenician deity: Baal, (plural) Baalim."—Strong. In proportion as the Israelites served these heathen deities they forsook the true God. This again is according to the teaching of Jesus in Matt. 6: 24. This idolatrous conduct of the Israelites led them into disobedience of the commandments of God which brought them the divine judgments extending into final downfall of the nation.

Verse 14. A spoiler is one who takes from another his chief possessions. Thus these idolatrous nations took from the children of Israel their property and fruits of their fields and other labors.

Verse 15. *Evil*. This does not always nor even usually mean bad morally. It is from *BAH* and defined by Strong "bad or (as noun) evil (naturally or morally)." The word has been rendered in the A.V. by adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, grief, hurt, misery, sorrow and others. God never entices man into sin but he does sometimes visit affliction on him in the days of special providence, as a punishment.

Verse 16. As proof that God did not bring these afflictions on his people in the spirit of spite or hate he raised

up judges to deliver them, after they had received the necessary amount of punishment.

Verse 17. Sometimes even the judges had difficulty in getting the people to reform. They were bent on following after the gods of the enemy nations around them. When immorality is used figuratively it means the worship of false gods. Hence this verse says the people went a whoring, or lusting, after other gods.

Verse 18. *The Lord was with the judge.* This proves that when we read later in this book about the judges and their teachings and conduct of the situations it is the Lord inspiring the movements. That does not mean that none of the judges did any wrong or that everything without exception was favored by the Lord. When that was the case the situation will not be left without indicating plainly to the reader the fact. *It repented the Lord.* One item is always in the word "repent," whether referring to God or man, and that is "change." Unless a change has been made, the word repent cannot be properly used. Therefore when man repents he must change his wrong conduct, to right. When God repents he changes some condition or some plan or prediction that he had made. In this case, after the children of Israel had been punished enough, God would change their afflicted condition into a more agreeable one.

Verse 19. The frequent backslidings of the children of Israel, followed by the mercy of God make up the book of Judges and this verse is thus a brief preface.

Verses 20-23. The preface suggested in preceding verse is extended in this paragraph and outlines the general national history to be delineated in the following pages.

JUDGES 3

Verses 1, 2. Many of the Israelites who had been engaged in war with the people of Canaan are dead now. Those wars had been for the purpose of dispossessing them of their usurpation of the promised land and also to destroy their idolatry. The history of that period was written in a book and was open to the information of the later generations. They should therefore have profited thereby and been led to serve the Lord. But the lessons were often unheeded by them, so it was necessary to use the remaining

heathen as rods of chastisement for them. Hence the words of this verse.

Verses 3, 4. This paragraph is a general listing of the enemy nations left to try or "prove" the Israelites.

Verses 5, 6. This more closely specifies the tribes or clans of the heathen nations infesting the land. The people of God not only mixed their worship with that of the heathen, but also mixed their blood by their marriages. It was then, as it always has been and always will be, that when God's people marry into those not his people, much trouble results. The social and fleshly interests created in the marriage relation often outrun those of spirituality. Therefore, it is extremely dangerous to say the least, for such intermarriages to be practiced.

Verse 7. It is there, and many times elsewhere, said that the people served the groves. Sometimes the same idea is worded by simple reference to trees or oaks, etc. This is because idolatrous nations so generally erected their altars and idol temples in the groves or near some prominent tree, that the system of idolatrous worship was identified in literature by the mere mention of these objects in nature. Sometimes in this day we hear people trying to connect the physical fact of a tree used for ornamental or mechanical purposes with the heathen worship. The conditions of mankind in the general ways of life are so changed that the comparison is entirely fanciful. It is as much off the subject as to forbid Christians eating certain animals today, because God at one time forbade such food to be eaten. We know that such restrictions are condemned by the N.T. (Col. 2: 16.)

Verse 8. It is worth while to keep a tabulation of the years mentioned in this book related to the period of the judges. Thus in this verse we note 8 years stated. This time the people were delivered into the hands of the Mesopotamian king.

Verses 9-11. The judge raised to power against this enemy king was the son of Kenaz, brother of Caleb. We read about him in Ch. 1: 13. He had already proved his courage in battle in the matter of securing a wife. Now he is helped by the Lord in his aggression against Chushan. This state of relief lasted 40 years. (Another place to mark.)

Verses 12-14. After a period of forty years the children of Israel broke over from their reformation and again did

evil, which called for another chastisement. This time the instrument of God's wrath came from the other side of Jordan. The descendants of Lot, Moabites and Ammonites, together with the Amalekites all rallied to the support of the Moabite king, Eglon, and came against them. This oppression lasted 18 years.

Verse 15. Once more the people of God turned to him in their distress and once more he was moved with compassion toward them. The deliverer this time was Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was lefthanded. This does not mean merely that his habits of life were to use the left hand instead of the right. The original language here indicates that something had deprived him, or at least hindered him in his use of the right.

Verse 16. This dagger was about 18 inches long. Whether he personally knew the physical size of his enemy we do not know, but the event will show that he did wisely in making this weapon of such a length.

Verses 17, 18. The word translated "present" also means tribute. It was a familiar custom in old times to express one's recognition of another, especially a king or other person of dignity, by making a present. Not for the material value of the thing presented but as a token of regard. By using this custom Ehud obtained admission to the presence of this king. The usages of war which are universally permitted, made it rutable for Ehud to act as he did here. After the formalities of greeting had been performed the attendants were sent away.

Verse 19. The word "quarries" is so rendered because of its relation in thought to stone which comes from such places in the earth. The original really means a carved image and is here used with reference to the idols carved from stone that had been obtained from the quarries. Having finished the immediate business of greeting the king and dismissing the attendants, Ehud takes a little time looking over the situation and viewing these idols. Now, he turns from them again and addresses himself to the king, announcing that he has a confidential message to give him. In respect for his announcement the Moabite king indicated to those present to keep still. On this order they left the presence of the two men.

Verse 20. This summer parlour was a kind of comfort-room used for the

general purpose of resting and cooling off, which contained provisions for caring for the requirements of the body. It was usually open and accessible to the public as to its material form but would be respected when occupied by a dignitary. Ehud now comes to the king of Moab as he was sitting in this apartment. He states that he has a message from God. This was another military action, at which the king arose.

Verses 21, 22. Ehud thrust the dagger into the body of the king with such force that the handle went in after the blade. Being a fat man with thick abdomen the flesh would have great pressure. It thus closed in upon the weapon and held it. Of course this wound would pierce through the intestines and cause great disturbance in that part of the body and force the excretions to be discharged.

Verse 23. By locking the doors of this parlor it would give it the appearance of being now used for privacy. This would give Ehud time to escape while the true state of affairs was being discovered.

Verse 24. It had the desired effect. *Covereth his feet*. This is rendered in the margin "doeth his easement." In other words, they supposed he was answering the calls of nature and hence did not feel disposed to intrude upon his privacy.

Verse 25. They waited so long, that at last they concluded their impression was wrong and they felt that an unusual delay had been caused. After concluding thus, they secured a key and opened the place. Doing this they found their lord dead.

Verse 26. As stated in verse 24 this plan of Ehud had the effect he sought. As the people were passing this time learning the true state of affairs, he had escape from their sight, passed beyond the quarries or images, and reached the place Seirath.

Verse 27. It will be well for us to keep our "bearings" as to the location of the actions of which we have been reading. Moab was just east of Palestine, across the Jordan. The Moabites had extended their oppression of Israel from their headquarters. That made it necessary for the Israelite judge to invade their territory and attack the king in his palace. That was accomplished and the judge escaped and came back into his own country as seen in preceding verse. Here he is reported blowing a trumpet to call

attention of his people. Mount Ephraim was the name of a general territory in the southwest of Palestine.

Verse 28. Ehud now called for his people to follow him that they might complete the victory over the Moabites already begun in the slaying of their king. In pursuance of this plan, they seize the fords of the Jordan to prevent the escape of any of the men of Moab.

Verse 29. The populace of Moab generally speaking did not suffer death in this action, for the race as a whole existed afterward. But of the special classes, the lusty or fat men (those like their king, verse 17) and the men of valour, not a man escaped, because the fords had been taken by the Israelites.

Verse 30. This is another numeral to mark. Fourscore years of peace passed.

Verse 31. Very little is said of this period and no term of years mentioned. We therefore must understand it to have been a local situation that did not affect the history of the country as a whole.

JUDGES 4

Verses 1, 2. History is repeating itself again. After the oppression had been quelled and peace was enjoyed for a time, the children of Israel again forgot God and did evil. This time the chastisement came through the Canaanite king, Jabin. The man who commanded his military forces was Sisera, so that whatever operations will be necessary in the work of deliverance must be directed against this man.

Verse 3. This verse supplies the term of the oppression, twenty years. And the rigor of the oppression is indicated by the fact that Sisera had almost a thousand iron chariots. This means war chariots. This terrible oppression brought the cries of the children of Israel to the Lord.

Verse 4. The judge at this time was Deborah. But she had also been serving God's people in another capacity, that of a prophetess. *Prophetess*. This is from *NEBIYAH* and defined "feminine of *NABIY*; a prophetess or (generally) inspired woman; by implication a poetess; by association a prophet's wife."—Strong. *Judged*. This is from *SHAPHAT* and defined "a primitive root; to judge, i. e., pronounce sentence (for or against); by implication

to vindicate or punish; by extension to govern; passively to litigate (literally or figuratively)."—Strong. We know that in the New Testament a woman is not permitted to teach authoritatively. But since this woman was inspired she would be qualified to teach or do anything else that God wished to have done.

Verse 5. The children of Israel would have good reason to rely on Deborah for judgment in view of her qualifications as seen in preceding verse.

Verse 6. While Deborah was qualified for the work of judge she did not propose taking active charge of the military operations. Hence she called into that duty and charge, Barak. And she did not assume the role of dictator as a human commander but informed him that "God of Israel commanded." On this order she directed him to mobilize ten thousand men of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.

Verse 7. While Deborah is the mouthpiece we should bear in mind that it was God who was to cause Sisera to be drawn out into the desired place of the battle.

Verse 8. Since Deborah was an inspired woman it was natural for Barak to desire her cooperation in the great movement before them. It was on condition she go with him, that he agreed to take over this command.

Verse 9. Deborah agreed to go, but she warned Barak that the honor of the campaign would go to a woman, as a result of the capture of the leader of the enemy forces. The purpose of predicting this is not stated. The reader can see without any speculation that Barak was unselfish and loyal. Although he was informed beforehand by this inspired woman that he would not receive the honor of the success, he proceeds to carry out faithfully his charge.

Verse 10. Barak called for the men according to the instructions of Deborah and together with her they went up to the territory of the action.

Verse 11. In Ch. 1: 16 this Heber was given friendly farewell by the Israelites and he went to dwell among his people. In the present verse he has severed his association with them and was residing in the vicinity of the operations about to take place.

Verse 12. The Kenites now showed their sympathy for the Canaanites by

giving information to Sisera about the movements of his enemy.

Verse 13. Acting upon the advice from the Kenites, Sisera mustered a mighty force of iron chariots and people and marched to the attack.

Verse 14. Here we can see an advantage of having Deborah along with the army of Barak. Speaking by inspiration she not only could instruct him to move forward but could predict the complete victory. Barak thus advanced with ten thousand men.

Verse 15. The attack resulted in the complete overthrow of Sisera's forces. He, like a cowardly leader, fled from his chariot and escaped on foot. While he thus made his escape from the heat of the battle he was not destined to escape finally.

Verse 16. In the meantime Barak is pursuing his victory until he has destroyed the last man among his enemies, except Sisera.

Verse 17. In verse 11 we learned that Heber had become the friend of this king of the Canaanites who was now in war with the Israelites. Therefore, Sisera considered it a safe place of hiding to flee into his vicinity. Being confident in his safety he comes to the tent of the Kenite himself.

Verse 18. This is not the first time that God used a supposed enemy to carry out some project favorable to his people. So in the present case, this friend of the enemy of God will be used to overthrow that enemy. Thus, in the manner of military procedure the wife of the Kenite invited Sisera to enter her tent, and even gives him false assurance of safety.

Verse 19. Being encouraged by this assurance, he asks for a drink of water. In response to the request the woman gave him milk and butter. (Ch. 5: 25.)

Verse 20. Sisera was now fully assured of his safety. With such a feeling of security he requested his hostess to direct all passing inquirers to go on because there was no man in the tent. There is no report of her reply to this request or whether she made any reply. However, Sisera then gave way to sleep of exhaustion.

Verse 21. We would ordinarily not think of a nail as being long enough to reach through a man's head, much less to go on into the ground far enough to become a fixed stake as it did here. But the word "nail" is from **YATHED** and defined "from an unused

root meaning to pin through or fast; a peg."—Strong. The word elsewhere has been rendered in the A.V. by paddle, pin, stake. Hence we see it was one of the stakes used to fasten a tent that was used in this case. That shows how he was held fast to the place. His head was impaled to the ground even as the cord of a tent would be thus fastened. Since a hammer could be an instrument of any indefinite dimensions or weight, and also since in this case a tent stake was used, we must conclude that the hammer the woman used was the kind used to fasten a tent cord. As the man was in a deep sleep from his exhaustion of both body and mind, that would give her an opportunity for making the proper aim and location on his head to direct the stroke. Above all these natural considerations, the fact that God was in this act (verse 9) would explain her success in directing this stroke. The simple statement "so he died," leaves out any particulars of the incident. They will be considered in verse 27 of next chapter.

Verse 22. Barak had been following up his chase of Sisera, and Jael was watching for him. As he came in sight she went out and invited him to her. He came at her invitation and found the leader of his enemy fastened to the ground, dead.

Verses 23, 24. The military successes recorded in this chapter are here ascribed to God. The children of Israel needed punishment and these Canaanites were the instrument in the Lord's hands for the chastisement. The motives of these instruments were always disrespectful to God and hence he always returned the punishment upon them.

