

**GOD'S MESSAGES  
BIBLE  
COMMENTARY  
SERIES**

**VOLUME 5**

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,  
and caused them to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8).

**COMMENTARY  
ON  
THE BOOKS  
OF  
JOSHUA, JUDGES  
AND RUTH**

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# Introduction To Joshua

**Author:** Conservative writers are in nearly unanimous agreement that Joshua was the author of the book which carries his name in the list of Old Testament books. Joshua was the right hand man of Moses. He had access to information leading up to the events recorded in the book. He also would have been the person most apt to know the first hand details which were such an important part of the record.

There is but one problem in stating that Joshua was responsible for the entire book. Just as the death of Moses was recorded at the very end of Deuteronomy, the death of Joshua is included at the conclusion of this book. Just as Joshua was accepted as the individual who described the death of Moses, the death of Joshua could have been given through divine inspiration of another after the event took place.

**Date:** Joshua died at the age of one hundred ten years. Since he was a mature man during much of the time Moses was leading the people through the wilderness, Joshua must have died less than one hundred years after Moses death. Adam Clarke gives an approximate date of 1451 B.C. It appears to be impossible to place a precise date, but the suggestion of Clarke is as reasonable as any other we have seen.

**Importance of the Book:** God had promised the patriarchs a land to which their descendants would gain possession. The five books written by Moses prepare the student of the Scriptures for the fulfillment of that promise. The lives of Adam, Noah Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are a continuous narrative telling of the introduction of sin, the condition of man at the time of the flood, the years of bondage in Egypt, the escape from that bondage, the forty-years of wandering in preparation for entering that promised land, and the death of Moses.

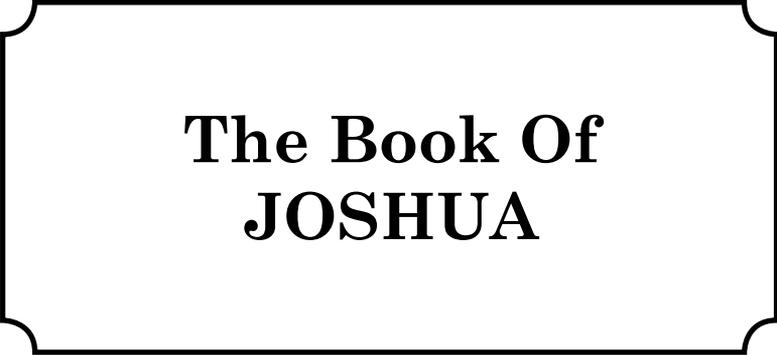
The book of Joshua is a perfectly natural continuation of what had taken place up to that point. Under the leadership of this man of God, Israel entered the land of Canaan, subdued the wicked inhabitants and apportioned the land to the various tribes.

The farewell speech of Joshua previous to his death is a masterpiece of encouragement, not only to those people whom he had led, but to every generation of God's followers from that time until the present.

When one finds the problems of life completely insurmountable, it helps greatly to think back on the lack of faith demonstrated by Israel when the ten spies returned with their pessimistic report, and then compare that with the optimism which Joshua inspired in those whom he led into Canaan. As long as God is with us, who can be against us?

### **The Main Divisions of the Book:**

1. Victory over the Canaanites.
2. Partition of the land.
3. Moses death.



**The Book Of  
JOSHUA**



## *Chapter 1*

The very close connection between Moses and Joshua during their lives is reflected in the close of the book of Deuteronomy and the beginning of this book. After working so closely together for much of the time of the travel through the wilderness, with Joshua working hand in hand with Moses, it was but natural for him to succeed Moses as the leader of the people.

God makes certain that Joshua will be the new leader by giving him special attention, along with careful directions as to how to proceed

**JOS 1:1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,**

Moses is spoken of as the “servant” of the Lord. God no doubt had many servants among the people. Moses stood out as a very special servant. Moses was God’s “right hand man” in many ways. He had shown weakness on only rare occasions. Now that Moses had been removed from the scene, a dedicated replacement was needed. Joshua had proven himself to have just such characteristics. God now spoke to him.

We are not told just how God spoke to Joshua. He had spoken “face to face” with Moses. It seems that no other man ever communicated with Jehovah in that manner. The urim and the thummim may have

been involved. He may have spoken to Joshua in dreams and visions. Whatever was the case, Joshua was able to determine the will of the Lord.

**JOS 1:2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.**

Moses failure to give God the glory for bringing water out of the rock had caused Him to deny Moses the privilege of leading the people into the land of Canaan. Joshua had proven himself both capable and willing to lead Israel. He was now to be given that responsibility.

The land of Canaan rightfully belonged to Israel since God had given it to them. The Canaanites had lost all claim to it as a result of their idolatrous and immoral actions. They had passed the point of no return. The decision to destroy them was just. Israel would only be possessing that which the Creator had declared to be theirs.

**JOS 1:3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.**

A great expanse of territory was now to be defined. The promise of this land had been given to Moses to Israel. Now the same promise is restated to Moses successor. God went on to explain what the boundaries of the promised land were to be.



**JOS 1:4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.**

It is difficult to envision just what God meant in this verse. There were several wildernesses; the wilderness of Sinai, the wilderness of Shur, the wilderness of of Zin, the wilderness of Paran, etc. I believe that in general we may say that the western border was the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the eastern border was the Euphrates River. On more than one occasion Canaan is referred to as from Dan to Beersheba. Dan was located about forty miles north of the Sea of Galilee and Beersheba was almost even with the southern tip of the Dead Sea.

Israel never did possess and govern all of this land. The nearest it came to doing so was in the time of Solomon. As Joshua and the people began the conquest of the land, they were looking across the Jordan River toward the west where the sun set each day.

**JOS 1:5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.**

Joshua had believed that with God's help, Israel could take the promised land and subdue the giants in the land. Now, thirty-eight years later, he is the



one who is appointed to see that the victory comes to reality.

But he will not be alone in leading the Israelite army. Jehovah will be with him every step of the way. That would make all the difference.

**JOS 1:6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.**

When God makes a promise, that promise will be kept. His promise had been given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that this land would be given to them. He was now renewing that promise to give Joshua and Israel the courage and strength needed to take that which was rightfully theirs.

**JOS 1:7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.**

The point is made in very strong words that it will take both strength and courage to accomplish what God expected. This could not be achieved without keeping the commandments of the law which had been given through Moses. If they departed from that law they would fail in their battles. If they would turn neither to the right nor the left in the keeping of that law, they would meet success.



**JOS 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.**

Israel was to keep their minds focused on obeying the law. This would require them to think about it on their beds at night as well as throughout the daylight hours when they were facing the enemy. They were not to be satisfied with a half hearted effort in keeping it. They were to talk about it constantly, and keep every command. It was not a case of determining which they wished to keep and which they were to ignore.

Very few persons find themselves faithful to God's will to the degree required. All men sin and come short of the glory of God. It needs to be pointed out that there are many from whose mouths the law of the Lord never comes forth. A stream of filthy speech and blasphemy takes it's place. God does not promise such persons success.

Is the reader ashamed to offer prayer when eating meals in a public restaurant? Does he reflect upon the Word of God during the course of daily activities, and upon his pillow before falling off to sleep? The law of the Lord is far more powerful than most of us realize. We, like Joshua and Israel, face formidable foes. We, like them, must invite God into our lives to give us strength and wisdom to overcome.



**JOS 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

Jehovah makes His will clear. He did so in the case of Adam and Eve in the garden. He did so in the case of Moses as He called him to lead the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. He is now doing the same with Joshua. Fear leads to dismay and defeat. Joshua was to be assured that with Jehovah at his side, victory was assured. Neither weakness nor fear were in order as long as he and those he led were carrying out the commandments of Almighty God.

**JOS 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,**

**JOS 1:11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.**

Joshua then passed on directions to the officers and ordered them to communicate with those under them. While they had been passing through the wilderness, the manna had been available every morning. Within the next three days, when they entered Canaan, the manna would cease. They would need food which they had prepared, to replace the manna which God had provided.

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**JOS 1:12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,**

**JOS 1:13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.**

The two and one half tribes that had settled east of the Jordan were reminded of the conditions under which they had received permission to occupy that land. God had made it possible for them to take possession of the land east of the River, but they had made a promise that they would pass over the Jordan and help the other tribes as they took possession of the land on the other side. It was permissible for them to come back to the east side, but they must not forget their promise.

**JOS 1:14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them;**

Their families and their livestock were to stay on the east side of the river while they crossed over and fought along with the other tribes. Not only were they to go along with their brethren, they were to go armed and go before them.

We are not told the purpose of having the men of the two and one half tribes lead the way. We can only



suppose this was insurance that they would not turn back and return to their families and possessions before the land on the west side had been taken.

The alert reader may very well wonder what defense was left for the families of the two and one half tribes while they were departed from them. Adam Clarke concluded that from figures given in Numbers and in the third chapter of Joshua, a large number of the men of the two and one half tribes did not pass over, but remained home to defend the families. See Clarke's Commentary, Volume 2, p. 9.

**JOS 1:15 Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.**

The men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of those of Manasseh were to give their assistance until the other tribes had taken possession of the land God had assigned to them. After that task was completed, they were free to their own families and possessions which had been left on the east side of the Jordan.

**JOS 1:16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.**

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At least for the time being, these men were quite willing to keep their promise. Later, it seems that they changed their attitudes and wished to return before the conquest was complete.

**JOS 1:17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.**

Was it really true that Israel had hearkened to Moses in all things? Certainly those who grumbled about the manna and wished to go back to Egypt did not do so. God had made it manifest through the miracles which Moses was able to do that He was with Moses. It is very easy to forget the events of the past when we find them evidence of weakness upon our part. Surely, at this moment these men intended to obey Joshua provided that such power as Moses possessed would still be available to them under the leadership of Joshua.

Good intentions, however, often fall by the wayside in the face of tribulation.

**JOS 1:18 Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.**

The men are so certain of their commitment to

Joshua and to the Lord that they were ready to execute any person who rose up against the divine will. They added their words to those of God. Joshua must be a strong and courageous leader.



## *Chapter 2*

This chapter of Joshua contains the account of the sending of the two spies into the city of Jericho to assess the situation there before beginning the invasion. Much difference exists in the various conclusions drawn by students of the chapter.

The present writer does not claim to have the final answers to all of the questions arising in the text, but will try to honestly present the overall picture and make it possible for the reader to make comparisons.

**JOS 2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.**

Shittim was located on the east side of the Jordan River, about five miles from the river. Jericho lay about the same distance from the river on the west side.

To say that spies were sent out secretly is not a case of poor grammar. These spies may have been sent out without the knowledge of the Israelites themselves, other than Joshua.

The question also arises as to the necessity of sending spies at all. God had said he would be with them. This leads some to deny any need for sending them. The fact that Jehovah had assured them of



His approval and support of the invasion does not cancel out the need for Joshua and his forces to know how they should proceed. They were to focus their attention on the city of Jericho. That would be the beachhead from which to move across the entire territory.

Why did the spies go to the house of a harlot and seek lodging there? A house of prostitution would be the last place we would expect godly men to search out. It is wise for us to spend a few words on this topic.

Very intelligent and diligent Bible students have taken quite opposite views of the question. I will briefly present main points of the contrasting views of Burton Coffman and Adam Clarke. The reader must attempt to make comparisons and seek to arrive at the Biblical position.