JUDGES 5

Verse 1. The original word for "sang" is defined in the lexicon as "sing." This is an English word and the same is defined by Webster as follows: "5. To relate or celebrate something in poetry." Poetry is described in English definitions as "beautiful or high thought," etc. Therefore, a song need not always be expressed by musical tones. Neither does it require to be expressed in rhyme, since poetry does not always have such a characteristic. The composition expressed by Deborah and Barak has all of the qualities of song as defined here.

Verse 2. Note the significant idea that God avenged his people when they willingly offered themselves. That

was a condition previously placed with the promises.

Verse 3. Deborah being the inspired person in this duet, it would be appropriate for her to use the first person singular as seen in this verse.

Verse 4. Seir, which is Edom, is mentioned simply as one of the locations where the Lord had shown his might.

Verse 5. The majesty of mountains in nature is called to our attention in connection with God's majesty and the awe-inspiring effect of his presence.

Verse 6. Conditions were so oppressive that public travel was largely shut off. The names mentioned in this verse point out some of the times when this suppressed activity of travel was present.

Verse 7. These conditions had continued in Israel up to the time of Deborah. It is pleasing to read the title she takes to herself. No boasting of her official post, or of her inspiration. She is presented as a mother in Israel. This is a dignified, but gracious, expression of relationship.

Verse 8. The children of Israel chose these new gods. They were the gods of the nations about them. The choosing of these gods brought the wrath of God and the war with these same idolatrous nations. The war was made more bitter to the people of God by the absence of war materials made scarce by the enemy. (1 Sam. 13: 19, 22.)

Verse 9. At all times there were men among the children of Israel who were moved with faith in God and interest in the general welfare. As an instance, her colleague Barak, who was her chief officer in the conflict just ended.

Verses 10, 11. Riding on white asses indicated some prominence, and sitting in judgment denoted importance. All such were indebted to God for their deliverance from the foe. These are all exhorted to "speak" or meditate on the good fortune now turned toward them. To go down to the gate indicated a condition of peace whereas a state of war would have caused them to shrink back into the recesses of the city, for fear of the enemy at the gate.

Verse 12. This verse is in the form of rejoicing over their joint victory in the fight against their common enemy. The heathen who had been holding the people of God in captivity are now taken captive by Deborah and Barak.

Verse 13. The Lord is the antecedent of "he," and is the one who gave Deborah and Barak their dominion over the enemy.

Verses 14, 15. This paragraph is an acknowledgment of various ones associated with Deborah in the operations against the enemy.

Verses 16-18. The general state of anxiety, alternating with conditions of unrest, is here referred to by the prophetess.

Verse 19. This verse is a statement that was true from two standpoints. The kings of the nations did not gain anything finally by the war. Also the people of God were interested in delivering their nation from the foe and fought for that purpose, not for the sake of obtaining money.

Verse 20. The "stars" were the leading men among the people, otherwise called princes. Just as a leading player or actor is called a star, so these men were also.

Verses 21, 22. The river of Kishon was the spot used as the encounter (Ch. 4: 7). Here the forces were overthrown, including the horse and his rider.

Verse 23. Meroz was a place near the river where the issue was joined with the enemy. The people of this place refused to join in the fight against the common foe, hence Deborah was instructed to curse its inhabitants. Refusing to fight and work with God's people is the same as fighting against them. (Matt. 12: 30.)

Verse 24. Although Jael was supposed to be one of the enemy's forces yet she came to the service of God's people and now she receives the blessing of God's prophetess. This is similar in principle to the case of Rahab. (Josh. 6: 25; Heb. 11: 31.)

Verses 25, 26. This paragraph relates the event that entitled Jael to the praise of the preceding one. Smiting off the head of Sisera is figurative, of course, since his head was not actually cut off. His destruction was accomplished by driving the tent stake through his temples.

Verse 27. This is the verse that is charged by the foes of the Bible with being a contradiction of Ch. 4: 21. They say that if he fell down at her feet then he was not killed as reported in the former account. A more critical study of the language will make it not only agreeable but very plain and evident. The word "fell" is from a word

that is translated "die" elsewhere. The word "bowed" is also defined by Strong as "sink" and in the R.V., it says he "swooned and died." "At her feet" is rendered in the margin as "between her feet." Now the whole event is plain. The woman found the man in a deep sleep. She wishes to make every surety of her action. Taking a tent stake in her left hand and the heavy hammer in the right, she takes a position straight over him by placing one foot on each side of his body. Then with one mighty stroke she drives the stake through his head and into the ground. So vital was the place where the instrument was driven that the man swooned and died here between her feet just as the verse indicates.

Verse 28. Whether her inspiration enabled her to report a literal action of this woman we know not. It could be a statement based on the obvious behaviour of the mother of the military leader. It would be perfectly natural for one woman to exult over the misfortune of another woman. Especially would this be true in a case where the exulting woman was on the righteous side of an issue.

Verse 29. This is another picture true to nature. The long delay of her son in showing up left no doubt in her mind, or those of her ladies as to the explanation.

Verse 30. This statement is in contradiction of the facts and of what the mother of Sisera really believed. The wish was father of the thought. So that in the desperation of her mind she paints a picture of her son's conquests when she had very much assurance that the battle of her people had been lost.

Verse 31. This verse expresses the good wishes of Deborah and Barak for the people of God, and is a statement upon the chronology of the times of rest.

JUDGES 6

Verse 1. The Midianites were the next instrument in the hand of God for the chastisement of his people, and these people afflicted them seven years.

Verse 2. These dens and caves are referred to by Paul in Heb. 11: 38.

Verse 3. The Midianites and Amalekites had long been enemies of God's people and the children of the east were the heathen nations in general who were located in that territory east of the Jordan. They afflicted the

Israelites especially by destroying their crops.

Verses 4-6. Although these oppressors were living east of the Jordan, they entered the territory of the Israelites to destroy their crops. The destruction was very general and made possible by the vast numbers of their people.

Verses 7-10. God always heard the cries of his people. But he frequently gave them severe chastisements for their evil doings. Here he reminds them of the former deliverances he had wrought for them, beginning with the terrible experiences in Egypt. They were reminded that warning had been given them not to give any attention to the gods of the Amorites. They had not obeyed the voice of God. Thus, a prophet of God reproved them for their sinfulness even though God intends to come to their rescue again as he has done before.

Verse 11. In preparation for the next judgeship an angel is sent into the vicinity of a man named Joash. This man was an idolator (v. 25), but had a son whom the Lord wished to use as the next judge. This son's name was Gideon and he recognized the Lord. He had felt the weight of the oppression of the Midianites on account of his difficulty in retaining the products of the field. *Threshed wheat by the winepress*. The R.V. says he was beating out the wheat in the winepress. This was a vat commonly used to hold the grapes while being pressed for extraction of the juice. Wine was not considered as much of a necessity as wheat and hence would not be as liable to be confiscated as wheat. Hence Gideon was disguising his real work by doing this hand threshing of the wheat in this vat. This would mislead the Midianites.

Verse 12. No charge is standing against Gideon personally, and thus the angel gives him a favorable greeting. He also assures him that God is with him.

Verse 13. Although Gideon personally was a brave man and true to God, yet he was being made to share with his brethren in the misfortunes befalling them at the hands of the Midianites. He complains and wonders why so much evil had come upon the people if God still regarded his people. Gideon had not yet learned the lesson of God's manner of dealing with a nation. The righteous life of a man or a few men cannot always head off

a punishment due the nation as a whole. That sad lesson was one the nation had to learn to their great sorrow later, in the times of the national captivity.

Verse 14. No detailed answer is given to the complaining inquiry of Gideon, but he is given assurance that his people will be delivered, also that he is to be the instrument in God's hands for the deliverance.

Verse 15. Thinking of mere human strength, Gideon cannot understand how a man of humble means and lowly standing would be able for so important a work.

Verse 16. This verse is an indefinite guarantee that he would succeed because the Lord would be with him, but no particulars are given as yet.

Verses 17, 18. Some people might call Gideon another "doubting Thomas." But it is not a bad trait to be unwilling to accept a fundamental declaration without some evidence of authority. It would be a good thing if all people were more careful along this line than they are. They would not be so free to accept just any kind of approach without a careful investigation. Joshua might have been saved the humiliation in the affair of the Gibeonites had he investigated. (Josh. 9: 14.) Request is made for time to procure an offering to be used on the occasion and the request is granted. This meat offering was to be in the way of a present which was one of the customs in old times. Recognition of a dignitary of any kind was often expressed by a "present."

Verse 19. Acting solely in the manner of this custom of respect, Gideon came with the offering all ready for the use of the angel.

Verse 20. Instead of using the offering as food, the angel directed Gideon to place the articles on the rock near by and to pour out the broth.

Verse 21. Gideon had asked for a sign by way of evidence that he was to be used as an instrument in the hand of God. This transaction answered his request.

Verses 22, 23. Had Gideon realized before this moment that it was an angel of the Lord he might not have thought of providing literal food. This was one of the instances referred to in Heb. 13: 1. When the truth was evident to him he was overcome with surprise and awe and felt doubtful of the outcome. His humility made him

feel unfit to be present with an angel of God and he expressed that feeling in words. He was given the comforting assurance that no harm would come to him here.

Verse 24. As a token of his joy and reverence for God, an altar was built by Gideon. It was an altar in the way of a memorial and was named by a word meaning "peace."

Verse 25. The first act Gideon was commanded to do in his work of reform and destruction of the enemy was to confiscate the animal his idolatrous father had in keeping. Also to throw down the altar he had built near a grove. These groves were the ones connected with idol worship so generally in those times. See comments on this subject at Judges 3: 7.

Verse 26. Instead of the altar of Baal that is to be thrown down Gideon was to build an altar in an orderly manner, and for the Lord. He was then to take the bullock his father would have sacrificed to Baal and offer it here on this altar to God.

Verse 27. Gideon associates ten of his men with him in this action. Since his father's household might be incensed against him he chose the night time for it. This was a matter of good judgment because the time was not ripe for open opposition to the evil practices around him.

Verses 28, 29. Morning disclosed to the men of the place what had been done but they did not know who was the doer of it. Inquiry was made and they learned the truth.

Verse 30. It was natural to make their complaint and accusation to the father of the man who had destroyed the altar. They demanded that Gideon should die.

Verse 31. We should be greatly interested and pleased at the reply of Joash. It was not only different from what we would expect if viewed from a natural standpoint but was consistent and logical. If Baal is a true god he ought to be able to take care of himself. It should not be necessary for a human being to plead his cause. Thus Joash argues the point. He further demands that a man who will plead for a god that is not able to defend himself is not worthy to live and must be slain before morning.

Verse 32. Because of the meaning of the word Jerubbaal, "Let Baal plead," Joash attached the name to his son

who was the cause of the present controversy.

Verse 33. These are the people mentioned in verse 3, now gathered to oppose the children of Israel.

Verse 34. Gideon accepted the challenge and blew a call to arms. Then Abiezer, the community of his father's people, responded to his call.

Verse 35. Gideon made further calls and specified the men of the tribes of Manasseh, Zebulun and Naphtali. These people also came at his call and now he has a vast number of men collected.

Verses 36-40. See comments at verses 17, 18. We do not have to explain such a request of Gideon on the ground of doubt as to God's power or willingness to help. He could have some uncertainty as to whether he understood clearly the Lord's will. If God will make this specified demonstration it will satisfy him of the Lord's will. By reversing the operation it makes the element of accident, or "happen so," impossible.

JUDGES 7

Verse 1. Gideon, with the host of people mobilized, encamped by the well of Harod which was on Mt. Gilboa, while the Midianites were encamped in a valley not far off and near the hill of Moreh.

Verse 2. If the visible means used in accomplishing an end seemed to be sufficient to the purpose it would tend to the impression that natural and not supernatural power had done the work. That would have encouraged the people to boast of their success, which God did not wish to be done.

Verse 3. The first reduction of the numbers was made on the basis of those who were "fearful and afraid." There is very little difference in the meaning of these words and either could be used without the other. The technical meanings of them are, "to be inclined to fear and thus easily startled"; and, "to be at the present time actually trembling over the prospect of danger near." Either defect would render a man unfit for military duty. When this qualification was designated it took 22,000 from the group thus far collected.

Verse 4. There are still too many people to leave the Lord the likelihood of glory and Gideon is told to move the host down near the water for further instructions.

Verses 5, 6. The ones who lapped in this instance were those who reached down with the hand and dipped up the water in the palm, then drinking from the hand as from a drinking vessel. The ones who bowed down to the water would penetrate the water with their mouth and drink directly from the water source. The action of the former would leave them in position to be watchful for the enemy, at the same time they were supplying their wants. Such would be the kind of men best suited for battle.

Verse 7. While these men will be employed in the attack, yet it was stated that by them the Lord would deliver the enemy into their hand, thus showing that the Lord would be the power that would accomplish the victory.

Verse 8. Now the selection is made. They supply themselves with things necessary for the sustenance and the other men are sent back to their homes.

Verses 9-11. God wishes Gideon to have his confidence made as strong as possible, so directs him to take his servant with him and go down near the Midianite camp. He will there see or hear something that will give him this added encouragement. The order was obeyed and Gideon went near the camp of the enemy.

Verse 12. The number of the enemy forces was so great that comparison is made to swarms of grasshoppers and to the sand of the seashore.

Verse 13. Gideon got near enough to do some eavesdropping. A man was relating his dream in which he saw a cake of barley bread tumble into the midst of the Midianites and overthrow them. A cake of bread would be an insignificant object to accomplish so decisive a result, and its meaning here was not lost in the minds of the people.

Verse 14. The man to whom the dream was related gave his interpretation of the picture. He said it meant the defeat of their forces by the hand of Gideon.

Verse 15. Having overheard this conversation Gideon was greatly encouraged and worshipped God for the revelation. Returning to the camp of his men, he reported to them what he had heard, and directed them to arise to the conflict.

Verse 16. The next thing he did was to make three divisions of the three hundred men already selected for the

battle. Strong defines these pitchers as jars of earthenware. We know that such would be nontransparent. These lamps or torches being placed inside the jars would be out of sight.

Verses 17, 18. The value of united action is proved in this instance. If each man should be left to his own judgment as to when and how to act there would be great confusion and the object desired would be missed. By all having the same example to follow, their action would be the same as of one man.

Verses 19, 20. The "watch" was a period of the night during which certain men were placed on duty as a guard. In Old Testament times the usual arrangement was to divide the night into three watches of four hours each. They would thus run as follows: First watch from 6 P. M. to 10. Second watch ran from 10 to 2 A. M. Third watch from 2 A. M. to 6. So the beginning of the middle watch would be at 10 P. M. and that was the time that Gideon and his men approached the camp of the Midianites. When the signal was given by the action of Gideon the three companies acted simultaneously. The first made a blast with the trumpets, then broke the jars. When this was done all at once, there would be three hundred torches flare out in the night. And just as the nerves were rendered tense by this sudden appearance they would be made more so by the united shout of the crowd announcing the presence of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The effect of this action would be electrical.

Verse 21. It had the desired effect. The host of the enemy broke rank and sent up a cry, then fled.

Verse 22. This verse is a more detailed account of the preceding one. In their startled confusion of mind the Midianites attacked each other and thus helped to bring about the result desired by Gideon.

Verse 23. The men mentioned here are the ones already designated as composing the army of the attack upon the Midianites. After the rout of the enemy, the army of the Lord pursued the enemy to further victory.

Verses 24, 25. We have already learned that "Mount Ephraim" was the name of a general territory in southwest part of Palestine. Now that the enemy has been generally defeated Gideon calls upon the people of this territory to take advantage of the situation and seize certain places against

the fleeing Midianites. They did so, and in the action took captive two prominent men of the enemy, Oreb and Zeeb.

JUDGES 8

Verses 1-3. About the time these men of Ephraim (Mount Ephraim) had taken the two princes mentioned in preceding chapter, they learned of the general success that Gideon had in the original attack. It is natural to wish for the honor following general success against an enemy. Now that such success has been accomplished, these men who had been called into the service at the last, felt that Gideon should have called on them at the same time he called on the men of the tribes mentioned in verses 24, 25 in chapter 7. Gideon thus feels it necessary to pacify them. He does so with an illustration. In general practice the gleanings of a vineyard gets only the leavings after the main crop has been taken. Yet, if one had choice of gleaning in a better vineyard or of taking the first crop even in a less desirable vineyard, he would certainly choose the former. So Gideon likens his general victory to the gathering of grapes in an ordinary territory and that of these men of Ephraim to the gleaning in a better one. In other words, they had at least taken two prominent men that he had not succeeded in taking and that was really more of a victory than his capture of many thousands. This illustration satisfied them.

Verses 4, 5. While much success has already been enjoyed, the follow-up work is still necessary. While in pursuit Gideon asks for food of the people of Succoth so that his men may be supported in their march after other men of the enemy. But the men of Succoth were like men often are today. They want to be on the winning side and will not give any support until they know which is that side. Their refusal brought a threat from Gideon.

Verses 6, 7. The attitude of the men mentioned in preceding paragraph was shown by the question whether the men were yet in the hands of Gideon, but their refusal to help did not hinder Gideon from proceeding in his march against the enemy.

Verses 8, 9. Coming to the vicinity of Peniel, Gideon made a request for support as at Succoth and received the same kind of rebuff. He also made a threat against them which was to be carried out after his victorious return.

Verse 10. There had been a hundred

and twenty thousand men slain, but a remnant of fifteen thousand were still left and were being led by the two men, Zebah and Zalmunna. These had taken refuge in Karkor, a place east of the Jordan.

Verse 11. The army was resting in tents and "was secure" which means they felt safe and thought the danger was over. Taking advantage of this condition, Gideon came upon them and routed them again and smote many of them.

Verse 12. The two men mentioned before, escaped from the present encampment and fled. Gideon overtook them and terrified the rest of the people with them.

Verses 13, 14. The battle having been completed in favor of Gideon he starts on his return homeward, and all this while it was yet night. When he got into the region of Succoth he seized on a young man of that community and demanded information leading to the identity of the leaders of that place.

Verses 15-17. Coming into the presence of these chief men, Gideon chided them for their former attitude toward him and also reminded them of his threat made at that time. Then he carried out his threat. With thorns gathered from the wilderness he taught ("made to know," in the margin) these men. This means that by this painful punishment they were made to learn an important lesson. After this corporal punishment he beat down their fortification and slew the men of the city.

Verse 18. It should be remembered these men were the principal leaders of the invasion made by the Midianites into the land of the Israelites. In their first operations they had slain a great many people. In this verse Gideon is making "post-war" investigation into the commission of "war crimes" and thus asks them the question recorded. They described the men whom they had slain in a certain place in such a way that Gideon recognized them as being his near blood kin. Also, as being men who were of the civilian population and should have been spared from death. Their deaths was the act of murder and so now the guilty men must be made to suffer.

Verse 20. These guilty men are sentenced to death and the executioner designated for the act was the oldest son of Gideon. In executing these men, Jether would be slaying the murderers

of his uncles and in an act of war, which would have been right. The young man hesitated from a feeling of personal awe, not that he was unwilling to obey the orders of his father.

Verse 21. This verse states an unusual speech. It is perhaps not so mysterious considering the real situation. These men know they are doomed to death at best. Then if an inexperienced youth were depended on for the execution, with his feeling of hesitancy he might make an imperfect attempt that would be more tortuous than if done by a more practiced man. Thus they prefer to have Gideon do the act of execution. He does so and also confiscates the valuables on the camel's necks as being spoils.

Verse 22. Gratitude was now running high. The deliverance from the hosts of Midian brought such great relief that the Israelites offer to make Gideon their ruler.

Verse 23. The reply of Gideon was wonderful and filled with reverence toward the Lord to whom he owed all of his victory. In this view he denies the offered place of rulership to both himself and his son and declares that the Lord would rule.

Verse 24. Since the victory over the enemy had been won through the human instrumentality of Gideon he felt desirous of receiving the temporal spoils of the conflict. These would be especially prized because of their material and form, since they were taken from Ishmaelites. This statement reminds us of the circumstance in Gen. 37: 25. In that place it was seen that both Midianites and Ishmaelites mingled with each other in the matters of trade, and costly jewels of silver and gold composed the chief articles of trade with them. Hence the words in this verse.

Verses 25, 26. As would be expected, the people were very willing to comply with the request. They spread a garment to be used as a receptacle and on it they cast the metals and also many precious pieces of woven materials.

Verse 27. According to Strong, the word for "ephod" sometimes means an image. That would be made of metal. In the spoils mentioned in preceding verse we find mention of purple raiment which would furnish material for a girdle which was the original form of an ephod. Thus we might not be able to settle definitely on the specific nature of this thing that Gid-

eon made. The thing that is clear is the fact that whatever it was the people made an improper use of it. Doubtless Gideon only intended it to be a trophy of war in which God had given him the victory. As such he would expect the people to be reminded of their dependence upon God for victory. But they were not inclined to take that view of the article. Relic worship is much akin to ancestor worship which has long been a weakness of mankind. Hence in this case the good intention of Gideon was turned into occasion of grief for him. The word for "whoring is ZANA'AH and defined by Strong as follows: "to commit adultery (usually of the female, and less often of simple fornication, rarely of involuntary ravishment); figuratively to commit idolatry (the Jewish people being regarded as the spouse of Jehovah)." This thing became a snare unto Gideon and his house. The word has both a literal and figurative meaning. The present sense is that Gideon was taken by surprise and thus trapped by the circumstance and humiliated. It cannot mean that he was personally led to commit idolatry for nothing elsewhere is found that even intimates such a thing.

Verse 28. The complete subjugation of the Midianites was accomplished by the valorous work of Gideon, and the land had peace for forty years.

Verse 29. Jerubbaal was the other name of Gideon. He now retired from active duty as a soldier and returned to his home.

Verse 30. *Of his body begotten.* Frequently in olden times a man's household would be composed of servants and others brought in and made heirs. These persons were sometimes given the name of sons. Hence the specification here so that we will know that Gideon had the seventy sons in the primary sense of the word.

Verse 31. As a general rule the main difference between a concubine and a wife was in the matter of property rights. The moral stigma that would be attached to the term today did not apply then because men were suffered to have plurality of wives. On account of the rights of legal wives over the concubines there was somewhat of an aversion against them by the rest of a man's family. The objection that would be made would not be on moral grounds but mainly from a social standpoint. In the present case the concubine had a separate place of resi-

dence from the immediate one of Gideon. The son of this concubine soon to figure in our study was located in Shechem.

Verse 32. Honorable report of the death of Gideon would be in order because of his vallant services for his God and people.

Verses 33-35. History repeated itself. After the death of Gideon the children of Israel not only fell to idolatry again but even became unmindful of the good work of Gideon so that they did not even accord his family the proper treatment. Of course we will expect to read of more trouble for the nation before long. The circumstances surrounding the proceeding will be unlike what have been shown to us before.

JUDGES 9

Verse 1. It should not be forgotten that Abimelech was that son of the concubine living at Shechem. Thus the people to whom he makes his appeal are those not related by blood to Gideon. Only Abimelech was related to him in that manner. But while they were not blood kin to Gideon yet the indirect relationship would imply that he would have authority over their community. This phase of the subject furnished Abimelech with a pretext for his theory and appeal.

Verse 2. If these Shechemites recognized the authority of Gideon that would mean an oppressive rule over them, since Gideon had seventy sons directly of his own. Thus there would never be any end to their subjugation and the rule might be torn with much unrest because of the jealousy and contentions of the many heirs to the throne. So why would it not be better just to disconnect themselves entirely from the whole brood of Gideon? Especially since he, Abimelech, though an apparent heir through Gideon was also related to them, the Shechemites, by blood.

Verse 3. This appeal was received by the family of the concubine. They made their position of mind known to the citizens of Shechem and induced them to espouse the cause of Abimelech. They recognized the relationship also of Abimelech to them.

Verse 4. All movements of any account that involve land and government require money. Having accepted the cause of Abimelech as their own the Shechemites will wish to contribute to the expenses. This was raised by drawing from the treasury of Baal-

berith. This was a god specially classed as one for the Shechemites but belonging generally to the idolatrous worship of Baal. With this money Abimelech bribed a crowd of unprincipled persons who joined in the usurpation. The first objective of the usurpation is to get rid of the men who would be in the way of this ambition of the son of the concubine.

Verse 5. With the backing of these hired men, Abimelech went to the city of Ophrah and slew his father's sons in a mass murder. That is, he intended to, and thought he had slain all of them, but the youngest one had succeeded in his attempts to hide. The fact that he thus escaped and that no indication is seen of a search for him, indicates the wholesale nature of the murder.

Verse 6. *House of Millo*. This was a family or clan among the people in the days of Gideon. This group joined with the men of Shechem, the place of Abimelech's family, and together placed him up as their king or ruler. It must be borne in mind that while the three years of Abimelech's rule are allowed to figure in the chronology of the period of the judges (see comments at 1 Kings 6:1), the whole transaction was illegal and to be considered as a usurpation. It was somewhat connected with the process of opposing the oppressors of the Israelites. When the use of Abimelech was finished he was himself brought to degradation for his crimes.

Verse 7. Jotham was the one who escaped the murderous hand of the usurper. After the affair had been settled for Abimelech to rule over the people, Jotham went to a place of prominence among the Israelites and made a speech to the men of Shechem. We will recall that the two places were near each other, and hence, Jotham could be heard.

Verses 8, 9. The figurative speech Jotham used in this case would be technically called a fable since that word properly means a narrative in which either animals or inanimate things speak and act like human beings. The first section of his fable says the trees invited the olive tree to be their ruler, but this tree considered its value as an article of service to God and man, too great to be interrupted by a place of rule.

Verses 10, 11. The next invitation was made to the fig tree. The response of this tree indicates that when any-

thing that has been qualified for a specific service takes up some other kind of life it loses its original use and purpose. Hence the fig tree is faithful to its mission in nature and refuses to become king over the trees.

Verses 12, 13. The trees that were approached refused the invitation to be ruler, hence the next approach was to the vine. It likewise refused the offer of prominence, preferring to maintain its intended service of cheer to God and man. The word "cheereth" is rendered by such expressions as rejoice, and make glad, etc. So we can see how it could cheer God. We would not think of the Lord as being in need of cheering in the ordinary sense of that word. But when man makes proper use of the gifts of nature it pleases God and in that sense cheers him. It is noted that the objects that would have been worthy of the position of rule over the trees, were not willing to take on the special honor. That is often the case among men. Also it is often the case that the most unworthy are the ones most forward in taking a place of such special favor. It will prove so in this case.

Verse 14. The next invitation was to the bramble. This is from *אֲדָמָה* and Strong defines it: "a thorn-tree (especially the buckthorn)." Having asked the more worthy trees to become their ruler and being rejected, the trees next appeal to that which should have been considered unworthy, the thorn tree.

Verse 15. The thorn tree accepts the call on condition that the other trees put their confidence in it and its shadow. But, anticipating possible treason, this tree threatens that it will discharge a fire that will consume even the cedars of Lebanon, which were the most prized trees of the country.

Verses 16-19. The fable was completed and Jotham then makes the application and shows that he was talking about the action of the people toward Gideon's house and the son of the hand-maid, or concubine. In his speech here he reminded them of their service his father had done for them against the Midianites which had been repaid with the murder of his lawful sons in mass slaying. He makes the challenge that they should prove their sincerity in the movement by mutual rejoicing in each other, they in Abimelech and he in them.

Verse 20. Jotham had challenged their mutual sincerity by demanding mutual respect between Abimelech and

the men of Shechem. Now he predicts that if the whole thing is based on insincere motives, mutual distrust and harm will be practiced against each other.