Adam Clarke does not believe this woman was a prostitute in the sense we might use the word today. Clarke points out the Philistines may well have followed the pattern of the Egyptians who expected women to supervise houses of public entertainment. He adds that the word in the Hebrew from which Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 were translated into Greek was zonah. The Greek word which was used to replace zonah was porna. This is the word from which our English word “pornography” was derived. Thus the impression is left that this woman was one of ill fame and degraded morals. Clarke sees the word as more likely meaning “tavern-keeper.” Since many tavern-keepers were women who were willing to sell themselves, the word in the Greek



has been translated in the King James Version as “harlot.”

Clarke answers the argument that since a husband is not mentioned at any point, she must not have been a married woman, by saying she could have been either a single woman or a widow. His conclusion was, “It is most likely that she was a single woman or a widow who got her bread honestly by keeping a house of entertainment for strangers.” Clarke does not like the idea that the spies would have made a decision to frequent a house of prostitution.

In contrast to Clarke’s position, Burton Coffman believes the one called a “harlot” was actually a prostitute. Coffman lists four women who were of questionable character that are found in the ancestry of Jesus. The four are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. He sees no reason for denying Rahab’s her place in Christ’s ancestry on the basis that she was harlot. Coffman disagrees with Clarke’s position that women were tavern-keepers in that part of the world. He sees both the Hebrew word zond and the Greek word porna as describing common harlots.

Coffman adds that evil persons were often converted to the way of the Lord. Jesus said to the Pharisees that,

Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

And the apostle Paul spoke of some persons within the church as having been of evil background.

1Co 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

1Co 6:10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

1Co 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Thus, if the name “harlot” was attached to this woman, it could have been in the same sense the Simon was known as Simon the leper. That did not mean he was still a leper after he was healed.

We leave this topic by listing three possibilities.

1. Rahab may have actually been a harlot.
2. She may have been a harlot who no longer followed that way of life.
3. She may have been only a woman who kept a place of public entertainment.

Whatever the case, Rahab was ready to cooperate with the two spies, even while she knew the nature of their mission.

Still one more question must be given attention. How did the two men manage to cross the Jordan River? There is reason to believe this was a time in which the river was swollen with rains. At it's



normal level the river averages about 100 feet in width. If the men entered the river upstream from where they wished to exit, it would have been quite possible to swim this distance. If the river was swollen at the time, this would have been much more difficult. The same could be said with respect to their return from the west bank to the east.

**JOS 2:2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country.**

We are not informed of the identity of those who told the king of Jericho that the spies had come. Neither are we told how these men gained their information. Were they able to identify the two men as Hebrews by some difference in their physical appearance, or the type of clothing they wore? Perhaps the two spies were not as secretive as they might have been and allowed the customers of Rahab to do some guesswork as to who they were. After all, the people of Jericho could hardly have been ignorant of the massive forces of Israel that were camped on the other side of the Jordan River.

**JOS 2:3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.**

Upon receiving the information that the spies had gone to the house of Rahab, the king immediately sent and commanded her to turn the men over to him. In case she did not know, these men had come to spy out the country for a possible invasion. If Rahab did not produce the men, she would be placing herself in very serious danger. Traitors are not treated kindly in any country.

**JOS 2:4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were:**

Rahab was willing to face the danger. She lied to those who came from the king and hid the spies. She claimed she did not know from where they came. If the messengers had doubted her truthfulness, they would have searched her house. They did not!

**JOS 2:5 And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.**

Rahab told a very believable story. The two men had left her house about the time when the city gate was shut. She had no idea which direction they went. Nevertheless, if the messengers left right away they might be able to catch up with them.

Was Rahab right or was she wrong in telling the lie? It is never right to lie. This woman needed to come to a more complete knowledge of right and



wrong. Men and women are to tell the truth and let God handle the consequences. God is not a liar and He does not wish for his creatures to use such tactics. Lies only bring confusion. It is the truth which makes men free.

Yes, men may suffer death for telling the truth. Is physical death the worst possible end? No! Spiritual death and separation from God in eternity is far worse.

**JOS 2:6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.**

This does not necessarily mean this was done after the king's messengers left, and that the men were hidden in the house while they were there. The language allows for them to have been hidden even before the king's messengers arrived.

The stalks of flax which were laid out on the flat roof of the building are an indication that it was harvest time. They could also provide evidence that Rahab was a worker in linen, and did not depend upon prostitution for an income. The amount of flax was sufficient that the two men could be hidden without much difficulty.

**JOS 2:7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.**

There were places on the river where it could be forded. The king's men knew of these places and

set out to catch up with the spies. They were on a mission impossible. The gate of the city of Jericho was closed as soon as the king's men had departed. This meant that the two spies were trapped within the city.

**JOS 2:8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;**

It appears that the spies intended to sleep on the roof until later in the night. Rahab came to them on the roof before they went to bed.

**JOS 2:9 And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.**

Rahab was in an excellent position to hear of the latest news as she would have had contact with numerous persons from day to day. That was hardly necessary. Everyone in the land had heard of these people who had approached their land from the other side of the Jordan. They were intimidated by the things which they had heard.

**JOS 2:10 For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.**

Like the rest, Rahab had heard of that which had taken place forty years before this. The Lord had cause the water of the Red Sea to part and allow these people to cross and escape from Pharaoh's army. She had heard about their victories over the two kings, Og and Sihon. If the forces of those two kings had been utterly destroyed there was good reason to believe Jericho could be taken.

**JOS 2:11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.**

What a confession this was! Not only was Rahab afraid of the power of Jehovah; every citizen of Jericho, and the land around it echoed her fear. This was not a local god of the trees or of the river. This was a universal God who is omnipresent. There was no way to leave His all searching eye and all powerful hand.

**JOS 2:12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:**

The woman did not ask for a written contract between herself and the spies. She was impressed enough with the Lord that if the men would swear



by His name, she would trust them. She wished to protect her family. She wanted some visible sign that this would be the case.

**JOS 2:13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.**

The men did not offer her any such token. They did give her their word that her mother and father, brothers and sisters would not be killed. It is interesting that Rahab had this kind of concern for her family. Professional prostitutes are not known for their loyalty to their kinfolk.

**JOS 2:14 And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.**

Take note that the spies did not say “if” the Lord gives us the land. They said “when” the Lord has given us the land. This seems to have been convincing to her. She trusted them to keep their promise and protect she and her family. Meanwhile, she would not betray them.

**JOS 2:15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.**



Two different words are used to describe the rope by which she allowed them to descend from her window above the wall to the ground below. The wall of the city must have served as a foundation for her house. All she had to do was throw the rope out through the window and let them go down hand over hand. Verse eighteen calls this rope a thread. If it was sturdy enough to hold the weight of a man, it would certainly have been better termed a cord, as it is in this verse, or a rope.

**JOS 2:16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.**

She suggested that rather than to head immediately for the Jordan, they should move into the mountains on her side, and then after three days they would be safe to return to the east side. By that time those who were searching for them would have given up the search.

**JOS 2:17 And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.**

The men were grateful for her assistance and renewed their promise to save Rahab and her family when the city was taken. It was not just a promise, it was a vow before the Lord.

**JOS 2:18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.**

It would be difficult to miss a red rope hanging in the window of her house. When that rope was seen, everyone in that house would be safe from destruction. It was important that no one venture out of the house. If they did, they would forfeit their lives.

**JOS 2:19 And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.**

This entire situation is reminiscent of the red blood which was placed on the pillars and the doorposts of the Israelites when the angel of death passed through Egypt at the time of the death of the firstborn.

**JOS 2:20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.**

If Rahab informed anyone other than her own family of the arrangements, the agreement would be  
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broken. The two men would not be held responsible for the deaths which would result.

**JOS 2:21 And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.**

The two men left her house by way of the scarlet rope. They went their way and she fastened the cord where it could be easily seen in her window. Would the word of a prostitute be worth anything at all? Yes, it certainly would in this case. She was scared to death. She could be expected to keep her word. If she was not a prostitute, but was an inn keeper, it would be even more trustworthy.

**JOS 2:22 And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not.**

Everything worked out successfully for the two. After the three days had passed the king's messengers gave up the search. It was safe for the spies to recross the Jordan and give their report.

**JOS 2:23 So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them:**

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Whatever means was used to cross the Jordan from east to west was used to make the return crossing. Through their information Joshua would be able to make decisions as to how the conquest of the land would be continued. He was not making up his mind whether to undertake the invasion. He was deciding what tactics to use during it.

**JOS 2:24 And they said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.**

What a reversal of the report which was given forty years earlier! At that time the hearts of ten of the twelve spies had fainted at the sight of the giants in the land of Canaan. This time it was the hearts of the inhabitants of the land which were faint. When a foe is fearful, the tactics used will be somewhat different than they would be if there was no fear.



## *Chapter 3*

The present chapter discusses the Lord's support of Joshua as the successor to Moses. Under Moses leadership the people are able to pass across the dry bed of the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan.

**JOS 3:1 And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.**

The spies had reported during the night after they returned from their mission to the city of Jericho. Thus Moses possessed the information that the people of the land were in a state of fear. They remembered that Israel had crossed the Red Sea some forty years before. It was no greater feat to cross the Jordan.

Some writers explain the lack of concentration of Canaanite armed forces by citing the false security the people would have felt because of the swollen river at that particular time. It is far more likely that the small nations in Canaan were so disunited that there was no possibility of cooperation. The spies had found great concern among the people. They definitely did not feel secure.



Shittim was some five to eight miles from the river. Joshua assembled the people early in the morning and the people moved to the edge of the river. They were to wait there until the command was given to move. We can imagine what might have been going through their minds. How would this mass of people manage to pass through the high waters of the Jordan? If they did pass over, what would take place on the other side? They trusted Jehovah, but would have been unable to foresee how He would guide and protect them.

**JOS 3:2 And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;**

**JOS 3:3 And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.**

They waited patiently for three days before receiving further instructions. At that point the leaders of the people revealed the details of the plan. The ark of the covenant was to be carried before them. The Levite priests would carry it and the people were to follow after it.

The ark of the covenant was the visible evidence of the presence of their invisible God. Up to this time the pillar of fire and the cloud had led the way. Now we no longer hear of the pillar and the cloud. The ark itself, carried by the priests was to point the way.



**JOS 3:4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.**

Previously the tribes had assigned positions on all sides of the ark. Some of the tribes preceded it. Some were on one side, some on the other, and others followed after it. This was no longer true. The ark would lead the way and the people were to maintain a space of two thousand cubits, which would be three thousand feet, or about three fifths of a mile.

This would allow the ark to be seen by more of the people, making it possible to more easily follow it. It also indicated the respect God intended the people to have for the symbol of His presence.

We might add that the crossing of the Jordan is often connected with the crossing of mankind from life here through death into the unknown hereafter. It is comforting to think of the promise of the Lord that He will accompany the faithful through this one time journey.

**JOS 3:5 And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.**

Sanctification is a process of setting something apart for holy purposes. When God caused Joshua to command the people to sanctify themselves, He was insisting that they dedicate themselves wholly to the task at hand. All other goals and purposes were to

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become insignificant in comparison to the entry into Canaan. Corrupt hearts are not the environment in which God's wonders flourish.

**JOS 3:6 And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.**

The priests who bore the ark were to take the lead. Christians are a royal priesthood. They should take their responsibilities extremely seriously. If others are to find a holy life, those who are already living such a life must leave the proper footsteps. This especially true of those who preach the gospel and those who are appointed to the eldership.

**JOS 3:7 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.**

People must have confidence in their leaders. They must know the leaders are capable of guiding. They must also know the leaders have their welfare at heart.

I would like to relay an experience which I think demonstrates the above point. I spent many years in the classroom teaching science. One of the best principals I worked for walked into the back door of my classroom while I was turned around to the



chalkboard. He could walk as quietly as a cat. As he came up between two rows of desks, one student handed another a note across the aisle. It did not reach it's intended destination. The principal just reached out and took it from the hand of the boy who had expected his friend across the aisle to take it. The principal did not say a word to either the student or to myself. He did not even read the note. He walked to the front of the room and dropped it in the waste basket. This man was loved by almost every student and teacher in the school.

The Lord was preparing to show His approval of Joshua as a replacement for His servant Moses. The things that would happen that day would enable Joshua to be respected.

**JOS 3:8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.**

Joshua was to command the priest who bore the ark to move out ahead of the congregation, even to the very edge of the river. Note that Joshua told the priests they were to stand still in the Jordan. That was precisely what they would do in just a short time.

**JOS 3:9 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.**

As Moses had done before him, Joshua made certain the people understood the instructions which

were about to be given originated from the Lord and not from him. Again we need to make the point that preachers, elders and Bible school teachers should follow that example. Human wisdom must take second place to the Word of God.

**JOS 3:10 And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.**

That which was about to take place would prove without a doubt that Jehovah's wisdom and power were with them. They need not worry that defeat would come upon them. God would see that every foe was conquered. All seven of the nations of the land of Canaan would be driven out.

These seven nations are listed. This number is not consistent in every list of the nations of Canaan. Sometimes the number is six and sometimes even as low as five. There are never more than seven in the list. The difference in number may be a result of changes in the political status of groups of people over a period of years.

**JOS 3:11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.**

**JOS 3:12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.**



The ark was to move out before the people. The ark was to pass into the river, not across it. Each tribe was to appoint one man as a representative of that tribe. We are not informed as to the responsibilities of these twelve just yet.

**JOS 3:13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.**

Joshua made a remarkable prediction. There was no possibility that he could have made such a prediction through his own intellectual abilities. If his prediction proved true, God must be with him. He deserved to serve as the replacement of Moses.

Just as soon as the feet of the priests who bore the ark touched the edge of the water of the Jordan, the water above that point would cease to flow downward. The water below that point would continue to flow and would leave the bed of the river dry.

**JOS 3:14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;**

**JOS 3:15 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)**

Events took place just as Joshua had predicted. The ark was borne before the people. When the feet of the priests who carried the ark touched the very edge of the water, a miracle occurred.

We have read strange remarks about the overflowing of the Jordan river. Verse fifteen tells us the river overflowed it's banks at the time of harvest. Commentators remark that this overflow was due to the melting of the snow at higher altitudes as spring appeared. This does not seem to be good logic. Harvests are taken in autumn, after the hot summer weather has begun to chill.

It is said that the harvest took place in the spring. Now we realize that in the southern hemisphere, the seasons are reversed from those in the northern hemisphere, but even so harvests do not come in the spring. It seems best simply to say the Jordan was overflowing at the time of harvest, just as the verse states. It says nothing about it being spring.

**JOS 3:16 That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.**

It would certainly not be a natural condition for water to congeal and cease flowing at one point and just below that point continue to flow just as it had



been before. It seems that God caused the location of the ark to act as an invisible dam which held the waters above that point from flowing. Moses could not have known such a thing would happen without having received information from the divine Mind.

No one knows the location of the city of Adam. All kinds of suppositions are presented without solid foundation. Let us simply admit we do not know. The people, however, passed over the river close by the city of Jericho on the west side of the Jordan.

**JOS 3:17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.**

The word “dry” is used. Was there not even mud in the bed of the river? If God could cause the water above the location of the ark to cease flowing, He could also see that the river bed was dry.

The passing of the people was no small event. We are talking about over a million individuals. It would take some time for a small column of people to cross. It is presumed that the column of people reached a mile or more up and down the river bed. To say they passed “clean over” is to say the entire assembly left the east side and moved across the river to the land of Canaan on the west side. The Lord was most certainly with them!





## *Chapter 4*

This chapter is centered on the crossing of Israel over the Jordan River, and the setting up of the memorials to that fact. There are several types of things found in the church of the New Testament.

**JOS 4:1 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,**

The divine aid which made possible the crossing of the river was not to be forgotten. God gave instructions to Joshua. Joshua then passed these instructions on to the people. The people then willingly followed the will of Jehovah. The events of that time have thus been made available to men and women of every generation until the end of time.

**JOS 4:2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,**

These twelve men had been selected previously, as recorded in chapter three. The selection of one man from each of the twelve tribes made certain each of those tribes was represented in the actions to come. We cannot but see the similarity in the twelve chosen here and the twelve Jesus chose as apostles.



**JOS 4:3 And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.**

As the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant touched the edge of the river, Those waters above that point had ceased to flow downward. The bed of the river had become dry enough that the people could cross. The twelve men were each to select a stone from the river bed and carry the stones to the west side of the river. They were to be left at the place where the people spent the night after making the crossing.

**JOS 4:4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:**

**JOS 4:5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:**

The stones which the twelve were to carry were of such size that they could be carried upon the shoulder of man. Before the ark was moved from the midst of the river, these stones were to be put in place on the west shore.

**JOS 4:6 That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?**

This was not just a sign to the immediate children of the Israelites. It was a memorial to be passed on through the minds of God's people forever. Although the stones might not remain in place until the end of time, their children would ask questions about them. Then those children's descendants would pass on the history of the crossing as long as time should last.

The answers to our children's questions about religious matters should receive careful answers. When our children ask why we baptize persons, the parent should quickly seize the opportunity for teaching about the command of Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all the world, baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When the children ask about the Lord's Supper, they are old enough to hear an explanation of Jesus death upon the cross as it relates to the remission of sins.

**JOS 4:7 Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.**



Take note of the word “forever” here. God intended for Jewish children to this present day to hear of His aid to His people in entering the land of Canaan. He also intended that this information be passed on to every nation in every age.

**JOS 4:8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.**

God’s command was observed. The twelve stones were taken from the river bed and carried to Gilgal, where the encampment was set up within Canaan.

Any who are suspicious of the truthfulness of the Bible should carefully examine the evidence for such memorials. The existence of records from the time the memorial was set up until hundreds of years later is one of the finest evidences of the dependability of Biblical statements. For example, Jesus did die on the cross of Calvary. The observing of the Lord’s Supper in every generation is undeniable evidence of that event.

**JOS 4:9 And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of**



**the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.**

There is discussion as to whether the stones mentioned in this verse are the same as those of the previous verses. There should be no doubt. These were another twelve stones. The first twelve were set up on the west side of the river. These were set up in the midst of the river.

The objection that these stones could hardly serve as a memorial if they were covered by the muddy water of the Jordan is not valid. The water of the Jordan recedes to a level where twelve large stones piled upon one another could be seen at certain seasons of the year. These were not pebbles which could be washed away by swirling water. They were large enough that they were to be carried on the shoulder.

Also the record says one set of twelve were set up at Gilgal. The other twelve were positioned in the midst of the river. Do we believe the divine record, or not?

**JOS 4:10 For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hasted and passed over.**

If the people of Israel had been as eager to keep all of God's commands later on, there would have far less grief for them. Tragically, they lost their

fervor and turned to idols.

There was good reason to hasten. They had no idea just how long the water would be held back. If they procrastinated, they could be overwhelmed and drowned as the waters resumed their normal flow. Just so, Christians must work while it is yet day. The night cometh when no man can work. When we know what God requires to begin the Christian journey, we must not postpone our obedience. When we are allowed three score and ten, or by reason of strength four score years, we must take full advantage of every moment.

How long would it take for two million persons to cross the river? Let us explore it for a moment. If one hundred persons were marching side by side, we would have a column about three hundred feet in width; about the distance from goal line to goal line on a football field. If each row of persons was followed by another row five feet behind them, one thousand persons would extend the length of the marching column by fifty feet. One million is one thousand thousand. One million persons would require an area of fifty thousand feet. Two million persons would require one hundred thousand feet. There are just over five thousand feet in a mile. Dividing one hundred thousand by five thousand, we arrive at a figure of twenty miles.

If the marching column were to travel at a rate of two miles per hour, it would then require ten hours for the entire group to pass from one side of the river bed to the other. It would be possible for two million persons to cross in one day if the river bed was dry for three hundred feet and the people marched at two miles per hour.



**JOS 4:11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.**

Here is another reason why the people would have made haste to cross. The priests who were carrying the ark must wait until the entire congregation had passed. They would not have wished to be at the end of the column when the water resumed it's flow.

As soon as the entire congregation was safely on the west side of the river, the priests moved the ark and the river followed it's regular path.

**JOS 4:12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:**

The two and one half tribes who had been given permission to take possession of their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan kept their promise to go over with the others and help in the conquest of the land. They are said to have passed over "before" the children of Israel. We must not make too much of this word. It may not mean that they went ahead of the rest. "Before" may only mean that they were where the rest could see they intended to join the rest in the upcoming struggles.

**JOS 4:13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle,**



**to the plains of Jericho.**

As we pointed out before, this forty thousand was not the entire force of men in the two and one half tribes. Some clearly remained to protect the women and children.

**JOS 4:14 On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.**

The children of Israel could hardly doubt that God with Joshua. As a result of the success in the crossing of the Jordan, it was realized that no human could have brought about the miraculous events which took place. They had a leader who was empowered from the same source Moses had drawn from. Even the name “Joshua” spoke of his leadership. Both the name “Jesus” and the name “Joshua” mean saviour.

**JOS 4:15 And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,**

**JOS 4:16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.**

**JOS 4:17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.**

The same chain of command was invoked again. God spoke to Joshua. Joshua spoke to the people.

The people obeyed. The priests moved from the river bed to the west bank and the river flowed on.

**JOS 4:18** And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

**JOS 4:19** And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

This was the tenth day of the first Jewish month. Israel had celebrated the Passover almost forty years before on the fifteenth day of the first month. They passed out of the wilderness and into Canaan just five days before the conclusion of a forty year period. This gave them just a few days before they would celebrate the Passover feast.

**JOS 4:20** And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

The name "Gilgal" became very important in the history of Israel. Although the location of the Gilgal here may have been a short distance from the later city of Gilgal, it behooves us to call the reader's mind to the following facts.

1. It was at Gilgal that Israel spent the first night in Canaan.

2. It was at Gilgal that the male children who had been born in the wilderness were circumcised.

3. Gilgal was the headquarters for Joshua as Israel's soldiers returned from various excursions.

4. It was at Gilgal that Israel observed the first Passover in the land.

5. It was at Gilgal that the manna ceased to fall.

6. It was at Gilgal that the ark rested until it was later moved to Shiloh.

**JOS 4:21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?**

**JOS 4:22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.**

**JOS 4:23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:**

**JOS 4:24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.**

These last four verses lead some of the writers to conclude there was but one set of twelve stones.

The same things seem to be said of the stones placed on the west side of the Jordan River as were said of those set up in the midst of the river. This present writer believes there were two sets. The important thing to remember is that God wanted all the people of the earth to know of His miracles in support of His people as they moved toward their inheritance!