Verse 21. Jotham knew he would be in danger after speaking the fable and making the application. After his speech he ran away to Beer, a place among the Israelites where he would be safe from attack by Abimelech.

Verse 22. This verse is noted mainly for the period of years stated so as to keep track of the chronology. While Abimelech was a usurper and not one of the lawful judges, his time must be considered in making up the required length of the period as accounted for elsewhere.

Verse 23. God does not force anyone to be evil morally who would otherwise be good. The word here means a spirit of unfriendliness. He caused the former state of friendship between Abimelech and the men of Shechem to be turned to the opposite.

Verse 24. The reason for the act of God stated in preceding verse is given here. It was in punishment for Abimelech's cruelty in slaying his brothers, and for the aid the men of Shechem gave him in that cruelty. Thus from here we will see these former allies in crime fighting each other, and thus fulfilling the prediction in Jotham's fable.

Verse 25. The Shechemites put men to lie in wait in the mountains and rob the people who were passing. This news reached the ears of Abimelech which was the thing they wished to happen.

Verse 26. Gaal was an Israelite who came to Shechem with a force of brethren and offered to take their side against Abimelech and his offer was accepted.

Verse 27. Hostilities against Abimelech were started by destroying the crops of the field and vineyards. They also made merry and entered the house of the idolaters in disrespect of the place.

Verse 28. Care needs to be exercised in this verse, not to be confused over the pronouns. Gaal is an Israelite, as is Abimelech on his father's side. This was recognized by Gaal in his saying that he is the son of Jerubbaal (Gideon). Yet Gaal advises that Hamor and the men of the city of Shechem be served, and not "him," meaning Abimelech.

Verse 29. Gaal makes a plea for the people of that place to trust his leadership and he would remove Abimelech from their midst. His offer was accepted and then he challenges Abimelech to strengthen his army and come out.

Verse 30. Zebul was ruler of the city and naturally wished to be true to Abimelech, whom he considered a friend of the place. Thus he was aroused by the action of Gaal and considered him an enemy.

Verses 31-33. Zebul now sends secret information to Abimelech of the movements of Gaal and urges him to do something about it, giving him suggestions how to act.

Verse 34. Acting upon the advice of Zebul, Abimelech rose up and laid siege against the city of Shechem.

Verse 35. Gaal saw the approach of Abimelech and went out to the gate of the city.

Verses 36-38. We should not forget that the forces on both sides of this struggle are in ill-favor with God. They are here placed in opposition to each other by the Lord in fulfillment of Jotham's fable. The multitudes of people now forming the siege of Shechem are exciting Gaal, and he exclaims to Zebul, the ruler of the city, that he sees these multitudes from the various sources. It is then that Zebul chides Gaal for his stand against Abimelech and reminds him of his words when he came to the city, and in the spirit of challenge urges him to go out and fight.

Verse 39. Gaal accepts the challenge and joins battle with Abimelech.

Verse 40. It is "six of one and half a dozen of the other" as to the right and wrong of the two sides of this conflict. Abimelech was wrong in usurping the judgeship after murdering the rightful candidates. The Shechemites and their leaders were wrong in their encouragement of the murderer. Now they are influenced by the Lord to oppose Abimelech so as to receive the judgment they deserve. The whole operation will be unfavorable for both sides.

Verse 41. After this skirmish, Abimelech went to a place named Arumah. Then Zebul, the ruler of the city of Shechem, expelled Gaal and his brethren from the city.

Verses 42, 43. Gaal and his forces were now exposed to danger after being thrust from the city. Abimelech was informed of this and made an

other forward movement by raising three companies of the people in sympathy with him. They arose and attacked those in sympathy with Gaal and smote many of them.

Verses 44, 45. The success of this action encouraged Abimelech and his men, so they came nearer to the city, even to the gate. At the same time the other two divisions of his forces attacked the people on the outside and in the fields and slew them. At last Abimelech stormed the city and took it. After killing the citizens therein, he beat down the city and sowed it with salt. The significance of this action is expressed in an interesting manner in the *Schaft-Herzog Encyclopaedia* as follows: "But salt was also strewn over a cursed place to indicate that nothing could any longer be allowed to grow there, because there can be no vegetation where the ground is saturated with salt (Deut. 29: 23; Judg. 9: 45; Zeph. 2: 9), hence 'a salt land' was a barren land (Job 39: 6; Jer. 17: 6)"—Article, *SALT*.

Verse 46. News of this disaster reached the ears of certain men of the tower or castle of Shechem, a unit of people who escaped the former destruction. Upon hearing this they fled to a place of supposed safety in the house of the god Berith.

Verses 47-49. Abimelech heard of this gathering of the people and prepared to attack the place. He ordered the men with him to imitate his example. Each man cut a branch from a tree and carried it with him to the hold where these other men had taken refuge after the affair of Shechem. Here they piled the branches they had taken and set fire to the place, destroying all who had fled there, and a thousand besides.

Verse 50. Thebez was another city not far from Shechem. After his success there, Abimelech next went to the former city and laid siege to it.

Verses 51, 52. Within the city of Thebez there was a strong fortification in the form of a tower and into this place the people of the city fled for refuge. Abimelech then came to this tower and was making preparations to burn it.

Verse 53. Being in this tower and above the men on the ground, a certain woman took advantage of the position and let a piece of stone fall down on the head of Abimelech, which

broke his skull but left him conscious for the moment.

Verse 54. While death was bound to be the end soon, yet while still conscious Abimelech wishes to escape the shame of having been slain by a woman. Upon this he directed his armorbearer to thrust a sword through him. It was done and Abimelech died.

Verse 55. This ended the war and the Israelite confederates returned to their own places.

Verses 56, 57. The writer informs us that all the foregoing actions were in fulfillment of the predictions made by Jotham. Both Abimelech and the forces at first encouraging him were to be punished for their wrongs against God's authorized judge.

JUDGES 10

Verses 1, 2. The only definite thing that is said about this judge is the length of his work which is important in keeping the chronology in the record.

Verses 3-5. The rule of Jair was 22 years and that fact should be noted which is about all that needs to be said at this place.

Verses 6-8. After a period of rest the children of Israel again forgot the Lord and fell to serving the various gods of the nations. Thus the Lord again brings the punishment in the form of oppression from the Philistines and Ammonites. This period lasted 18 years.

Verse 9. The scope of the oppression is the subject of this paragraph. The Ammonites dwelt on the east of Jordan while the Philistines were on the other side and near the Great Sea. They both joined to oppress Israel.

Verse 10. The confession of the Israelites is significant as having two phases. It would be very wrong to forsake God even had they then remained idle. In addition to having forsaken the true God they had become active in serving the false gods. This kind of double guilt was committed later by the nation. (Jer. 2: 13.)

Verses 11-14. God reminded the children of Israel of the many times he had delivered them from their enemies. In spite of these deliverances they had forsaken him and served the heathen gods. Now then, in taunt for their sins he bids them appeal to these gods for help.

Verses 15-18. The mercy of God is

great. His people cried unto him in their sore distress and proved the present sincerity of their plea by putting away their idols and serving the Lord. Then God had compassion for them and encouraged them to resist the enemy. Upon this the forces on each side began mobilization for conflict. The Ammonites collected in Gilead a region east of Jordan and inhabited by Israelites. This presented a direct threat to the peace of the children of Israel. They encamped in Mizpeh, a city of Palestine. In their distress the princes of Gilead called for a volunteer leader against the Ammonites with promises of military honors.

JUDGES 11

Verse 1. There was a territory called Gilead and also a man by that name. We should not confuse the two, as they have no special relationship. This man had a son born to him by a harlot, and the son's name was Jephthah. No fault should be laid against him because of his "irregular" birth, although such is often done.

Verse 2. The sons of Gilead's legal wife grew to manhood, then resented the presence of Jephthah in their home and expelled him. They said he was the son of a strange woman. That word means one from outside. The mother of Jephthah being a harlot, she was not a part of the immediate family of Gilead.

Verse 3. Jephthah fled to the land of Tob, a region east of the Jordan but above the general territory of the one called Gilead. Of course, all men will have some sympathizers. Jephthah had his and they assembled round him after he had been rejected by his father's family.

Verse 4. The Ammonites were the first to start active hostilities.

Verses 5, 6. In their distress the elders or leaders of the region of Gilead sent a call for help from Jephthah, who was in the land of Tob.

Verse 7. Of course, we would expect Jephthah to remind them of their previous ungrateful attitude toward him in expelling him from his father's house. After all, Gilead was as much kin to Jephthah as he was to any of his other sons. Now that they are in distress they call for help from him. This shows that something unusual was evident in the life and characteristics of Jephthah since they now feel as if they can rely on his ability and faithfulness.

Verse 8. The elders of Gilead make an urgent reply to ask him for leadership against the Ammonites with the promise that he will be their head.

Verses 9-11. Jephthah requires further guarantee of respect and authority. They grant his request and together form a pact with an oath before God to bind it.

Verse 12. Having been made commander-in-chief of their forces against Ammon he now makes formal protest against the enemy and charges that he has aggressed against the people of the land.

Verse 13. For answer to this charge the children of Ammon accused the children of Israel of having taken their land while en route from Egypt.

Verses 14-23. To the accusations of the children of Ammon, Jephthah made general denial. He also detailed the history of the years covering the journeys of the Israelites from Egypt. In this account was seen that Israel offered the fair thing in every case as to the countries through which it was necessary to go. Only when the kings and rulers of the various lands resisted the fair offers of Israel did the Lord help them to defend themselves and thus obtain the land of the aggressors as spoils. The conclusion of this line is stated, that it was the Lord and not Israel who had given the territory to them.

Verse 24. The Ammonites would have considered it right for them to hold in possession anything that their god Chemosh would give them and claim it to be theirs as rightful possession. In that case they would deny that any personal or private robbing had been done. On the same principle the Israelites can justly claim the property that their God gave them and should not be accused of unlawful spoliation of land.

Verse 25. Jephthah reminds them of the case of Balak and asks the significant question in ironic inquiry if Balak ever strove against the Lord. It was expected that Ammon would answer in their own minds and see their own "handwriting."

Verse 26. Jephthah next asked Ammon why, if it were right and necessary to recover this territory, they had let all the centuries go by without doing so.

Verse 27. Concluding the general account of the facts of history Jephthah makes final denial of all accusa-

tions. Also he accuses Ammon of wrong in the aggression and appeals to the Lord as his judge of his own righteous course.

Verse 28. Notwithstanding the fairness and truthfulness of this message from Jephthah the children of Ammon refused to desist from their hostility.

Verse 29. The war must now be prosecuted, so Jephthah advances to the attack.

Verses 30, 31. On his way to the immediate vicinity of active war against the Ammonites, Jephthah made the vow that has been much misunderstood and thus incorrectly interpreted. The marginal reading gives us "or" instead of "and" in verse 31. That would make the vow read "shall be the Lord's, or I will offer it," etc. This makes the vow have a two-fold bearing. That is, it has two alternatives, either of which would be the fulfilling of the vow. These two were that he would let it be the Lord's for his exclusive service, or that it would be burned in sacrifice. Thus the vow does not require that the thing affected be burnt necessarily. But there will be more on this subject near the close of the chapter.

Verses 32, 33. After making the vow discussed in preceding paragraph Jephthah proceeded against the Ammonites and the Lord showed his favor for him by giving him complete victory over the enemy. Thus it may be inferred even from this fact, that God is holding Jephthah in his good will. Had he been against the practice of Jephthah he certainly would not have given him this victory without criticism. The case of Moses and his neglect of circumcising his son (Ex. 4: 24-26) may be compared at this place. As important as Moses was for the matter at hand, God would not accept his further services unless the law of righteousness were obeyed. Certainly, in the case of Jephthah, the issue is no more important. He is given complete success even though that very success was the condition on which he made his famous vow.

Verses 34-36. After his successful campaign, Jephthah returned homeward. Upon his approach, his only child, a daughter, came to meet him with musical instruments and other indications of merriment and joyfulness. We are not told just how detailed was the information that her father gave to her as to his vow.

Whether he had gone over all the items or not, we know that she finally came to know the nature of his vow. She did not even protest or try to dissuade him from it. Instead, she urged him to carry out his obligation in gratitude for his victory over the enemy through God's help.

Verse 37. The daughter made one request and that was for two months time in which she would bewail or bemoan her virginity. Had her fate been that she was to be burnt in sacrifice, there would have been nothing significant in her virginity. In that case it would have been appropriate to bewail her untimely death. Or, even had she been a mother at that young age, it would still have been a matter of lament for her to die so young. So that the tragic death would have been the thing to bewail. Yet, that is not what she wished to lament. It was her virginity that was to be regretted. Yet a death and burning on the altar would have been the same tragedy whether a virgin or a bride. The circumstance will be all the more appreciated when it is remembered that motherhood in those days was considered far more desirable than it often is today. A woman who was unable to be a mother was considered as being reproached. (See Gen. 30: 1, 22; 1 Sam. 1: 5, 6, 16.) Thus it was the prospect that she was never to be a mother that she was lamenting.

Verses 38, 39. Her father gave her leave to do as requested. Thus she took some companions and spent two months in the mountains bewailing her virginity, which was the thought that grieved her. After the period of absence granted had expired she returned to her father. Then it is stated that he did to her according to his vow. See comments at verse 31 as to the requirements of this vow. In direct connection with this statement it says "she knew no man." All Bible students know this is a common expression of the scripture referring to the relation of the sexes. It means she was devoted to perpetual virginity and thus to spend her entire life as a virgin, without the joys of motherhood and under the constant occupation of service to God. This circumstance established a custom among the Israelites which will be described in following verse.

Verse 40. The custom mentioned in preceding verse was a practice carried on by other daughters of Israel.