## *Chapter 5*

This chapter records the circumcision which took place just after crossing into Canaan, the ceasing of the manna, and an appearance of the Messenger of the Lord.

**JOS 5:1 And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.**

In general, the Amorites were a tribe that lived in the highlands of Canaan. The name Canaanites is used to include different persons from one time to another. In the present case, it refers to the inhabitants of Canaan who dwelt in the lowlands closer to the Mediterranean Sea.

Word must have passed pretty rapidly that the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan on dry land, even though it was a time when the river was swollen from rain. This was an indication of the same type of help that allowed them to cross the Red Sea when they escaped from Egypt. This was help from a higher source than man. The Israelites God must be very wise and very powerful. Who could stand against such power? The people of the land



lost the spirit for fighting.

The use of the word “we” in this verse is proof that the writer of the book of Joshua was an active member of the army of Israel. Joshua fits the picture.

**JOS 5:2 At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.**

A surprising command came to Joshua from Jehovah. He was to make sharp knives and circumcise the men of Israel for the second time. It is surprising because it would seriously hinder the Israelite army if an attack was launched by the Amorites and Canaanites. A human general would not have issued such an order.

But why is this said to be the second circumcision? It is not because any man was to undergo a second operation. The first general circumcision of the male Israelites had taken place at the time Israel crossed the Red Sea and began their journey through the wilderness.

Circumcision had obviously been neglected during those forty years of wandering. Circumcision was the sign that these men were to become the leaders of the families of God’s chosen people. The command had been given in the time of Abraham. During the four hundred thirty years of Egyptian slavery, it had not been continued. Then after leaving Egypt it had been done upon leaving, and then apparently



been discontinued. God commanded that the rite of circumcision be reinstated as a sign of the willingness to keep the covenant between Himself and His people.

**JOS 5:3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.**

Joshua did not complain and charge God with poor foresight. At this time, God's commands were very highly respected. If He could make the crossing of the Jordan possible, as He had, He could also defeat the Amorites and Canaanites if they attacked.

This present writer finds the reference to the "hill of the foreskin" as a mound of dirt which was built up over the buried foreskins of the circumcised men, to be somewhat ridiculous. Any man or boy, or any mother for that matter, should know that the hill of the foreskin is the slight ridge of the male sex organ at the point where the foreskin is severed when circumcision take place. It could be that some ridge of ground where the foreskins were buried later became known as the "Hill of the Foreskin", but that is not the meaning of the term used here.

**JOS 5:4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.**

**JOS 5:5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they**

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**came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.**

The important point here is not some quibble as to whether those males who were not old enough to fight at the time Israel exited from Egypt were or were not circumcised. The point being made is that many males needed to be circumcised because this had not been done during the wilderness wandering. God expected it to be done now, as they entered the promised land.

**JOS 5:6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.**

The men who had refused to enter Canaan after the spies came back with the evil report had broken the covenant and circumcision would have been of no advantage to them. They had proven they were not going to live in subjection to Jehovah. They were all allowed to die before Joshua led the younger generation into the land.

**JOS 5:7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised:**

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**for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.**

**JOS 5:8 And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.**

The circumcision of an eight day old infant is one thing. The circumcision of a mature man is another. It is most interesting that God arranged it such that the miracle of crossing the Jordan threw fear into the hearts of the Amorites and Canaanites to the extent that they were afraid to attack during the days in which the men recovered from the surgery.

**JOS 5:9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.**

What did the Lord roll away when He declared He had rolled the “reproach of Egypt” from off them? The word Gilgal means “circle of stones.” It should not be difficult for the reader to see the connection between circumcision and a circle made with stones.

Israel had lived under the disgrace of slavery in Egypt for several centuries. They did not completely escape from that indignity until they had crossed the Red Sea, made their way through the great and terrible wilderness, crossed into Canaan and renewed the covenant with Jehovah. Gilgal was a place to be remembered in the days to come.



**JOS 5:10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.**

The fourteenth day of the first month of the year was assigned by Jehovah as the time of the passover. Israel had not only passed over the Red Sea forty years earlier when the angel of the Lord destroyed the firstborn of the Egyptians, but they had now passed over the Jordan and were encamped in the land of promise.

**JOS 5:11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.**

After eating the manna for some time in the wilderness, the people had murmured and complained. They longed to go back to the leeks and cucumbers they had eaten in Egypt. Now their steady diet of manna was to come to an end. They began to eat from the food grown in the land of Canaan. Personally I believe the manna would be preferable to me over parched corn and unleavened cakes.

**JOS 5:12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit**

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**of the land of Canaan that year.**

Here is one of the reasons why they switched from eating manna to eating the parched corn and unleavened cakes. The manna ceased to fall the day after their feet rested in the land of Canaan. The people of the land had retreated and left their fields untended. There was a sufficient supply of food without the manna.

Christians are wandering through a wilderness today. God has supplied food from heaven in the form of the inspired truths found in the Bible. There will come a time when the faithful will be told to enter into the joy of heaven. The truths of the Bible may well be delivered in a different way when that time arrives.

**JOS 5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?**

Joshua was the Lord's chosen leader of Israel. The first city encountered after entering the land was Jericho. A good leader attempts to look ahead and survey the conditions before involving those whom he leads. Joshua was near Jericho. He may have been praying. He may have been wondering just how the city was to be taken.

As he pondered, he raised up his head and looked.



A person had appeared near to him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua knew the Lord was with him. He was not afraid. He did need to know whether the person was a friend or a foe. Would he fight for Israel, or against it?

**JOS 5:14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?**

The person identified himself as the captain of the host of the Lord. He was neither a part of the Israelites nor of the Canaanites. He was in charge of God's spiritual army. An angelic host would be supporting the efforts of Israel against the Amorites and Canaanites. This person was the commander of that host.

Joshua was so much impressed that he fell flat on his face and worshipped the Captain of the host. He recognized this person as his Lord. Joshua was but a servant.

Was this person Jesus Christ in a visible form previous to His birth as a Babe in Bethlehem? It seems probable. Jesus is called the King of kings and Lord of lords. Angels did not encourage men to worship them. This person saw himself as being worthy of worship.

**JOS 5:15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off**

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**thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.**

Why should one piece of ground be more holy than another? Is God not the Creator of every atom in the universe? In the present case, the ground was made holy because the figure before whom Joshua bowed down was one of the three persons making up the triune Godhead.

Joshua was expected to show his respect for God by removing his shoes from his feet. He did so. It was as if Joshua was saying, "Speak Lord, thy servant heareth."



## *Chapter 6*

The hindrances caused by the circumcision of the male population of Israel had been eliminated through the healing process.

Jericho was just ahead. By taking Jericho and then moving across the land of Canaan, the people of the land could be divided into two sections. Each section of the land could then be taken separately. This procedure is well known by military forces of later days.

This chapter will discuss the conquest of the city of Jericho. The Lord gives the instructions. Israel follows the instructions. The city is taken and Israel is warned not to take any of the spoils for their personal advantage.

**JOS 6:1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.**

Yes, Jericho was shut up, lock, stock and barrel. The citizens of the city had gone into a state of panic when it became apparent the Israel had the benefit of supernatural help. If the invaders could cross the swollen waters of the Jordan, what else could they accomplish? It seemed that the safest thing was to get everyone inside the walls of the city and shut the gate. No one was open the gate for any reason.

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No one was to leave. No one was to enter.

Ordinarily this would have made the city secure from the assault of enemy forces. As the spies had reported some thirty-eight years before, the cities were protected by impassible walls. With a sufficient food supply laid up, there would have been little reason to fear an enemy for a lengthy time.

But this was not an ordinary situation. Israel knew it, and the inhabitants of Jericho also knew it.

**JOS 6:2 And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.**

The Lord who speaks here is almost certainly the person who introduced Himself as the Captain of the Lord's host in the last chapter. He spoke to Joshua in the past tense. He had already given Jericho into the hand of Joshua and his forces. The city, it's king and it's entire army was to be helpless before God's people. The impressive walls of the city were no major obstacle.

**JOS 6:3 And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.**

To compass the city was to march around it. Israel's forces were to march around the city one time each day for six days.

Let us see if we can imagine what was going on  
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in the minds of the watchers on the wall. As they saw the army of Israel moving toward the walls, they must have wondered what would take place. Would they be able to penetrate the walls and enter the city as they had crossed the Jordan?

Then, as they saw Israel marching around the city instead of attacking it, they must have been somewhat relieved. Perhaps they were safe after all. By the end of six days they must have felt the Israeli forces were unable to plan a successful offense.

We may have a false view of the size of this city of Jericho. It is spoken of a number of times in the scriptures. We are led to think of it's size as being comparable to some of our medium sized cities in other parts of the world. Those familiar with the historical records report that the distance around the entire city may have been less than a mile.

**JOS 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.**

Seven is a number of completeness. Seven of the priestly tribe were to precede the ark of the covenant in marching around Jericho. The priests were to blow on the trumpets. Some believe the priests were constantly blowing the trumpets. Others think they blew them only upon the completion of the last circle on the seventh day. Compare this verse with verse thirteen of this chapter.



There is disagreement also as to the nature of the trumpets. The King James Version calls them ram's horns. Ram's horns were sometimes used as trumpets at that time. However, the word which is translated as ram's horns here is used in other places to describe metal instruments. This is not a critical issue.

By the time the watchers on the walls of the city saw the Israeli forces moving around the city the first time on the seventh day, they no doubt expected them to return to their own camp. It must have been somewhat of a surprise to see them going around the second time. By the time the seventh circle around the city had been concluded, the watchers must have wondered just what was taking place. They were very soon to find out!

**JOS 6:5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.**

The captain of the Lord's host predicted that when the trumpets blew, after the seventh cycle on the seventh day, and when the people shouted with a great shout, the wall of the city would fall flat, allowing every man of the Israeli forces to march straight into the city. We are not told whether or not the wall fell flat on every side of the city. It is



even believed by some that the walls sunk into the ground making the entry of the Israeli soldiers no more difficult than walking over level ground.

If the house of Rahab was located on the top of the wall, as might be concluded from the fact that she was able to lower the spies to the ground by a scarlet cord passed out of her window, we might assume either that portion of the wall remained intact, or those who see the wall as sinking into the ground are correct.

**JOS 6:6 And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them, Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.**

Joshua did not hesitate to put the commands of the captain of the Lord's hosts into effect. He would have had extreme difficulty in understanding why this procedure would be effective. But ours is not to reason why. If the Lord speaks, His people are to obey.

**JOS 6:7 And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD.**

**JOS 6:8 And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the LORD, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.**

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**JOS 6:9 And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rereward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.**

The identity of the “rereward” is of interest. This verse seems to say the armed forces went ahead of the ark. This would mean that the rereward consisted of some who were unarmed.

**JOS 6:10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.**

What a strange sight this must have been. Thousands of persons were marching around the city without making any noise. No word was being spoken. For seven days this continued. Some people have a difficult time maintaining silence for thirty minutes during a sermon in these latter days.

Sometimes we hear of an eerie silence. This certainly would have been just that to the anxious watchers within the city of Jericho.

**JOS 6:11 So the ark of the LORD compassed the city, going about it once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.**

Each evening for the first six days Israel went back to their own encampment to spend the night.



**JOS 6:12** And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

**JOS 6:13** And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

As was suggested in the third verse of the chapter, this verse should be compared with that one.

**JOS 6:14** And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days.

**JOS 6:15** And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

The seventh day was to be a bit different from the first six. There were to be seven cycles of march around the city on this day. It would be necessary to rise earlier in the morning to accomplish this.

**JOS 6:16** And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.

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**JOS 6:17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.**

It was not through human effort that the city had been taken. The Lord have given it to them.

The people were not to take anything in the way of spoils when they entered the city. As far as human use, everything in the city was forbidden. Even the people of Jericho were under the ban.

There was one exception. Rahab the harlot, or innkeeper, was to be left alive. Because of her help in hiding the two spies, she was immune to the destruction which was to be visited on all else. She was also granted the security of those whom she loved and who had been granted their lives if they remained in her house. Regardless of what her past might have been, she was found on the Lord's side on this occasion. That is always the safest place to be.

**JOS 6:18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.**

Compare the instruction in this verse with that which was given when Israel left Egypt. At that time they were told to borrow precious things from the Egyptians and take those things with them

when they left. At that time they had earned that which they took with them during those long years of slavery. This time it was quite different.

**JOS 6:19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.**

These items were accursed as far as Israel was concerned, but those same items were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord as first fruits of the entry into the promised land.

**JOS 6:20 So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.**

Was what took place here a miracle, or was it a natural occurrence which just happened to fall in line with the will of the Lord concerning victory over the Canaanites? I flatly declare it to be a miracle. I am very much aware of the ability of certain singers to shatter a drinking glass by singing a high pitched note. I have also noticed my living room windows vibrating when automobiles pass by playing very loud music. But, what human general would give such instructions for breaking into a walled city? Even if God knew the sound of the shouting and the blowing of the trumpets would set off earth tremors



or sympathetic vibrations in the walls of Jericho, no human would have known of such circumstances.

Only the intelligence of Jehovah could have brought about the falling of the walls. The city was theirs. God gave it to them.

**JOS 6:21 And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.**

We have met such astounding statements before this. God destroyed men, women and children at the time of the flood. Again here He commanded Israel to do the same to the corrupt persons of Jericho. Both humans and animals were to be slaughtered.

There comes a time when God gives up that which is determined to defy Him. He is a merciful God. He forgives over and over again. But not forever. When, in His all knowing mind, He realizes there is no hope for a change of attitude, He destroys that which is beyond redemption. Those of the city of Jericho fit that mold.

**JOS 6:22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.**

**JOS 6:23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all**

**her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.**

The two spies who had been sheltered and protected by Rahab were to search out Rahab and those whom she had brought into her house. They had promised her protection. God honored their promise. She and hers were brought out of the city and escaped destruction.

From later Biblical records, it seems certain that Rahab became a servant of the Lord and married an Israelite. She is listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ as the wife of Salmon. (See Matthew 1:1-6.)

Mat 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Mat 1:2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

Mat 1:3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

Mat 1:4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

Mat 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of **Rachab**; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

**JOS 6:24 And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD.**

The city of Jericho was utterly destroyed. The valuable metals which were found there were confiscated and taken to the treasury of God.

There was a sad exception to the information reported in this verse. We shall find later that Achan fell to temptation and took of the accursed spoils.

**JOS 6:25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.**

The service of the Lord is always repaid. It may not be evident at the time, as it was here. Nevertheless, such service does not go unnoticed.

**JOS 6:26 And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.**

Jericho was never to be rebuilt. If someone was brash enough to do so, he would find the effort very expensive. Both he and his children would suffer miserably. It is true that Jericho was rebuilt. It plays a part in the history of the Saviour Himself. The passage does not say it will never be rebuilt. It only pronounces a curse upon the one who is responsible for such rebuilding.



**JOS 6:27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.**

Does the pronoun “his” refer to the fame of the Lord, or the fame of Joshua? It seems quite logical to conclude that both Jehovah and His servant Joshua were recognized throughout the entire land of Canaan.



## *Chapter 7*

Chapters seven and eight are so tightly related that they might well be united as one. This chapter tells of the sin of Achan and the resulting defeat of Israel at Ai. Chapter eight follows with a victory over Ai when the sin has been removed from the camp.

**JOS 7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.**

There are several chapters in the Holy Scriptures which begin with the word “but.” In every case the word introduces a contrast with what has gone just before. So it is this time.

Everything had gone right in the victory over Jericho. God was with Israel and it was made clear that with divine help nothing would be able to block the taking of the land.

The joy was not to continue. God had warned the people that the spoils from the city of Jericho were to be devoted to Him. If anyone took anything for personal use it would bring a curse upon the entire nation. Achan did just that. He ignored the warning and in a sense “robbed God.” We should note that no one ever steals from God. Robbery differs from



stealing in that robbery is committed in sight of the victim. God saw the sin of Achan. It was robbery.

Several generations of the genealogy of Achan are given. Some are omitted, but enough is given to assure us Jehovah knew exactly who had committed the transgression against His will. God's anger toward this contamination of the entire camp was intense. He had strictly warned that any such sin would reflect upon the entire nation.

**JOS 7:2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.**

We move forward now to the tragic consequences of Achan's sin. Just as Joshua had sent spies into Jericho, he now sent spies to Ai. This would seem appropriate. God did not command it, but if He approved of it before, He would be expected to approve it again.

The location of Ai has not been discovered by present day archeologists. One reason which has been suggested for this fact is that Ai may have been but a military outpost for the city of Bethel. If that were true, we would not expect to find remains of building foundations and other cultural items.

The difficulty with this suggestion is that the next chapter will tell us of 12,000 persons who were taken shortly after this when the sin had been removed from the camp.



It may be that the two spies were overconfident because of the ease with which Jericho had fallen. Twelve thousand people could put up sizable resistance. If things were as they had been before, with God fighting on the side of Israel, the result would have been the same as it was at Jericho. Things were not the same.

**JOS 7:3 And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.**

The two spies concluded that it would not be necessary to send the entire army of Israel up against Ai. Just two or three thousand of the 601,000 were all that would be needed. Compared with the larger city of Jericho which had been defeated so handily, Ai should be taken with ease.

**JOS 7:4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.**

The three thousand men were in for a terrible shock. Rather than gaining an easy victory, they were overcome by those of Ai and fled for their lives. The words “fled before” could have been translated as “turned their necks toward them.”

**JOS 7:5 And the men of Ai smote of them**

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**about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.**

There is no record of a single death among the Israelites during the victory over Jericho. This time thirty-six men lost their lives. Not only did the gate of Ai not come tumbling down. The forces inside the gate came out and chased the three thousand of Israel for some distance.

What a shock this was! How could things have been so different? The people of Israel became just as fearful as their enemies at Jericho had been in the previous battle.

**JOS 7:6 And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.**

In particular, Joshua was grief stricken. The presence of the Lord among the people was associated with the ark of the covenant which was still in their midst. Joshua fell face downward on the ground. The elders of the people joined him. They remained in this condition until the end of the day. They threw dust upon their heads as a demonstration of their helplessness.

**JOS 7:7 And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD,**



**wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to GOD we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!**

Joshua prayed most earnestly. Had the Lord really made it possible for the people to pass through the waters of the Jordan River, and then forsaken them that they might all be destroyed? This sounds very much like the statement of the people long before this after they had crossed the Red Sea.

Exo 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

**JOS 7:8 O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!**

**JOS 7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?**

Joshua was not telling the Lord anything He did not already know. If Ai had been able to turn back the forces of Israel, certainly the word would spread quickly and the Canaanites would join forces and cut off the existence of the entire nation. What would happen then to the great name of Jehovah?

Was God truly willing to permit His name to be disgraced through the defeat of His people?

**JOS 7:10 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?**

God's reply to Joshua was abrupt. This was no time to be lying on the ground. It was a time for action.

**JOS 7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.**

The Lord did not point out Achan as an individual. He repeated what He had said before. The entire nation was defiled. Someone among them had taken of the spoils of Jericho and brought a curse upon all of them. That which had been taken was hidden among their own possessions. They had defied God.

**JOS 7:12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.**



The Lord pointed out that this was the reason for their defeat. They could not stand before the enemy because of the curse. He had not been with them because they had chosen to defy Him. They could not defeat the men of Ai without His assistance.

It is not unlikely that the fear and panic which had come upon the Israelites was partly due to God having instilled it in their hearts. He had been able to bring about such fear in their enemies. Why could He not do the same with them?

**JOS 7:13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.**

Sanctification is the process of setting apart for a holy purpose. There was disease in the camp which threatened the very life of the entire nation. Diagnosis and possible surgery must be utilized. There would be no success until the cancer was removed.

**JOS 7:14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the LORD shall take**

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**shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.**

It was evening as Joshua and the elders had prayed for some time. The next morning Joshua was to start the process of searching out the person who had committed the sin. This would be done by bringing representatives of each of the tribes near to the ark. God would indicate which of these tribes included the guilty person. After the tribe was identified, the families of that tribe were to approach the ark. God would indicate which family contained the guilty one. Each household of the guilty family was to be examined, and then from the guilty household, the guilty person would be selected.

The manner in which God would indicate which tribe, family, household and individual was guilty is not revealed. However, it looks very much like the Urim and Thummim were involved. The casting of lots is also a possibility. We cannot say for certain.

**JOS 7:15 And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.**

When the guilty person was identified, he and all of his possessions were to be burnt with fire. Let us not accuse God of unmerciful conduct. God knows far better than we do just how serious any particular sin is. Our human judgment can be seriously flawed.

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God's judgment is perfect. Achan had caused the defilement of the entire camp. His sin had already proven deadly to thirty-six men.

**JOS 7:16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:**

Joshua took action quickly. Early the next morning he began the process of narrowing the tribes down to one. The tribe of Judah was the one containing the sinner. Judah was one of the most prestigious of all of the tribes.

**JOS 7:17 And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:**

**JOS 7:18 And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.**

What must have gone through the mind of Achan as this elimination process was going on? Each time a tribe or family was selected, he must have realized the finger of God was pointing right in his direction. He could have saved much anxiety by stepping up and making a confession before his name was taken. Confession of sin should not come about in this way. We should acknowledge our sin before we are forced to do so.



**JOS 7:19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.**

Joshua surprises us with his words to Achan. He even spoke with a degree of tenderness, referring to Achan as “my son.” We should do all within our power to convert the sinner, not to torture him.

It would be to the advantage of everyone for Achan to confess his guilt. The congregation would be rid of the curse. Achan would have to stand for what he had done, but his confession might well mean that God would save his soul, even if his life must be forfeited.

**JOS 7:20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:**

We are relieved to find that Achan took the advice of Joshua. He did confess his sin. He even acknowledged that he had not just sinned against his fellowman. He had sinned against God Himself. Every sin is a sin against God.

**JOS 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took**



**them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.**

The first verses of this chapter speak of the sin in general terms. Now we are to be given the details of the transgression. Achan had taken three different things.

1. A fine Babylonian garment.
2. Two hundred shekels of silver.
3. A wedge of fifty shekels of gold.

The garment which he took was not just a fine garment. It was, according to the original Hebrew, a garment fit for a king. The two hundred shekels of silver would vary in value with the times. We are left with the impression that it was worth much. The fifty shekels of gold would have rounded out quite a treasure.