The words "to lament" are rendered in the margin by "to talk with." This is more reasonable and agrees with all the facts and phases of the circumstance. People do not talk with a dead girl. Besides, if it were merely a time of lamentation in memory of the unfortunate girl it would not have been necessary to go to her. There are some general considerations that should be had in thinking over this subject. No law of God ever called for or authorized any voluntary sacrifice of a person on an altar of fire. Such would have been repulsive to God, and had any man presumed to do so he would have been condemned. In all the Bible, not a word of criticism even can be found against Jephthah. On the other hand, he is mentioned as one of the great men of faith in Hebrews 11: 32. This is very significant.

JUDGES 12

Verse 1. When some great achievement has been made it is often the cause of envy. Jephthah has come off with such great honors in his war against the Ammonites that the men of Ephraim are bitter against him. In their bitterness they make a false accusation against him and threaten his life and property.

Verses 2, 3. Jephthah denied their charge and replied that the very opposite was the fact. He had called upon them without response and they left him to take care of himself. And in his speech he gives the Lord the glory for the success.

Verse 4. So Jephthah is again forced to engage in battle and gathers the forces of the men of Gilead. We should remember these people are east and somewhat north of the central portion of Palestine. The men of Ephraim as here mentioned were west of the Jordan and somewhat south. Hence the statement in first verse that they went northward. In this war Jephthah called the Gileadites over to him for service. One incentive for the intensity of the battle was another false accusation of the men of Ephraim. They charged that the men claiming to be Gileadites were really Ephraimites who had deserted. This was soon to be tested out as to their identity.

Verse 5. As would be expected, the Ephraimites were put to the worst in the battle. The ones who escaped the heat of battle thought to flee to their own country by crossing the Jordan. This was also expected by the Gilead-

ites, hence they seized the passages of the river. The personal identity of all who might come to these established crossings of the river would make it necessary to proceed cautiously. They would not want to injure an innocent person. The first thing in the examination was to give the men opportunity for surrender by asking if they were Ephraimites. If they denied being so, the test would be put.

Verse 6. *Shibboleth: Sibboleth.* There is practically no difference between the meaning of these words. They mean something that is flowing or extending out and hence in the lexicon the definition of ear of corn, and of a river, or branch, is given. But the slight difference does call for the injection of the rough breathing sound in the pronunciation. The local vernacular of the Ephraimites had left out this sound and so their usage had trained their tongue against expressing it. This fact proved their undoing and exposed the attempted deception. As a result another 42,000 of them fell.

Verse 7. This short account of the death of Jephthah is characteristic of the language of the Bible. We should note another term in the years of the judges.

Verses 8-10. We have before noticed that some of the judges are barely mentioned with the length of their rule. But that is important in our tabulation of the years of the period of judges. In this paragraph we have seven years.

Verses 11, 12. Elon was of Zebulun, and judged ten years.

Verses 13-15. According to the information in the margin this and the two preceding judges were civil judges only and their territory was restricted to the north and eastern part of the country. This may be true. It would account for the brevity of the history. Evidently during these judgeships there was not much disturbance from the enemy in general and so no great amount of activity would be called for on the part of a judge. Yet the years of their rule must be counted since they go to make up the whole period. In this last one we have eight years. The word "nephews" is from a word of indefinite meaning, including grandsons. That is clearly the meaning in this place, since the number of sons is given in direct connection.

JUDGES 13

Verse 1. In some cases the writer gives us the term of years to include the time of oppression and that of the judge. But in this instance we are to understand that God allowed 40 years of oppression to go by as punishment for the nation before raising up their deliverer. So we are about to study the life and actions of one of the most noted judges.

Verses 2, 3. In so many instances recorded in the Bible the couples destined to figure prominently in the plan of the Lord were childless and the wife barren. In the case at hand it is thus. The couple chosen lived in the tribe of Dan. The angel of God appeared and promised the woman should bear a son.

Verse 4. Conditions of a Nazarite required that the hair be allowed to grow long (Num. 6: 2-5), but no mention of this was necessary here since women already left their hair long.

Verse 5. The son promised to this woman was to be a Nazarite from his birth. That would mean that he must not eat anything that came through the vine when he would have attained the age of eating such food. Since he was to be under such a vow from the time of his birth it would mean that the parents must never cut his hair. This son will grow up to become the deliverer of the people from the Philistines.

Verses 6, 7. The whole thing was astonishing to the woman and, of course, she told the matter to her husband. Her expression that the countenance of the person speaking to her was terrible, means that it was one to fill her with awe. We have also the definite information that this woman was intended to be under the Nazarite vow for she was told not to partake of the fruit of the vine. This was a specific symbol of that vow. Also, the child was to be a Nazarite from the womb, which agrees with the idea that he would be born of a Nazarite mother.

Verse 8. What a wonderful attitude this man showed. Concern for the proper training of the child was the subject of his prayer. Since he and his wife had been childless they did not have any experience. The unusual mission of this son to be born was such that it would be unwise to wait for the painful experiences of parenthood to bring the information. Thus it was logical to ask for instruction.

Verses 9, 10. In response to the prayer of Manoah the Lord sent the angel again to the woman who was alone in the field. Upon this she goes to bring her husband. Here is a fact that belies the intimidated accusation sometimes made by enemies of the Bible that this whole occurrence was one of improper conduct and that it was not an angel who appeared to this woman, and that a man in the guise of an angel appeared and that he was intimate with the woman. Had that been the case she would not have gone at once to bring her husband while the angel was still present.

Verses 11, 12. Upon direct information as to the identity of the angel, Manoah repeats his inquiry as to the training of the child.

Verses 13, 14. Again notice that the course of procedure begins with the woman which shows that she was under the Nazarite vow as well as the promised son. See comments on this subject at verses 4 and 7.

Verse 15. Gratitude would suggest the hospitality here offered. Besides, Manoah did not know that it was an angel who was before him. This is one of the instances referred to by Paul in Heb. 13: 1. Sometimes angels even partook of material food. In the present one the angel will not do so although he will remain for a while.

Verse 16. While the angel declines to eat, he agrees that an offering to the Lord may be made. This will give the angel opportunity to demonstrate his supernatural power.

Verse 17. Gratitude again manifested itself with Manoah in asking for the name of his benefactor. He wished to be prepared to repay the favor to the proper person.

Verse 18. The request of Manoah was denied since the thing asked for would have been beyond his comprehension. We do not know why, since we do have the names of angels given in other cases. It is another place to read Deut. 29: 29.

Verse 19. There was no indication of bitterness of disappointment with Manoah, but instead he went on with his performance of offering the kid and meat offering. The angel in the meantime did some wonderful things which we are not informed about. They were done in the sight of the man and his wife and continued until the events of the following verse.

Verse 20. The prophet Elijah went up to heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings

2: 11). The angel here disappeared in a flame that had been on the altar. After his departure the man and his wife were filled with awe and became prone on the ground.

Verses 21, 22. The demonstrations of the angel were ended and left in the mind of Manoah the belief that it was a real angel of God who had visited them. Being the most unusual experience they had ever known, the man is overcome with concern and feels that he is in danger from the exposure. Just how much he had learned on the subject of the presence of God we do not know. But we are sure of this, that the feeling of unworthiness of man for the company of a being from heaven was present with Manoah.

Verse 23. The reasoning of the woman here is wonderful. It would be well for the reader to consult Matt. 5: 23, 24. In that place Jesus taught that the performance of an offering at the altar would not take the place of another duty. Especially if that other duty pertained to the individual conduct of the one making the offering. So in the instance at hand. The acceptance of the formality of the sacrifice was evidence in the woman's mind that their standing before God was favorable.

Verses 24, 25. True to the promise from God the son was born and named Samson. In the time used for his physical maturity he was exercising himself in the camp of his family, that of Dan. The spirit of the Lord produced certain demonstrations of power in Samson even while still among his people. We are not told just what they were like, but the idea is that he was destined to be one of the great men of Israel.

JUDGES 14

Verse 1. Many of the incidents to be read about in the following chapters will be easier understood by remembering that the Philistines are now the enemies of Israel. They figure in the experiences of God's people in this period more than any other of the heathen and many unusual measures will be taken in dealing with them. For instance, God will suffer the present judge to take certain actions that would have been frowned upon in the life of a private Israelite. Neither does Samson always realize that the Lord is really using him in these various relations to bring about

the defeat of the Philistines. For some reason, Samson made a journey to Timnath, a place shown in the map to be in the possession of Ephraim. While there he saw a woman of the Philistines who pleased him.

Verse 2. Customs of the times now being studied were different from those of ours. It was a common matter for parents to take action in securing a wife for a son. This was especially true when the woman sought was from a different community than that of the interested man. See for instance the case of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 24.

Verses 3, 4. The parents of Samson did not realize that God was in all this affair and was taking such means to get their son in a position of advantage with the enemy. They protested his choice of a woman for a wife. He insisted on the choice because she pleased him well. Neither did he realize what it might mean to the cause of the people of Israel for him to be thus connected with the Philistines.

Verses 5-7. The trio went down to Timnath to attend to the matter of engaging the woman for Samson. On the way the strength of the young man was demonstrated by his encounter with a lion. This took place at a time that he was temporarily not in the company of his parents and he did not tell them about it. Going on down to Timnath he obtained a visit with the woman and was confirmed in his first impression made on the previous visit to the town. The language of the following verse indicates that an agreement was reached between him and the woman to become husband and wife soon.

Verses 8, 9. When the time drew near the trio again started to Timnath. When they reached the spot where Samson had killed the lion he "turned aside" as he evidently had done the other time for his parents had not known of his experience with the beast. Finding some honey in the carcase of the animal he took some and ate. Coming to the presence of his parents he gave them of the honey but still did not explain it to them.

Verse 10. The matter was settled for the woman to become the wife of Samson. It was a custom for a groom to treat his bride by giving a seven-day feast to the guests who might be present. This was what Laban required of Jacob in Gen. 29: 27. Sam-

son does this for the woman who was to be his wife.

Verse 11. It was to be an interesting occasion for they invited thirty friends to be present and be companions to Samson.

Verses 12, 13. As one means of diversion Samson propounded a riddle to these companions and gave them the entire period of the seven days to guess it. The stake was thirty sheets. This word is from CADIYN and defined by Strong "from an unused root meaning to envelop; a wrapper, i. e., shirt." The R. V. says "linen garments," which is doubtless justified by the lexicon. Whichever lost in the proposition was to give these articles of clothing to the other. Whether the companions expressly agreed to the bargain is not stated. But they called for the riddle and in absence of any other conditions they would be honorably bound to the terms stated by Samson.

Verse 14. As the reader will know, the riddle was formed from his experience in the matter of the honey in the carcase of the lion. He must have had such a thought in his mind all along since the affair of the lion, since he kept the account of it from his parents although it was a very indifferent matter as to being confidential. He wished to know that he alone would have knowledge of it. Since we know they never did guess the riddle themselves the last statement of this verse must be taken to mean that they did not begin to surmise until the third day that the riddle would be too much for them.

Verse 15. They kept on trying at the riddle. Finally the seventh day arrived and now they have just the one day to win the prize. In their desperation they appeal to his wife to learn the answer. They accompany their request with threats to burn her and her father's house. They further accuse her of conspiring with her husband to take their possessions from them and put the question direct to her if such is not the case. This is what they meant by the last words, "is it not so?"

Verse 16. She resorts to a strong weapon of a woman, her tears. This she adds to the complaint that he had told some things to others that he had not told her. He tries to quiet her by telling her that he had not told it to his own parents.

Verse 17. His reply did not quiet

her. She wept before him "the seven days." Since this weeping did not begin until the seventh day we see the explanation in the margin which says "the rest of the seven days." The entire seven days will not be over until the present one closes. Thus it means that from the beginning to the end of the seventh day she besieged him with her tears so that on this seventh day, the last day of grace for the riddle, he was overcome by her persistence. In this condition of mind, he told her the answer to the riddle. As yet, we know not that he expected it to go any further than to her. Neither does the text state whether she relayed it to the men of the city. That remains to be brought out.

Verse 18. Just in time for the conditions stated the men gave the answer to the riddle. Samson knew he had not told any one the answer but his wife and that she therefore had betrayed his confidence on that subject. One of the meanings of the word for "plowed" is to devise or work with secrecy. A heifer would be used figuratively as referring to his partner in the intimate relationship of this life. The whole sentence means that they had secretly devised with his young partner and in that way had obtained the answer to his riddle.

Verse 19. However, Samson will fulfill his promise although it will be to the sorrow of the Philistines. God helped him in the matter by giving him success in the encounter. By killing the thirty Philistines he obtains the articles of clothing to pay off the riddle. Also we may learn that since the articles were taken from the bodies of the men slain, it shows that the "sheets" of the stake were as already explained and not articles for the beds. In his anger over the whole affair it seems that Samson departed from the place and went back to his father's house. Evidently this was an act of hasty temper although it, too, might have been part of the Lord's plan.

Verse 20. The closing words of preceding paragraph were suggested by the statement of this. In the absence of Samson from his wife's home where he had left her for the time being, she had been given by her father to another man. It was one whom Samson had befriended, but ingratitude is a common trait.

JUDGES 15

Verse 1. In course of time Samson cooled off from his anger and decided to go on a visit to his wife. It was customary to express good will by making a gift of some value and so Samson decides to present his wife with a young goat. Now that he had already received the woman as his wife he is entitled to her intimate company and decides to avail himself of it. One meaning of the word for "chamber" here is bed chamber. It means that he proposed to enter his wife's bed chamber where he was supposed to have right to enter. But the father of the woman barred him from the apartment.

Verse 2. The father offers his explanation and says he thought that Samson hated her. We may justly infer that such conclusion was based on the angry conduct of Samson in taking his departure for his former home instead of remaining with his new wife. Especially might he so conclude since Samson had been absent a considerable time. Now that another man has been given possession of the young woman she cannot be claimed by Samson. Instead of her, the cold bargain is offered that he may have the younger sister of his wife. The inducement is suggested that she is fairer (better or more beautiful) than the one he had married. There is no indication that Samson even made any reply to this insulting proposition.

Verse 3. Samson plans to do the Philistines a disfavor but he will bring it about in such a way that they will not blame him for it and hence will not take any vengeance on him.