Achan had gone through a process quite similar to that which Eve followed when she ate of the fruit of the tree in the Garden of Eden. He saw the precious items. He desired, or coveted them. He took them. The same process has been repeated uncounted times in the history of man. There is no man alive, who has reached the age of accountability, that has not walked down that same path at the urging of Satan.

Achan even went so far as to tell exactly where he had hidden the forbidden things. They were buried in the midst of his tent with the silver on the bottom.

**JOS 7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and**

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**they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.**

When Joshua checked out the confession, he found the items just where Achan had said they would be. They were buried in his tent.

**JOS 7:23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.**

They removed the items from the tent and brought them to Joshua who caused them to be laid out before the ark of the covenant, in the presence of Jehovah. They belonged to God. They were now offered to Him. Part of the process of sanctification was completed.

**JOS 7:24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.**

There is a problem at this point. Not only was Achan taken; his sons, his daughters and his possessions were all taken to what was from that time on to be called the “valley of Achor.” It is thought that the name Achor is related to the name Achan. The name Achor means “trouble.”



**JOS 7:25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.**

The problem which has been discussed here has to do with the supposed death of Achan's sons and daughters. God has declared that "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. (See Deut. 24:16.)

Deu 24:16 The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

But are we certain Achan's sons and daughters were not involved in the sin? These people were not living in mansions. If Achan buried the items in the midst of his tent, is it not logical that his children would have known of what he did. If so, they would have been just as guilty as he was.

Some commentators have held that the grammar does not force us to admit the death of Achan's children. That the word "them" in verse twenty-five could possibly have reference only to Achan's possessions and not to his sons and daughters.

**JOS 7:26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.**

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Three heaps of stones had been piled up in the last few days. There was one in the middle of the Jordan. There was one on the west side of the Jordan. Now there was one in the valley of Achor. The writer of the book of Joshua informs us the stones were still there in the day he was writing. This eliminates a date far later than Joshua.

## *Chapter 8*

In the last chapter we followed the agonizing defeat of Israel due to Achan's sin and the resulting defilement of the entire camp. This time we will see a reversal of fortunes. The defilement has been removed. God is again with Israel. The conquest of the promised land will continue successfully.

**JOS 8:1 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:**

This is quite a different story than the one just finished. God is encouraging Joshua. He will be with His people. It will not be just two or three thousand going up against Ai. The entire Israeli forces are to be prepared. The outcome is so certain that Jehovah speaks as if the battle had already been fought. The king of Ai, the people, the city and the land in the area belong to Joshua and those under his command.

**JOS 8:2 And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.**

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Joshua is assured that the king of Ai, and his city, will be treated in the same manner as was Jericho and her king. We take the liberty of adding the two kings on the east side of the Jordan to the list.

The livestock and any valuables found in the city are to be taken for a prey. What a contrast this is to what God told them before entering Jericho. At that time they were warned not to take spoil for themselves. Everything in Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord. If Achan had waited for until they reached Ai, he could have taken possession of anything he could lay his hands on. Instead, he died for his disobedience.

**JOS 8:3 So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour, and sent them away by night.**

Joshua's heart could have been filled with fear after his experience in attacking Ai the first time. That attack had been a horrifying defeat. He had to have perfect confidence now in the ability and willingness of the Lord to give Israel the victory in spite of what had happened before.

There is a powerful lesson here for God's children today. If God commands us to keep on in the face of severe disappointment, we must honor his word.

Joshua did as he was commanded. He assembled all of those who were qualified to fight. Out of that six hundred thousand soldiers, Joshua chose thirty



thousand of the finest soldiers and sent them into position at night when they could not be seen by the enemy.

**JOS 8:4 And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:**

Israel had come from Jericho to Ai. This would have meant they were approaching from almost directly east. These thirty thousand men were to go around the city of Ai and wait on the backside. They were to wait a short distance from the city until the time for them to enter the action.

**JOS 8:5 And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,**

Joshua would remain with the rest of the soldiers. His large force would come near to the city and make it obvious that they were going to try to take it. Joshua predicted that when the soldiers of Ai saw the forces of Israel moving toward them, they would come out of the gates of the city and try to defeat them as they had done before.

There was a vast difference this time. The sin had been removed from the camp. God was with His people. Over six hundred thousand soldiers were available rather than three thousand.

When the forces of Ai came out of the city after Israel, Joshua and his soldiers would flee from before them as though they were fearful.

**JOS 8:6 (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.**

God had not given special directions this time. Joshua was left to plan the strategy himself. He was confident that if he used his best judgment, God would cause the plan to succeed.

**JOS 8:7 Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand.**

**JOS 8:8 And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you.**

When the forces behind the city saw the soldiers of Ai leave the city and follow the fleeing Israelites, they were to move into the city. This would be successful because God would be with them.

When they had gained control of the city, they were to set a fire. God had commanded that this be done. Joshua followed the commandment. The burning of defeated cities was done more than once in the battles of ancient history. Jericho had been burned after it was captured.



**JOS 8:9 Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.**

No one is certain of the exact location of Ai. Since it has been suggested that Ai was a military outpost of Bethel, it is reasonable to believe the two were not too far distant from each other. Bethel was about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Ai is pictured in the Baker's Bible Atlas as being perhaps two or three miles nearly west of Bethel. Some have thought that thirty thousand men would have been hard to conceal if they were positioned between the two locations. Since we do not know the actual location of Ai, we would be wise to take the word of scripture that the men could move into position during the night without being detected.

**JOS 8:10 And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.**

The next morning after the thirty thousand were sent out Joshua counted his forces and, along with the elders of the tribes, he led the large force toward the city of Ai. It is not likely that Joshua stood in the forefront of the people. Commanders normally find a place where they can easily follow what is taking place without the risk of leaving their soldiers with no leadership. This is not cowardice. It is foresight.



**JOS 8:11 And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now there was a valley between them and Ai.**

As Joshua and the main forces of Israel approached the city, they pitched north of Ai such that there was a valley between Ai and themselves. This is a little surprising in that we might have expected them to lodge on the east side since that is the direction from which they had come. There must have been some undisclosed reason why they circled around to the north. The thirty thousand had secured themselves on the west side of Ai, somewhat south of Bethel.

**JOS 8:12 And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.**

There is a difficulty here. The thirty thousand were said to have been sent to the west side of the city of Ai. Now it is stated that five thousand men were told to lie in ambush on the west side of the city. Was this five thousand selected from the main force where Joshua was, or was it selected from the thirty thousand which had been sent to the west side? Were there now thirty-five thousand on the west side, or were there still thirty thousand with five thousand of the thirty set to ambush the city while the other twenty-five thousand were waiting



in reserve to enter the scene if they were needed?

Some say this is a scribal error, and that the one who was doing the copying mistook five thousand for thirty thousand. This is a possibility, but there are other possible answers. Joshua could have decided to add another five thousand to the thirty thousand who were first sent. The thirty thousand and the five thousand could have both been west of the city and still not have been united as a single camp. The five thousand may have been the only ones actually sent into the city, with twenty-five thousand ready if called upon.

**JOS 8:13 And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.**

The main force of Israel was now located to the north of Ai. The thirty or thirty-five thousand were positioned to the west. Joshua moved during the night to a position in the valley which lay north of the city between his forces and the city.

**JOS 8:14 And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city.**

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The king of Ai already knew the army of Israel was nearby. When he awoke in the morning it did not take him long to decide upon a plan of action. He assembled his men and left the city to drive the Israelites away, as he had done the first time. He was unaware that there were at least thirty thousand Israelites waiting on the west of the city while his own forces had left it undefended as they pursued the ones which were obvious to him.

**JOS 8:15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.**

Joshua and his men pretended to be just as fearful as they were in the previous defeat. They fled, with the soldiers of Ai in hot pursuit.

**JOS 8:16 And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city.**

The deception worked. When the men of Ai began to pursue Israel, the city was left without any hope of defending itself.

**JOS 8:17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.**



Apparently the men in Bethel had also left their city to join those of Ai in defending their cities. Neither Bethel, nor Ai, had a single soldier left. All were busy pursuing Israel. Both cities were helpless.

**JOS 8:18 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city.**

This time the Lord did give a specific command to Joshua. Joshua was to stretch out the spear which he carried toward the city. When that had been done, God would give him the city.

There are those who wonder how the men lying in ambush could know Joshua had stretched out his spear. They could not all have seen him at the same time. This is not a serious objection. The word could have been passed by those stationed at certain intervals of distance from one another. It would have taken a very short time to send the word.

**JOS 8:19 And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire.**

The ambush is a reference to all of the thirty or



thirty-five thousand who had situated themselves on the north and the west sides of the city. These men hastened into the city with little if any resistance and set a fire.

**JOS 8:20 And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers.**

The men of Ai must have been aghast when they noted the smoke arising from their city. In addition, there were Israeli soldiers where they had not expected them to be. The Israelites were not only in front of them; they were behind them.

**JOS 8:21 And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai.**

Joshua's men also saw the rising smoke. This was their signal to turn around in their tracks and attack those of Ai who had been pursuing them. The men of Ai were at their mercy. They destroyed them.

**JOS 8:22 And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.**



The soldiers who had taken the city of Ai then came out of the city and trapped the soldiers of Ai between themselves and the main Israelite forces. The soldiers of Ai were completely wiped out. Not a single one of them was allowed to escape. All were killed.

**JOS 8:23 And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.**

It was not unusual for a victorious army to take the opposing king captive to demonstrate their complete victory. The Israeli soldiers did not kill the king of Ai. They brought him to Joshua alive.

**JOS 8:24 And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword.**

The men who had come out of the city of Ai to fight with Israel were not the total population of the city. Women, children and men who were not capable of fighting in battle were still in the city. After slaying the soldiers who had pursued them, the Israelite soldiers entered Ai and used their swords to kill those who remained.

**JOS 8:25 And so it was, that all that fell**

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**that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.**

The twelve thousand men who had pursued Israel were hardly a match for the army of Israel, especially when God was with them.

We can see from this number why the spies who at first suggested that only two or three thousand Israelite soldiers would be needed to take the city. This would have been true if the camp had not been defiled by Achan's sin. The three thousand could have been victorious. This time the Israelites were far superior in numbers.

**JOS 8:26 For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.**

As long as Joshua held out his spear, the campaign was successful. The reader will very likely recall the occasion when Moses arm was held up by Aaron and Hur in a battle against the Amalekites. (See Exo. 17:11-12.)

Exo 17:11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Exo 17:12 But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands,



the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

It is also wise to see the parallel between what took place here and that which occurred at the crucifixion of the Christ. If Jesus had desired to do so, He could have called ten thousand angels to his side at Calvary. He allowed Satan to gain a temporary advantage in order that the war against sin could be won through His resurrection from the dead.

**JOS 8:27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua.**

It was not permissible to take the spoils of Jericho. They were first fruits which belonged to the Lord. It was permissible to take them for personal property this time.

**JOS 8:28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.**

Jericho had been burned after it was conquered. Ai was to suffer the same fate. We assume the word “desolation” means lack of human inhabitants. No one lived in the city from the time of it’s defeat until the time of the writing of this verse.



**JOS 8:29** And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

The fact that the king of Ai was hanged on a tree until sundown is not proof that he died by hanging. The bodies of criminals were often hung up after their execution to show disdain for their crimes. The king could have been killed with a sword and then hung on the tree after he was dead.

It was not God's will that bodies hang overnight. (See Deut. 21:22-23.)