Verses 4, 5. Enemies of the Bible scoff at the idea that a man could catch three hundred foxes when it usually takes several men to catch one. For one thing we are not compelled to suppose that these foxes were the same as the animal by that name today. Even if they were, let it be remembered that Samson is now the instrument in the hands of God for the subjugation of the Philistines and he would enable Samson to do whatever was necessary for the work. By tying the foxes together in pairs and in the manner described with the torches attached to their tails, they would be incited to struggle for release. In the contrary pulling of the animals their speed would be interfered with and all the while the fire

would be burning down the grain. This would result in much more destruction to the crop than would have been done had the foxes been left apart even though there would have been double the number of torches. But the hasty exit of the foxes from the place would have left less destruction in their wake than as done by Samson's wisdom.

Verse 6. Of course, this drew the attention of the Philistines with the inquiry as to the perpetrator thereof. Being informed that it was Samson and also as to the reason for it, they laid the blame all on the father-in-law of the man and the woman who was to have been his wife. Being a party to the fraud it was just that she suffer with her father. She had not only betrayed the confidence of her husband by exposing the answer to the riddle, but now, in the alienation from his companionship, she was guilty along with her father. Hence, it was right that she suffer with him. By looking over Samson and pouring their effective wrath on the cause of the situation the thing came to pass referred to by Samson in 3rd verse.

Verses 7, 8. While the aforesaid actions avenged Samson for his disappointment in the matter of his wife, he is not satisfied with the present evils inflicted on the Philistines. He attacked them in the hip and thigh. The last word refers to the groin and includes consideration of the generative parts. Thus the slaughter which Samson inflicted on them was not instant death, but a prolonged one. Having accomplished this revenge he went to a place in Palestine called Etam, which had a sort of resting place on a rock. There he prepared to dwell for a time.

Verse 9. The Philistines pursued Samson and assembled at a place called Lehi, the exact location of which was uncertain. It was in the same general territory as Judah.

Verse 10. On seeing the hordes of the enemy the men of Judah inquired their aim in coming there. They said it was to bind Samson and return vengeance on him.

Verse 11. The speech of the Philistines seemed to be a surprise to these men of Judah. They considered them as their rulers and did not realize that movements were being made for their release. Now they address themselves to Samson in a kind of critical mood.

Verse 12. Having been informed that it was Samson alone whom the Philistines wanted they think to appease them by delivering him into their hands. Samson is not afraid of the Philistines but asks for guarantees of security from his own brethren.

Verse 13. The assurance desired was given and then he was bound as if to prevent his escape. In this condition they brought him from his place on the rock at Etam and to the place called Lehi.

Verse 14. When he reached Lehi the Philistines gave a shout preparatory for an attack. The spirit of the Lord came to his rescue and the cords around him became as weak as if they had been burned in the fire and he was thus released.

Verse 15. He had not come to this place with any weapon. A moist jaw bone of an ass was nearby and that became his only weapon. With such a weapon he slew a thousand of the Philistines. We will understand, of course, that such a weapon, unaided by the Lord, would have been far too short to accomplish what was done at that time.

Verse 16. Here is where Samson forgot to give credit properly for the success of his deed. The first personal pronoun used exclusively got him into trouble with God.

Verse 17. According to Smith's Bible Dictionary the name Samson gave this place means "hill of the jawbone." And in the margin of the text we have "the lifting up of the jawbone." Not only did he take the credit to himself of killing the great number of men, but named a place by his personal feat.

Verse 18. The great thirst that came upon him must have been sudden in its attack and very depressing inasmuch as he felt the threat of death. It sometimes needs a thing like that to impress a person with his shortcoming. It had the desired effect on Samson, for he cried out in his misery that "thou hast given this great deliverance" and then pleads for help.

Verse 19. God never punishes his servants beyond what is necessary. After the penitent plea of Samson a fountain of water was made to flow from the very object by which he had accomplished, through the Lord, his great victory over the enemy. Then he gave a name that was different

from the one just bestowed on the place. That name was in view of his feat in handling the jawbone. This one was in memory of his penitence. The word is defined in the margin as "the well of him that called or cried," and the lexicon agrees with the definition.

Verse 20. This passage not only gives us another term of years to be added to the chronology, but also states the particular people who oppressed Israel at the time.

JUDGES 16

Verse 1. Gaza was a prominent town in the land of the Philistines. The incident of his going down to that place and patronizing a harlot was not a very uncommon thing then any more than it is today. But it occasioned another demonstration of the power of Samson in the presence of the enemy as will be seen.

Verse 2. He had been seen coming into the city but his exact location would not be known. The principal cities were walled and going and coming had to be done through the gate. The men of the city planned to capture him in the morning, supposing that after passing the night in the place he would go out. Of course they were sleeping near the gate and not aware of his plan to go on after his visit with the woman. The word for "lay" is SHAKAB and defined by Strong "a primitive root; to lie down (for rest, sexual connection, decease or any other purpose). There is no evidence that they knew his purpose in the city or they would have watched at the house of the woman. It is the inspired writer who tells us of his actions there.

Verse 3. See comments on the word "lay" in preceding verse. After ending his visit with this woman he was ready to leave the city but found the gate closed since it was still night and those walled cities were thus fortified at night. Here is where Samson showed his physical might again by carrying away the very parts of the city that were supposed to be protection for the citizens on the inside. He was able not only to pull the parts down but carried them to the top of a hill near Hebron. Nothing more is said about this circumstance and we do not know how much effect it had on the Philistines except that it gave them to understand that he was a mighty man and that they would never be able to deal with him in an ordinary manner. This will be brought

out in the following part of the narrative.

Verse 4. The word "loved" is from *AWHAB* and defined "a primitive root; to have affection for (sexually or otherwise)"—Strong. This shows us that the attachment between Samson and Delilah was more than mere physical gratification. Had that been the only sense in which he loved this woman the word would not have been used since it was not used just previous to this case. When the writer told us of his visit to the harlot nothing was said about his loving her. Moreover, we are not to forget that the Lord is in all of this matter and using all the various means to get Samson in a position of advantage over the Philistines. That can be accomplished by bringing about the intimate association of this judge with this outstanding woman of the enemy.

Verse 5. This verse indicates that something more than mere physical relations existed between Samson and Delilah. The leading men of the Philistines recognized this close attachment between them, else they would not have hoped to overcome him through her help. It is true the word "wife" is not used in the story but there were no definite ceremonies that we know of in force in those days for making a woman a wife. All the elements of such a relationship were present in this case and we have reason to think of them in that light.

Verse 6. Being influenced by the vast amount of money promised her, Delilah asked Samson to explain the secret of his great strength. There could have been no indication of it by his personal appearance even though he might have been one of unusual muscular form. That could not have accounted for the ability to carry away the gate of a city.

Verse 7. The "withs" were cords, and being green, meant they were moist or new. It might be that such an article would be secure against rending.

Verse 8. The Philistines were willing to cooperate so they furnished her with the articles suggested by Samson. It might be asked why he permitted her to even tie him with these cords as he was strong enough to resist her had he wished to do so. Again we should keep in mind that the Lord is in this whole strange thing.

Verse 9. One meaning of the word for "chamber" is an apartment. De-

lilah admitted these men into her apartment but in a hidden manner, to be unknown to Samson. After binding him with the cords she announced that the Philistines were upon him. But they had no opportunity to take him because he broke the cords as if they were charred.

Verses 10, 11. She accused him of lying to her which was the case. Yet she was willing to trust him again and all this according to the plan of God referred to above. This time he explained that new ropes that had never been used would make him helpless. A rope would be heavier than a cord and so perhaps they would hold him.

Verse 12. The suggestion was followed and she bound him with the ropes. Also she had the men concealed and ready to take Samson if he were found to be really trapped. Again he tore them from him as if they were thread.

Verse 13. To the reader who knows the "secret" of his strength this theory of Samson might seem to come nearer the truth since the hair of his head was involved. The web was the warp in a loom and thus was a series of threads similar to the series of filaments composing the hairs of his head which were long, being a Nazarite. It might be that by joining the two systems of these filaments he would be held fast. The seven locks would mean his entire growth of hair since the word indicates the idea of completeness when used figuratively.

Verse 14. The suggestion was followed, and again the presence of the Philistines was announced to him. Again his strength was exhibited by his leaving with all the parts of the loom adjoining the web, to which his hair had been fastened.

Verses 15-17. Delilah is not entirely discouraged. She continues her pleas from day to day until he is practically worn out. It is natural to ask why he kept on answering her as long as he did when he knew her motive for all the instances. We should also remember that the whole proceeding is of the Lord. So he told her the truth this time. His long hair was in evidence and had been since she had known him. What she did not know was that it had never been cut. He explained why that was the case and that his strength was a supernatural gift on condition of his special vow. The mere telling her of the secret of his strength would not

have been wrong for any man under a vow could lawfully relate that fact. The text does not say that he gave her permission to have the hair of his head cut. He could have prevented her from doing so had he determined to do so. It is reasonable to conclude that he needed a lesson of confidence for others as well as for himself.

Verse 18. After being deceived three times why would Delilah conclude that he had told her the truth this time? Well, the three explanations Samson offered would at least have the appearance of being physical cause for overcoming his strength. Thus she could logically conclude that in some mysterious way such material obstacles to his exercise, might overcome him, hence she was deceived the three times. But the explanation he gave her this time was fundamentally different. There could be no logical or physical connection between long hair and this phenomenal strength. Were the fact of long hair the physical cause of strength then all women of that day would have been strong because they had such hair. She rightfully concluded that indeed some hidden (to her) cause of his strength was connected with the locks of his hair. With such assurance she called for the lords of the Philistines once more and they came with the money in hand to reward her for her treachery.

Verse 19. Samson submitted to the plan of Delilah and allowed himself to fall asleep on the knees of this woman. In that condition the hair of his head was shorn and thus his vow was broken. When that was done the Lord took his strength from him because the vow was broken which was the condition, or one of the conditions, of his vow upon which the special favor of God was bestowed.

Verse 20. Delilah gave an arousing call to Samson and he awoke. We will recall that he had been vexed almost to the point of death before going to sleep. It was natural that awaking thus suddenly he would not miss his long hair at once. So he thinks to do as he had done on the three previous occasions. He proposes to go out and "shake" himself. This word is from *NAWAR* and defined by Strong "a primitive root (through the idea of the rustling of mane, which usually accompanies the lion's roar); to tumble about." The idea is that as the lion would roar and shake his mane

in his great and majestic strength, so Samson will shake his strength as connected with his long hair like the mane of a lion. Being just aroused from the deep sleep he did not realize that he was minus his hair and hence did not realize that the Lord was gone.

Verse 21. The lords of the Philistines were on hands to take advantage of the situation. Without hindrance they took Samson into their grasp. They began their persecution of him by boring out his eyes. They are not forgetting the former disappointments they had and so are taking no chances this time. They took him to the important city of their country and there bound him with brazen fetters. Also they put him in prison and compelled him to do servile labor for them. They made him grind while in the prison house. The word is from *TACHAN* which is defined, "to grind meal."—Strong. According to the information of history it was always women who were compelled to do this work. The exception is made in this case, and its very significance is that he has been humiliated to the strength and position of women.

Verse 22. Samson has had his first lesson of chastisement for breaking his vow by losing his strength. Since another purpose of God in this proceeding is to get vengeance on the Philistines the strength will gradually return. That will be necessary for the accomplishing of the downfall of these enemies. It can be seen in numerous instances of the history of the Israelites that God would use heathen nations to punish his own wayward people. After the punishment had been inflicted, then the heathen nation would be punished. Thus in the present case Samson needed punishment for breaking his vow and the Philistines were the instrument by which the punishment was inflicted. Now that such has been done it remains for the enemy himself to be given the justice his motives deserved.

Verse 23. Citizens are permitted to visit their public prisons especially when a noted prisoner is there. So the Philistines came to the prison and beheld their hated foe in custody. In this situation they gave credit for their good state to their idol god, Dagon.

Verses 24. Chronologically this verse should be prior to verse 23. The people came to the prison and there saw Samson in slavery. When they

saw him in that condition they proceeded to assemble in their temple used for the worship of their god. When assembled in that place they engaged in praises to their heathen god and gave it the credit for the overthrow of their common foe. They here acknowledge that Samson had slain many of their fellow citizens.

Verse 25. In the midst of their festivities and joyfulness over their supposed victory they thought of having further entertainment at Samson's expense. They sent to have him brought out of the prison and into this public building where they were gathered in so great numbers at the occasion of their triumph. The word "sport" is from an original, that means to laugh or to be laughed at. Thus they did not expect Samson to act for them as a sportsman would act, but that he might be the object of their jests and derisive laughs.

Verse 26. Samson is blind, hence asks for the services of a lad in finding the pillars of the house. His purpose as stated to the lad was that he might lean on them which would seem a very reasonable explanation.

Verse 27. Great buildings that were used for public activities were based upon tall and heavy pillars in olden times. So much so that a single pillar would support much of the building and hence the perpetuity of the building would depend often on one or two central posts. (See 1 Tim. 3: 15). At the time we are now considering this great building was filled with happy men and women with the lords of the Philistines. As the roofs of buildings were then used for personal occupation there were three thousand of them on this roof. We do not know how many more were on the inside.

Verse 28. The personal afflictions of Samson moved the Lord to compassion. A prayer was sent up to heaven. It was not overlooked that not only were the eyes of the servant of God destroyed, but in reprisal for them the great enemies of God would be punished. This interest in the cause of God on behalf of his people was very commendable for Samson.

Verse 29. Mere faith as exists in the assent of the mind is not enough. Some action on the part of man must be forthcoming. In confidence, Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the house was supported.

Verse 30. Continuing his prayer, Samson asks to die with the Philistines. Also continuing his own actions in cooperation with the Lord, he applied his strength against the pillars and the building collapsed, killing the people therein. The number of the slain is not given except in a comparison. He slew more at the time of his death than he had killed in all his life previously.