Deu 21:22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

Deu 21:23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

**JOS 8:30** Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal,

**JOS 8:31** As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath



**lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.**

Mount Ebal was about thirty miles almost straight north of Bethel. Israel was moving across the land of Canaan and in the process of dividing the north from the south. Mount Ebal and Mount Garezim were not much out of the way.

God had commanded that such an altar was to be built on Mount Ebal. See Deut. 27:4-5. This was a most appropriate time to do so. They had built one at Gilgal after crossing the Jordan and entering the land. Now they had been blessed by Jehovah in the victories over Jericho and Ai. It was certainly a time for sacrifice and expressions of thanksgiving to the Creator.

It is interesting that the altar was built on the mountain where the curses were stated. This may be related to the need for burnt offerings and peace offerings to bring peace with God.

The stones from which the altar was to be built were not to have been cut into shape by human hands or instruments. This would be a reminder that God was the one responsible for the successes, not men.

**JOS 8:32 And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.**

At first glance it would seem that the stones mentioned in this verse were the same as those of the previous verse. That may not be the case. Deuteronomy 27 discusses two sets of stones. One of these sets was to be used in erecting an altar. The other was to be used for writing the law.

Joshua, although not a king, was the accepted leader of the nation. In accord with his position as leader, he followed the instructions God gave for kings. He wrote a copy of the law in the presence of the people. We do not know whether this was a complete copy of the five books of Moses, a copy of the book of Deuteronomy, or a copy of the ten commandments which summarize the law of Moses.

Regardless, Joshua was implanting in the minds of Israel that their leader was ready to hear and obey the instructions of God, and that they needed to do the same.

**JOS 8:33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.**

The entire congregation was brought together. This included the prominent leaders such as elders,

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judges and other officials. These men were positioned around the ark, which was carried by the Levite priests. Even the proselytes who had not been born among the people, but who had accepted the religion of Jehovah, were included in the gathering.

The ark was placed in the valley between the two mountains. Half the tribes were situated near Mount Ebal. The other half were situated near Mount Gerazim. They were prepared to listen to the reading of the law.

Was it really possible that the number of people involved could have heard Joshua reading from the law? There are reports that the topography of the valley with the two mountains provides a natural amphitheater. Voices can be heard for a tremendous distance from the center of the valley between Ebal and Gerazim.

**JOS 8:34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.**

Joshua himself then read the blessings and the cursings of the law which was given through Moses. He was no doubt reading from the copy which he had personally written.

**JOS 8:35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the**



**women, and the little ones, and the strangers  
that were conversant among them.**

Not only did Joshua read the blessings and the cursings, he read every word of the law which Moses had transmitted to Israel. We are not told how long it took to complete this reading.

At this critical time in the history of the nation of Israel, it was very important that everyone be reminded of the need to follow the will of the Almighty. The older persons needed to be reminded. The younger persons needed to be taught concerning the past, present and future of Israel's relationship with Jehovah.

How important it is that men and women today follow this example! We are constantly blessed with food, clothing, shelter, and a host of other things which are necessary to life. In spite of God's grace, men walk off into the spiritual darkness. They ignore the blessings and invite the curses. We pray that the reader may use greater wisdom than this and constantly search for the way that leads to eternal life.



## *Chapter 9*

Chapter nine deals with an attempt on the part of the Gibeonites to protect their lives through deceiving Israel into making a peace treaty with them. They succeeded in their deception, but paid for this in becoming lowly servants to those whom they had deceived.

**JOS 9:1 And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof;**

The word had spread throughout the entire land of Canaan that Israel and their God had set out to conquer the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The nations listed here represent the vast majority of the nations in that area. These nations finally decided to take military action and protect themselves from destruction.

**JOS 9:2 That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.**

This is an interesting change in attitude. The kings of Jericho and Ai were terrified nearly to the

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point of paralysis. They had about decided Israel's army and their God were invincible. Now we find that other nations had made the decision to fight. What caused the change? First, Israel had suffered a sharp defeat the first time they attacked Ai. It was apparent that they could be defeated. Second, there had been very little cooperation between the nations up to this time. Now they were banding together and presenting a much stronger force.

The only question here is as to why they had not united earlier. The answer to that is probably that they felt resistance would be useless. Since Achan's sin had resulted in a defeat for the people of God, there was reason to think a cooperative effort might succeed.

**JOS 9:3 And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,**

**JOS 9:4 They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;**

Gibeon was located in Hivite territory. It is evident that not all of the Canaanites were in sympathy with the forming of a combined army to oppose Israel. The Gibeonites decided to separate themselves and use another method.

They decided to use deceit to avoid the loss of their lives. They pretended to be representatives of a distant nation. They found old sacks which gave



the appearance of having been used for a long time and loaded their asses with them. Wine bottles at that time were made of leather. They found some which had been torn and were patched.

**JOS 9:5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.**

They found old shoes which had also been mended. This is an interesting contrast to the statement that the Israelites clothing and shoes were not worn after their long journey through the wilderness.

The Gibeonites even provided themselves with dry and moldy bread, indicating they had been carrying it for many days.

**JOS 9:6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.**

The first encampment after Israel had crossed the Jordan had been Gilgal. The Gilgal mentioned here would hardly be the same. The people had moved twenty or thirty miles to the northwest of the Gilgal on the Jordan. They would not have back tracked that far. There was a Gilgal not too far from Mount Ebal. This seems to have been the one mentioned here.

The Gibeonites approached Joshua as the leader of the Israelites. They pretended to have traveled a



very long distance. They wished to ally themselves with Israel and form a peace treaty.

**JOS 9:7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?**

The men of Israel were probably the elders who had been consulting with Joshua on several occasions before this time. Whether they were leaders of the tribes, or simply some of the men of Israel, they were suspicious of the Gibeonites. How were they to be sure these were not persons who were living nearby and desired to save themselves and their possessions?

**JOS 9:8 And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?**

The Gibeonites did not reply to the men who doubted their word. They returned their answer to Joshua himself. If they were to be accepted by the Israelites and a peace agreement was made, they were willing to be servants.

This should have caused Joshua to join his own men and wonder about the truthfulness of the strangers. If they had come from a far nation, why would they be so anxious to be taken in as servants?

Joshua was ready to go just a bit farther in his investigation. He asked them a very direct question. Where did they come from? Who were they?

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**JOS 9:9 And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,**

**JOS 9:10 And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.**

The devil is very subtle. So are those who follow in the footsteps of the king of liars. Their answer to the question was no answer at all. They evaded it by saying the word had reached them, even in their far country, that Israel's God had delivered them from Egypt, and that He had given them victory over the king, Og and King Sihon of the Amorites.

At least this much of their statements is truth. Their people had heard of these magnificent victories and were very much impressed. It was best not to fight against such strength, but to become an ally to it.

**JOS 9:11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.**

These men claimed to be only representatives of the far nation. They had been sent by their leaders

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to secure peace with Israel, even if it meant they would become servants to them.

**JOS 9:12 This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:**

**JOS 9:13 And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.**

Now we come to pure lies. The bread was not hot when they set out. It was dry and moldy, but not because it had had time to mold. It was moldy when they left home. It was the same with the leather wine bottles. They had been chosen because they were dilapidated. The shoes they wore were tattered and patched when they started.

**JOS 9:14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.**

The deception succeeded. The Israelites ate a meal with them. Such a meal was common between parties who wished to make an agreement that was binding.

In a sense, the Lord's Supper is such a meal today. Christians share it with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one means of indicating we desire peace and unity with Him as our Saviour.



A serious mistake was made. The leaders of Israel should have asked God to help them make a decision such as this. The Urim and Thummim was available and the High Priest could have determined God's agreement or disagreement. There was strong reason for consulting God. A command had been given in no uncertain terms that they were not to make peace treaties with the inhabitants of the land. (See the following.)

Exo 34:11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Exo 34:12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Deu 20:10 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

Deu 20:11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

Deu 20:12 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou

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shalt besiege it:

Deu 20:13 And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

Deu 20:14 But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

Deu 20:15 Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

Deu 20:16 But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

Deu 20:17 But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

Deu 20:18 That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

Jos 3:10 And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.



It may be that the Gibeonites had sent spies into the Israelite camp and had learned of the difference God had made between the way the Canaanites were to be treated and the way those who were from far off.

Look back at Deuteronomy 20:15-16).

**JOS 9:15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.**

Without consulting Jehovah, Joshua arranged a peace agreement with the Gibeonites. Both the Gibeonites and the princes of Israel consented to the treaty.

**JOS 9:16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.**

Three days after the agreement was made, Israel found out the Gibeonites were not from a far country. They were near neighbors, and were of the inhabitants of the land which God had commanded be driven out or killed. He had warned that if this was neglected, Israel would find themselves following the sinful and idolatrous ways of the Canaanites and would suffer serious penalties.

**JOS 9:17 And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day.**

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**Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.**

The men of Israel checked out the story of the Gibeonites and found they were from only a distance of three days journey. They located the cities from which the Gibeonites had come.

**JOS 9:18 And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.**

Israel had a difficult decision to make. Sworn oaths in the name of the Lord were binding. So were the commandments of the Lord. Were they to honor their oath, or were they to keep God's commandment? The princes of the congregation decided to honor the peace agreement and the oath.

The congregation as a whole did not appreciate the decision. Clearly they were fearful of the wrath of the Lord falling upon them. Which would be most displeasing to God, breaking the oath or breaking the commandment? It was true that the oath was made as a result of deception, but it had been made and that fact had to be considered.

**JOS 9:19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.**



The princes who had been responsible for the making of the decision replied to the congregation that they would keep the oath that they would remain at peace with the Gibeonites. The choice had not been easy, but a choice had to be made and they were willing to appeal to the mercy of God for allowing the Gibeonites to live.

God did consider the breaking of this oath to be extremely serious. Later, king Saul was chastised for breaking this oath when he slew some of the Gibeonites. (See 2 Samuel 21:1-2.)

2Sa 21:1 Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

2Sa 21:2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

**JOS 9:20 This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.**

**JOS 9:21 And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.**

During the course of their earlier conversations, the Gibeonites stated that they were willing to be made servants of Israel if their peace agreement was accepted. They could therefore be made lowly servants without killing them. This would keep the oath, but it would punish them for their deception.

**JOS 9:22 And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us?**

**JOS 9:23 Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.**

Joshua announced the decision to the Gibeonites. Because of their lies they would become hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God. This was no slight burden. They would be looked down upon. They would provide the water to wash the sacrifices, and the wood to burn them on the altar.

This was not the temple. This was the tabernacle. The temple was not built until later on.

There is another consideration. God seems to have had mercy upon those who turned away from their idolatry and immorality and were willing to worship and serve Him. Rahab is an example of this, just as these Gibeonites are.

**JOS 9:24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants,**  
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**how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.**

**JOS 9:25 And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.**

The Gibeonites tried to justify their lies by explaining how fearful they were for the lives when they found out God had commanded those who lived in Canaan to be utterly destroyed. Since a more lenient command was given in the case of those who were not inhabitants of Canaan, the Gibeonites had claimed to be from a far country. They were ready to accept the status of bondservants since that was what Israel had decided was good and right.

**JOS 9:26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.**

**JOS 9:27 And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.**

And so that was what was done. The Gibeonites became servants to Israel, particularly in the provision of wood and water for the tabernacle, or house of God.