Verse 31. His relatives came for his body and buried it in the family burial ground. The statement of his twenty years of judgment must not be added to the term mentioned in ch. 15: 20. It is merely a repetition of the same fact and given here as a final summing up of his remarkable life. It might be inquired as to what benefit it was to the Israelites for Samson to have all these personal conflicts with the Philistines. It will appear clear when we reflect that all this had a detracting effect and that while these things were going on, the general oppression from the enemy would be hindered and the children of Israel encouraged.

JUDGES 17

Verse 1. Mount Ephraim has already been seen to refer to a general territory in the south and west part of Palestine. Somewhere in this district, this man Micah lived. He was an Israelite but had become interested in idolatry as did his mother.

Verse 2. This idolatrous mother had been saving some silver for an unlawful purpose which was unknown to the son. He had spied it and stolen it. When the mother missed it, not knowing the identity of the thief, she had given way to cursing in the hearing of her son. Now he confesses to her that he had taken it. Instead of reprimanding him for stealing, she asked the Lord's blessing on him. This evil attitude is explained by the fact that she was not concerned in the moral life of her son, but was glad that the silver was at least "kept in the family."

Verse 3. The son turned the silver over to his mother for the time being. She protested, since it had been saved for his use anyway. She had intended it to be made into images for idolatrous worship by him and hence he might as well have it again in his possession. On this explanation she handed it back to him.

Verse 4. We cannot consider it an unselfish act when the son turned the silver back to his mother this time. He had been informed that she would

use it for his benefit and hence he would get its value appropriated to himself at last. Not only so, but he would be relieved of the trouble of having the articles made. He would thus let her have that responsibility. So the silver was taken by the mother who procured the services of a workman, made a cast, and also a chiseled image, and they were placed in the house of the son Micah.

Verse 5. Not satisfied with these two images his mother had procured for him, Micah added these articles. They were similar to the sacred articles that were used by the priests in the tabernacle services. Thus this man Micah mixed the two kinds of worship, the idolatrous and the imitation of the true one in the tabernacle. He was a man somewhat along in years for he had sons, one of whom was acting as his priest.

Verse 6. There was no man in civil authority who would also be interested in seeing the true laws of God carried out. Hence each man became a law unto himself, and thus the independent conduct of Micah. No endorsement is intended for this man's evil ways, but just an account of conditions in that age of many upsets.

Verse 7. There is no apparent connection between the foregoing verses and those to follow. The relation will appear before the chapter is finished. Bethlehem is a town situated in the possession of the tribe of Judah. This young man who was a Levite as to his tribe was sojourning in this town of Bethlehem. We are not told why he had been there but evidently it was temporary, as will be seen in the next verse.

Verse 8. The words "a place" are not in the original. But the context shows them to be correctly inserted for the young Levite was said to have been only sojourning in Bethlehem which was outside the territory of his tribe. Now he is going away from Bethlehem to sojourn again wherever he can find a place to spend some time. In his rounds he comes upon that spot in mount Ephraim where the house of Micah was.

Verse 9. Micah asked this newcomer about his former whereabouts. In response, the young Levite informed him as desired, and also told him of his purpose in going about over the country, that he was looking for a place.

Verse 10. That was just the kind of

man Micah was interested in. He invited him to dwell with him and be to him a father (figuratively, as an overseer) and a priest. Micah knew that the priests under the law were to be teachers also. So the young man engaged himself to this man on a stipulated sum of money and other temporal things.

Verses 11, 12. The contract having been agreed to, the young man was treated as one of the family. Micah also performed some sort of ceremony in consecration of the man to the priesthood over his house.

Verse 13. Another thing that Micah knew was that the lawful priests were to be of the tribe of Levi. Whether this particular young man was from the particular family of Aaron which alone of all the Levites could be priest is not stated. That much of the required qualification was present at least. For this reason Micah concluded that the blessing of God would be extended to him. He did not realize that no one can hope to have the favor of God in his wickedness just because he mixes some of the true items of service of God with his own unlawful actions. He was destined to learn at the last that his arrangement will not prove a permanent blessing to him.

JUDGES 18

Verse 1. For the first sentence in this verse see comments at ch. 17: 6. The tribe of Dan is not satisfied with the amount of land they possess at this time and we will see them making arrangements to enlarge the same.

Verse 2. Five men were sent on a mission of finding more territory that might be attached to what they already had. Going forth they came upon the general territory of mount Ephraim, to the particular spot containing the house of Micah.

Verse 3. This verse explains the one previous and why they lodged in the house of Micah. When they had come near this house they heard the voice of the Levite on the inside and recognized it. We do not know how they came to know him but the record says it was so. Upon hearing the voice they turned in to inquire why he was there and all about his business in that place.

Verse 4. The young man answered their questions and concluded with the most significant part of the contract, that he was the priest to the man employing him.

Verses 5, 6. These men doubtless understood the provisions of the law of Moses, that the priesthood was expected to be a means of communication between God and the people. (Lev. 10: 11; Deut. 17: 9; Mal. 2: 7.) Such would only apply regularly to the authorized priest and one in the faithful service of God. In the absence of any direct information in the record here, we are not able to say how much of this transaction was approved of by the Lord. We are able to say that what the priest predicted for them came to pass. Sometimes God used even unauthorized persons through which to give information to others (1 Sam. 28: 11-14), but whether that was done in the case at hand is not certain.

Verse 7. The men resumed their search for territory available for their tribe to acquire. Finally they came to the community of Laish as it was called at the time of this adventure; but which came to be called Dan. Bible students will recognize it by this name and will recall that it was located at the most northern extremity of Palestine. They found the people there to be unsuspecting and careless about their safety. In other words, so self-satisfied with their situation that they never seemed to realize that an enemy might slip in on them any time. With such an attitude they exposed themselves to attack without being prepared in mind, or otherwise, to defend themselves. This was the very kind of opportunity these men of the tribe of Dan were wanting.

Verses 8-10. This group of five spies returned to their home and made report of their discovery of a desirable land. They also urged their brethren to go at once to possess it and described the people as being careless and not watchful.

Verse 11. Acting on this advice they armed and sent 600 men.

Verses 12, 13. In their journey they retraced the same route the five men had taken on their mission of espionage and reached the place of Micah's house.

Verse 14. Of course these five spies were in the present group as pilots. Upon reaching the place of Micah's house they gave the company information about the articles that were in that house and suggested they do something about it.

Verses 15-17. The company now came to the immediate spot and the body

of the army stood guard at the gate while the five spies entered the house and took the graven image and other articles that Micah had there for worship. In the meantime the priest looked on the company, standing with them at the gate.

Verse 18. Having confiscated the articles they came on out to the gate where the priest was standing and he asked them for explanation of their actions.

Verse 19. The priest was told to keep still and also offered a position like the one he had at present, only over an entire tribe.

Verse 20. This offer was pleasing to the priest and doubtless sounded like a better proposition than the one he had been holding. On this inducement he went with the company.

Verse 21. In the order of march they put the little ones in the front, also the cattle. The "carriage" here means their personal goods that had to be carried.

Verse 22. After the company had been gone some distance the people living near the house of Micah rose to his assistance and went with him in pursuit.

Verse 23. Upon overtaking them they made a cry of objection, or despair, or some other kind of expression that provoked the children of Dan. At this, the latter replied with the question as to what was ailing Micah and why he was pursuing with the company.

Verse 24. This seemed to be an unnecessary question in view of what they had done to him. He expressed the thought that he was left with nothing and that he had much on which to base a complaint.

Verses 25, 26. Micah was warned to keep still if he valued his life. The company then proceeded in their journey, while Micah, seeing his cause was lost, returned home.

Verse 27. The company of Danites arrived at the place that had been espied by the five on the previous trip. They found them still unmindful of any danger and not looking out for their own safety. In this state of affairs the city was easily captured. The people were surprised and slain and their city was destroyed. In thus taking sneak advantage of these quiet people, the children of Dan fulfilled the prediction made by Jacob in Gen. 49: 17. It was said that Dan should be "a serpent by the way," which was

explained to mean he would make an unexpected attack.

Verse 28. The easy victory over this place is further explained by the fact that they had no one to fight for them. Zidon was too far off to furnish them any help and they were not allied to any other people by business or otherwise. The last part of the verse breaks into the matter of the Danites and their conquest just accomplished. They rebuilt the city they had just destroyed and established a colony thereat.

Verse 29. The language of this verse indicates that while the former city was the site of the present one, the name was changed in honor of the head of the tribe. It is here that we see one of the methods of recording facts in the Bible. As far back as Gen. 14: 14, we read of the city of Dan, yet we just now have read of the actual circumstance by which it got its name. The explanation is that when the events took place that are recorded in Genesis this history of which we just now learned had happened, so the writer uses the name that was then (at time of his writing) attached to it.

Verses 30, 31. This paragraph shows the fickleness of man. After practically kidnapping the priest of Micah and promising him a larger "pastorate" they now ignore all that, and instead place a man as priest over their institution who did not belong even to the tribe supposed to furnish priests. And nothing was ever said about the young Levite who had deserted Micah. Also, this illegal establishment here was along the same line of false worship that finally got the nation into serious trouble with the Lord, ending with the national captivity. When people once depart from the law of righteousness there is no logical stopping place. They seem more ready to imitate a bad example than the true one.

JUDGES 19

Verse 1. To avoid confusion, we must always remember that "mount Ephraim" is a term not restricted to a specific place, but to a territory of some general extent in the western part of Palestine. The Levites as a tribe did not have any possessions, thus the individual members of that tribe dwelled in various places. The one we are now reading about was sojourning on the farther side of this territory just named; and at Bethlehem, in the possession of Judah, he

found a woman who became his concubine. A concubine in those times was practically the same as a wife in all moral senses, but differed as to her property rights. She was expected to be as true to her master in the intimate relationship, as the wife with legal rights.

Verse 2. The fact that this concubine was accused of playing the harlot proves that even in those liberal times a concubine was considered under obligations to one man, the same as the wife. This woman deserted her duty to the one man and began promiscuous relations with other men. In this sort of life she also deserted her new home and returned to that of her father.

Verse 3. After a period of absence, stated in the A. V. as four months, the husband went in search of his concubine and made a plea for the return of her affection. She evidently had repented by this time of her lapse of duty for she secured him entrance to her father's house. The meeting was also agreeable to the damsel's father.

Verse 4. The father-in-law expressed his friendship by giving three days of hospitality consisting in lodging and food.

Verses 5-7. On the morning of the fourth day the Levite prepared to leave, but his father-in-law persuaded him to remain another day and night.

Verse 8. On the morning of the fifth day he intended to depart, but his father-in-law persuaded him to remain till the afternoon and enjoy his hospitality.

Verse 9. Towards evening the Levite prepared to leave. His father-in-law used the approach of night as basis for pleading that they wait till morning and then go. The genuine nature of the friendship of this father-in-law is here proved.

Verse 10. The Levite would not be detained longer but departed and soon came to the vicinity of Jebus, which is Jerusalem. This was not very far from the place where they had been lodging.

Verses 11-13. As it was now getting late in the day the servant suggested they stop in Jerusalem for the night. The Levite objected because at that time the city was being held by a foreign class of people, called Jebusites. The possession of Benjamin was directly adjoining that of Judah and the Levite felt more at home there.

He therefore insisted that they proceed to one of the cities there.

Verses 14, 15. The sun had gone down by the time they reached Gibeah, a city in the possession of the tribe of Benjamin. As it was thus and they knew of no certain lodging place in the city they sat down in the street. It was now in the early hours of night or late hours of the day.

Verse 16. There was another man from this same general territory called "mount Ephraim," now staying in the city of Gibeah and finding work in that community. He had secured a lodging house for his own occupying. As he was coming home from his work, he came into the city, since his work was in a field. He was of another tribe than the one where he was now living for these natives were Benjamites.

Verse 17. Passing into the city he noticed this man sitting in the street and asked him about his situation.

Verses 18, 19. The information asked for was given. The Levite was returning to the house of the Lord. That would be an appropriate explanation to give this man who was a stranger to the Levite. The tabernacle was then at Shiloh (Josh. 18: 1), which was north of Jerusalem and in the general territory called mount Ephraim. He was now detained in his journey by night fall. He was in the street because no lodging place had been made available to him. He had sufficient provisions for himself and his beasts, hence, was not to be a burden on any one.

Verses 20, 21. Upon this, the old man invited the Levite and his group to lodge with him. Bringing him into his house the usual acts of hospitality were performed which included the washing of feet which was occasioned in those days by the fact of travel on foot and the wearing of sandals that subjected the feet to travel-soreness.

Verse 22. *Belial*. In Old Testament times this was not a proper noun. It was used as a descriptive word. It meant one who was base, worthless, lawless. It later came to be used especially with reference to Satan. In the particular instance before us the men were Sodomites. "That we may know him," meant they wished to commit sodomy.

Verses 23, 24. The protection connected with the obligations of hospitality caused the old man to protest their wicked demand. To quiet them he offered to bring out to them his own

virgin daughter, as well as the guest's concubine. This was a strange proposition. For more complete comments on the subject see Gen. 19: 8 and note. Two wrongs never make one right. Yet of two evils, it is sometimes preferable to choose the less. Certainly natural immorality is less wicked than unnatural. This idea is recognized by the language of Paul in Rom. 1: 27.

Verse 25. *Would not hearken*. Since the men did use this woman we must understand this expression to mean only that they did not orally agree to the proposal. Still their attitude was threatening, so the Levite cooperated with his host to the extent that he exposed his concubine to the lust of the men of the city. They abused her all night so that her life was practically shut off by morning, at which time they let her go. In the case of Lot (Gen. 19: 8), the men would not use the women. In the present case they did not orally agree with a like offer although it states they abused the concubine. Thus, whether they used her in the same manner as in sodomy we are not told. The reasonable inference is that they so used her since that was their depravity.

Verse 26. The woman had just enough strength left to reach the door of the house where her husband was lodging but was unable to gain entrance.

Verses 27, 28. For the time being the Levite did not know what had become of his concubine since he had turned her into the hands of the men of the city. Hence he was preparing to resume his journey alone or at least to go out in search for her. When he opened the door there was his concubine prostrate with her hands grasping the threshold of the door in a desperate struggle for entrance. The husband thought her only resting and bade her arise that they might be on their way. Receiving no response he discovered that she was dead. Next he put her body on his beast of burden and went on to his home.

Verse 29. Upon arriving at his house he cut the body of his concubine into twelve pieces, a piece for each tribe, and sent the awful tokens out among the people.

Verse 30. The effect was what the Levite expected, no doubt. All who saw the gruesome articles were shocked. They stated that it was an action without parallel in all the history of their nation. A general call

was made that the people hold consultations on the subject, and after doing so express themselves.

JUDGES 20

Verse 1. The act of the Levite recorded in previous chapter roused the entire people of Israel. *From Dan to Beer-sheba*. This was to signify that all of the nation had been aroused. Dan was at the northern and Beer-sheba at the southern extremity of the land of Palestine. Gilead was east of the Jordan. Thus we see that the whole population of the twelve tribes came together as *one man* which indicates the unity of feeling and of action. Mizpeh being an important city in Israel it was the general place of assembling to confer on action as to the case of the Levite.

Verse 2. Here they mobilized a group of four hundred thousand warriors.

Verse 3. When the army was assembled the Levite was asked to report more definitely on his terrible experience. The tribe of Benjamin in the meantime heard of the great assembling of armed men.

Verses 4-7. The Levite gave a full and true account of what he and his concubine had suffered. He concluded his speech with request for an expression from them.

Verses 8-11. The unity of mind and action is still manifest with this great throng of Israelites. Their decision was to divide their man power into relays and prepare for action. The first thing will be to advance to the city of Gibeah, the scene of the terrible mistreatment imposed upon the complainant.

Verses 12, 13. When they had gathered at Gibeah, representatives of all the other tribes sent men throughout the possession of the tribe of Benjamin. The whole tribe need not be charged with the guilt of one city unless they cause it to be so. Therefore, these commissioners offer to settle the controversy by punishing the men only who were guilty. That was fair and should have been agreed to by the tribe of Benjamin. But they would not accept the proposal made by their brethren.

Verses 14, 15. Having rejected the offer of peace made by the Israelites, the tribe of Benjamin knew that war was inevitable. They mustered an army from the various cities of their possession and assembled them at

Gibeah. In that city they found others to add to the army. The forces of Benjamin now were 26,000 men from the outlying cities, and 700 from the city of Gibeah.

Verse 16. Among the forces of Benjamin were some special sharpshooters to the number of 700. *Left-handed*. This word occurs only twice in the Bible. As a complete term it does not always mean that the person had adopted the use of the left hand instead of the right. It usually meant that something had impeded or deprived him of the use of his right hand and that he used the left of necessity. In the particular case of the Benjamites we have information in 1 Chr. 12: 2 that the Benjamites were skillful with each of their hands. That would give them certain advantages as to the angle desired for casting stones at the target selected. That fact accounts for the statement made here that they could sling stones at a hair breadth accurately. That would make them formidable antagonists.

Verse 17. The forces of Israel are numbered at 400,000. *Beside Benjamin*. This is said to agree with the idea that Benjamin is on the other side of the conflict.

Verse 18. As stated before, the Israelites divided their men into relays for the war. As to which group should make the first attack, they asked counsel of God by going to the house of the Lord. That was in recognition of the arrangement made by Moses that God was to be known in the place chosen to record his name. Upon their inquiry they were informed that Judah was to make the attack.

Verses 19-21. The first battle apparently brought defeat to the Israelites, but their knowledge of warfare and also their faith in the Lord prevented final defeat.

Verses 22, 23. Before making another attack, they again seek counsel of the Lord and are told to renew the battle.

Verses 24, 25. Again the children of Israel suffered loss of many men.

Verse 26-28. While they are not entirely discouraged, they seem to think that something may be lacking in their own preparation of mind. This time they put on a season of religious activities. After this they renew their inquiry. The inspired writer explains that the ark of the covenant was there, as was also the priest. These factors made it lawful to ask counsel of God. Again they were told to re-

new their battle against Benjamin. But the reader's attention will be called to a difference in the last response of God from the two previous ones. In them nothing was said as to the immediate outcome of the battle. In this they were not only told to go on with the battle, but that in it they would succeed over the enemy. The whole procedure agrees with the idea taught generally in the Bible that desirable results often have to be obtained through painful and expensive sacrifices.

Verses 29-31. Now the Israelites make the attack after arranging certain stratagems. In this battle the Benjamites slew thirty of the others. But this was for a purpose. It gave them false encouragement.

Verse 32. They concluded that the victory was to be theirs as in the previous battles and were thus prepared in mind to fall into the feint which the Israelites set for them by fleeing. This drew them from the city and into the highways where they would be open to the attack of the army of Israel.

Verses 33-35. The decisive battle was now about to begin. The ones lying in ambush joined the others and together they smote of the Benjamites, 25,000 and more. When we consider the small size of the army on that side, this number of slain will appear as a fundamental and fatal loss.

Verses 36, 37. The visible cause of the success was the stratagem practiced by the children of Israel. As the bulk of the army was fleeing and the Benjamites were thus encouraged to pursue, those in ambush arose unexpectedly and made the attack that resulted in the great slaughter of the pursuers.

Verse 38. This is an explanation of part of the strategy. At the proper time the signal to be used for movement was that of sending up a flame out of the city.

Verse 39. It was at this time that the Israelites in the larger unit made as if they were retreating and that decoyed the Benjamites on to their action.

Verse 40. To avoid confusion it is well to bear in mind that the scripture often makes a general statement of happenings and then gives more details. The total number of killed among the Benjamites was stated in 35th verse. From there on in the chapter some of the means used were explained specifically and the various

stages of the day's actions outlined. This flame caused to arise out of the city was one of the ruses intended to throw the enemy into confusion, which it did.

Verses 41, 42. This paragraph sets forth that on account of the effect of the flame the Benjamites started to flee toward the wilderness and were slain in the flight.

Verses 43, 44. In this incident of the battle the Benjamites lost 18,000 men.

Verse 45. Still pursuing toward the wilderness and overthrowing all the stragglers along the highways they killed two thousand more of the enemy.

Verse 46. Here the writer sums up the total slain of the Benjamites except that it is given in round numbers instead of the specific hundreds as in 35th verse. Such an order of recording figures is common in both sacred and profane writers.

Verse 47. These six hundred men were usually swift in flight and thus escaped.

Verse 48. This verse is one of the details of the whole day's transactions and is to be considered as included with the account already referred to previously.

JUDGES 21

Verse 1. It was permitted by the law for women to marry into a tribe other than that of their fathers with the stipulation that no disturbance was to be made in the holdings of the land. But before starting into the war with the Benjamites the men of Israel were so hot in their indignation that they had made an oath not to let any of their daughters follow that practice. Whether they realized how completely the women of the Benjamites would be destroyed along with the men of war is not stated. But we can see from verse 16 below that about all of the available material for wives was slain. It is not considered ethical warfare to attack civilians, but if such mingle with the armed forces it is unavoidable that destruction of them will occur and hence the population as a whole will be reduced. That is what took place in this battle.

Verse 2. After the war was concluded the men of Israel saw the awful condition of the tribe of Benjamin, that it was almost out of existence, at least as far as the prospects of future multiplying. If the marriage of their few remaining men to the daughters of the other tribes is prevented then

the tribe will become extinct. This caused them to weep before the Lord in Shiloh.

Verse 3. In spite of the outrage committed by this one tribe, the Israelites were amazed at the very idea of losing one of the twelve tribes.

Verse 4. The enormity of their plight now brought upon them a feeling of remorse. In that condition of mind they instituted a season of sacrificial worship. After that it was determined to set about to find means of overcoming the situation. Of course those implicated in the vow mentioned in first verse were only the ones who had come together at Mizpeh at the general call referred to in ch. 19: 30 and ch. 20: 1. Now if any communities can be found who did not respond to that call, of course they would be free from the oath. Also they would be guilty of what would amount to desertion in time of war, in effect. This would give them a pretext for punitive action. With this sort of outlook they decided to make inquiry.

Verse 5. The decision arrived at was carried out. Inquiry was made as to whether any of the tribes of Israel had failed to respond to their country's call for service. It had also been determined with this plan of inquiry that if any were found to be guilty they were to be slain as "draft evaders."

Verses 6, 7. This paragraph repeats what has already been stated, that the men of Israel were very sorry for the situation and were eager to do something to repair the damage they had done to the future of this one tribe by their oath.

Verse 8. The inquiry is again stated and the information was obtained that the community of Jabesh in Gilead failed to respond. This was the chief city in the territory named and contained many people.

Verse 9. An examination of the enrollment was made and in this way it was found that the above mentioned units of the population were guilty of the breach of duty for not any of that community responded to the call.

Verses 10, 11. A detachment consisting in twelve thousand men was sent to carry out the decision of execution. The instruction was to kill all the men and also all the women except those who had never had relations with men.

Verse 12. After this was done they

found four hundred virgins left from the lot.

Verse 13. The six hundred refugees mentioned in verse 47 were now contacted and given proclamation of peace. This was to let them know that the war was over and they could come out from their hiding.

Verse 14. These Benjamites were then given wives of the virgins saved from the slaughter at Jabesh. There were six hundred of these men needing wives while only four hundred of the virgins. Hence there lacked still two hundred without wives.

Verse 15. As used here the word "repented" means they were very sorry and filled with pity for the Benjamites. It is said that the Lord made this breach in the tribes of Israel. This is to be understood in the light of the binding nature of an oath. If an Israelite made an oath to the Lord he was bound to keep it.

Verses 16, 17. Still regretting the situation they declare that something must be done to preserve the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 18. Even in their desperation they did not forget their oath and thus something must be done to remedy the sad affair without breaking their oath directly.

Verse 19. The law of Moses established three yearly feasts to the Lord and all males were required to assemble at the national headquarters to attend the services of the tabernacle. It was at this time located at Shiloh. While the males only were required to appear at those times, others were permitted to come and usually there were great numbers of others there out of interest in the Lord's institutions. And while the men would be engaged in the activities about the tabernacle the women and others not engaged in such work would be free to conduct themselves in various ways in the near community. This gave the Israelites an idea in the present emergency.

Verses 20, 21. The two hundred Benjamites yet without wives were now told to hide in the vineyards of the community. One form of activities practiced by people in old times was that of dancing in groups. Either the men would thus engage as a group or the women would do so. So while the men were engaged in the duties about the tabernacle the virgins would pass their time in this exercise of dancing. The instructions were for these men

lying along the highway and in the vineyards to rise up and seize each man a virgin to become his wife.

Verse 22. No mention is made of complaint from the virgins. If any of them objected it is not revealed. It was natural to expect an objection from the fathers or brothers of the girls and hence an explanation was promised. They would make a plea to the men to be favorable toward the transaction for their sakes. That in the war the Israelites had not made any reservation from among the Benjaminites for wives of the single men. Also that the fathers or brothers of these Israelite virgins were not guilty of having violated their oath on this subject and thus were not to be chided as being short of their duty to the nation. If they will all be quiet and let these remaining men of Benjamin find their own wives themselves the rest of the nation could be guiltless, at least as far as direct ceremony was concerned.

Verse 23. The counsel was accepted and the two hundred men secured each a virgin to be his wife and then returned home to repair the damage that had been done by the war.

Verse 24. The children of Israel of the other tribes also mustered out of military service and returned to their various homes.

Verse 25. This is explained in ch. 17: 6.

RUTH 1

Verse 1. *When the judges ruled.* This gives us the general period for the date of this book. But none of the works of reference that I have found can set the exact time. However, we know it was in the latter part of the reign of the judges because it concludes with the birth of the grandfather of David which brings us near the history found in the book of Samuel. The events of this very interesting and beautiful story occurred in the time of the period covered by the book previous to this and may be considered as an insert of that book. The immediate cause of the movements of the family concerned was a sore famine in the land of Canaan. This family belonged at Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah. In their distress they crossed the Jordan into the country of Moab which bordered along the river. The family now consisted of the man and wife, also their two sons.

Verse 2. The names of the members

of this family respectively were Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion.

Verse 3. The first misfortune to befall Naomi here was the loss of her husband by death.

Verse 4. The entire time of sojourn in Moab of this family was ten years. In that time the two sons married women of the Moabites. Their names were Orpah and Ruth. Whether in the same order as named above we do not know.

Verse 5. The next misfortune for Naomi was the death of her sons, which left her with her two daughters-in-law only, of her own family.

Verses 6, 7. News now came to Naomi that the famine was over in Judah and thus she decided to return to her home land. In the first movements of leaving the land of Moab the two daughters-in-law were with Naomi with indications they intended going with her to her land.

Verse 8. These girls evidently were not sisters, for Naomi suggested they go "each to her mother's house." This would have been inappropriate language had they been of the same house. Naomi had nothing but a kindly regard for these women because of their respectful treatment of her. But they were foreigners to her native country and would naturally feel more at home where they had been born. So she bade them return to their former homes and wished the blessing of God on them.

Verse 9. She even wished that they might each again find a husband and have another home of rest or satisfaction. She kissed them which was a gesture of good-bye, for that act was generally done only on meeting or parting. Since they had been with each other up to now, the kiss was one of parting. The immediate effect was one of sadness on the part of both for they wept.

Verse 10. The attitude of both women was favorable to going with Naomi and to joining with her among her people.

Verses 11-13. There are various thoughts suggested by this paragraph. One is that marriage was an important, if not the most important, objective of life. That is true in many senses. As such was the case, Naomi supposed the chief point of interest with these women was to find another husband with her. If that were the case, then it would indicate their love for and confidence in her