One cannot help but wonder what would have taken place if all of the nations which opposed Israel's occupation of the land had turned to Jehovah rather than fighting against His will!



## *Chapter 10*

Here we have the plea for Joshua to come with the army of Israel to deliver Gibeon from an attack by a united force of five kings as a result of their anger and fear over Gibeon's treaty with Israel.

We see Joshua coming to Gibeon's rescue. This is followed by a miraculous demonstration of God's power as He fought on the side of Israel and Gibeon. Joshua's forces then moved from the central part of Canaan throughout the southern half of the land. Various cities were taken until southern Canaan had been overcome.

**JOS 10:1 Now it came to pass, when Adonizedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;**

This is the first time Jerusalem is mentioned in the old testament by that name. It had been referred to by other names up to that point, but this is the first time this name is applied to the city.

The name of it's king, Adoni-zedek, is closely related to the name of another king of the same city. That king is Melchi-zedek, whose name means "king of righteousness." The name of the king of

Jerusalem is Adoni-zedek, whose name means “lord of righteousness.”

Adoni-zedek had become very much concerned over what would happen to the entire south part of the land of Canaan if Joshua and his forces continued their conquests. They had taken both Jericho and Ai. Gibeon had decided to cast their lot with Joshua. He was apparently fearful that Jerusalem could not defend itself through its own strength. Therefore something must be done.

**JOS 10:2 That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.**

Gibeon was an impressive city. It was famous because of its efficient military men. If Gibeon had found it wise to join forces with Israel, there was a need to call in allies from the other cities of the land.

**JOS 10:3 Wherefore Adonizedec king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,**

**JOS 10:4 Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.**

Adoni-zedek called on four other kings to form a coalition with him in order that their combined

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strength might be sufficient to turn Joshua back.

Adoni-zedek did not realize he was opposing the strength and wisdom of Creator of the universe. If he had realized this, he might well have taken the same action Gibeon did and offered to become servants of Israel.

**JOS 10:5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.**

Thus we have the following opponents.

On one side we have:

The God of heaven and earth.

On the other side we have five kings.

Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem.

Hoham, king of Hebron.

Piram, king of Jarmuth.

Japhia, king of Lachish.

Debir, king of Eglon.

These five kings united their forces and began to attack Gibeon. Gibeon not only represented what they saw as a traitor to the region. It was located at a strategic position for possible resistance to Joshua's entry into the land.

There is an important point here. When God's people score a victory in conversion of sinners in a given area, one may anticipate a joining of efforts on the part of worldly men and women in the attempt

to halt the march of the Word of God.

**JOS 10:6 And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.**

The men of Gibeon had agreed to what is known as a lord-vassal treaty. The vassal was expected to serve the Lord as a bondservant. The lord was expected to protect the vassal. The men of Gibeon felt that they had a right to call upon Joshua for help in their time of need. They had been attacked by the combination of Amorite kings from the highlands in the south of Canaan. They knew they would be unable to defend themselves. They pleaded for Joshua and his men to come to their aid.

**JOS 10:7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.**

Even though they had been deceived into making the peace treaty with the Gibeonites, Joshua responded to the call for help quickly.

It is said that he ascended from Gilgal because Gibeon was at a higher elevation than the former. He took his finest soldiers with him. He knew one of the principles upon which God operates. God expects man to do all he is capable of doing. God



will see to the rest.

**JOS 10:8 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.**

“Fear not.” is a common expression from Jehovah. God’s people of all the ages have faced what seem to be overwhelming enemies. Christians fight against principalities and powers in high places. These powers are not to be feared. With the help of the Lord, they may be conquered.

**JOS 10:9 Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.**

Joshua and his men marched from Gilgal to Gibeon throughout the night. We are told that the route over which they passed was very difficult. They must have been very tired when they arrived at their destination.

**JOS 10:10 And the LORD discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Bethhoron, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makedah.**

“Them” in this verse refers to the armies of the five kings which had been amassed for the attack against Gibeon. God intervened in the battle and

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the armies of the five kings were routed. The retreat of the five kings allowed Joshua's forces to move westward and then southward from the highlands and into the foothills as the land was leveling off toward the Mediterranean Sea.

**JOS 10:11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.**

God caused hailstones to rain down upon the enemies of Gibeon and Israel. There is much discussion over the nature of these stones. Some have declared them to be meteorites. There can be no argument. The Bible states that they were hailstones.

What is meant by great hailstones? Were these stones the size of pebbles or were they as large as tennis balls? If the reader has been in a severe hailstorm where the hail was as large as average sized marbles, he will recognize the possible damage which could be done by such. But could hailstones be large enough to actually kill a human?

Yes, most certainly they could. Hailstones the size of large oranges have descended in recent history. Some of these were collected and placed in freezers where they could be shown to those who were not present when they fell, and who were suspicious of the accounts of the event.



It is little wonder that the armies of the five kings retreated. They faced both the swords of Joshua's army and the hailstones hurled down upon them from the God Most High.

**JOS 10:12 Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.**

Now we come to a miracle which has resulted in vast numbers of pages in the commentary of both the supporters and the critics of the Biblical record. It was clear to Joshua that there was a need for absolute victory over these five kings before night fell and darkness allowed the opposing forces to escape.

Joshua prayed to the Lord that day. His prayer was followed by a command that the sun and the moon stand still upon Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon. First we must deal with the identity of the one who gave the command. The grammar would allow the command to have been given by the Lord as a response to what Joshua had said to Him. In this case, Joshua would have prayed to God for help. Then God would have given the command for the sun and the moon to stand still. The other possibility is that Joshua prayed to God that the sun and the moon would stand still, and God did as Joshua prayed.

In either case, we could justifiably say that God



hearkened to the voice of Joshua, whether Joshua simply asked God to help in whatever way God chose to help, or whether Joshua specifically prayed to God that the sun and the moon stand still.

**JOS 10:13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.**

What an astounding miracle! The sun and the moon did as commanded. Each halted it's normal activity. They each stood still in the midst of heaven and did not set for nearly one whole day.

Much ridicule has been piled upon this Biblical claim. Atheists and sceptics have pointed out what seem to be natural impossibilities. Supporters of the Bible have presented many different possibilities as to just what could have taken place.

If one is confined to the common operations of the natural world, the event is impossible. Your present commentator has studied and taught physical science for several decades. He has taught it to fifth graders, and to college students. He has no hesitation in saying natural eclipses, or the darkness of a monstrous hailstorm are the answer.

This account is not a case of ancient ignorance of the Newtonian system of the universe. It is an account of the intervention of Jehovah, who created and controls the universe, as He promoted the entry



of Israel into the promised land, and caused the defeat of the Amorites, whose iniquity had become full at this time. Genesis 15:16 spoke of a time like this.

Gen 15:15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Gen 15:16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

If one is willing to accept the fact that nature is not self existent, and that there is a supernatural God who created it and can cause it's laws to be altered to achieve His purposes, there is no problem. It is admitted that the details of such intervention are beyond the capabilities of human understanding. I am convinced nature is not self existent. There is a supreme intellect. I would expect that superior being to reveal Himself to His creatures and to protect and promote them, even to the extent of altering the course of nature to achieve that purpose.

**JOS 10:14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.**

The only other day this writer can compare with this one is the day when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was raised from the dead.

Let me suggest, however, that God works



providentially in the affairs of humans. The prayers of men are heard. Although the results are not in the form of miracles such as aided Joshua in the defeat of the Amorite kings, God does hear and He does hearken to the prayerful voices of the faithful.

**JOS 10:15 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.**

Will the reader please look at the forty-third, and last, verse of this chapter. It is identical with this fifteenth verse. This fifteenth verse is not present in the septuagint translation which the Greeks produced from the Hebrew. There was no reason for Joshua to return to Gilgal and go back over than rugged route. It is left to the reader to decide if this is a copyist's error.

**JOS 10:16 But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.**

The five kings managed to flee all the way to Makkedah, which lay perhaps thirty miles to the south of Gibeon and the Valley of Aijalon. Since their forces had been routed in the battle of Gibeon, they attempted to save their own lives by hiding in one of the caves which were common in the area.

**JOS 10:17 And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.**

**JOS 10:18 And Joshua said, Roll great stones**



**upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them:**

When Joshua was told of their hideout, he commanded that the mouth of the cave be sealed with stones large enough that they could not escape. Men were appointed to keep guard and see that they remained in the cave.

**JOS 10:19 And stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the LORD your God hath delivered them into your hand.**

The main part of Joshua's army was not to stop where the kings had hidden themselves. They were to chase the fleeing Amorite army and destroy those who lagged behind. being unable to keep up. The Amorites were not to be allowed to go back to the cities from which they had come. God had delivered them into the hands of Israel and they were to be annihilated.

**JOS 10:20 And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities.**

Not all of the Amorites were killed. There was a great slaughter, but there were some who managed to get back into their fenced, or walled cities and



escape death. The Amorites were, at least for the present, to be no more a threat to Israel's possession of southern Canaan.

**JOS 10:21 And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.**

The confrontation was over. Joshua's forces moved back to the point where the five kings had been trapped in the cave at Makkedah. To move the tongue is to speak. The children of Israel had been so successful, with the help of the Lord, that no king had the courage to oppose them.

**JOS 10:22 Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.**

Joshua was ready to punish the five kings of the Amorites for their folly in attacking Gibeon. This must have been a time of great humiliation for these men who had the dignity of rulers among their people. They now sit helpless before the power of this man of God.

**JOS 10:23 And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.**

**JOS 10:24** And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

Before executing the kings, Joshua called for lesser men than himself to come forward from his army. It would have been degrading enough for Joshua to place his foot upon the necks of these kings. It was even more so for his officers to demonstrate their control over them.

The placing of one under foot is a means of showing victory and control over them. Jesus will treat His enemies in this way in the final victory over the Serpent. He sits at the right hand of the throne of the Father today. Tomorrow he will be the victor! (See Psalm 110:1.)

Psa 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

**JOS 10:25** And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

Joshua had been encouraged with these same words from the Lord. He now passed them on to those whom he was leading across the land of

Canaan. As long as Israel remained faithful to God, no enemy was capable of conquering them.

**JOS 10:26 And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.**

After the officers had placed their feet upon the necks of the Amorite kings, Joshua executed them and hung their carcasses upon trees until the sun set in the evening. This would discourage any others from attempting the same type of attack upon God's people.

It was considered to be a pollution of the land for bodies such as these to hang on the tree through the night. A few hours was sufficient to show the horror of their sin.

We cannot but remember the fact that Jesus was removed from the cross before the sun set, even as he bore the sins of the world upon his shoulders. He had become a curse for all those who would place their soul in his hands. He would die that we might live. But he was not to be left upon the tree over night.

**JOS 10:27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.**

The kings had thought to escape by hiding in the cave. That was not to be the case. They were to be buried in that cave. Their bodies were left there and remained until the present record of the actions of Joshua were written.

**JOS 10:28 And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.**

There were three battles described in some detail. These were the battle of Jericho, the battle of Ai, and the battle of Gibeon. From here on, the details are omitted and only a brief summary of the victories over others of the southern cities is given to us. Those who dwelt in the city of Makkedah were destroyed as completely as those in Jericho had been.

**JOS 10:29 Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:**

**JOS 10:30 And the LORD delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.**



Nearly the same words are repeated with respect to Libnah. None remained of the souls who dwelt in that city.

**JOS 10:31 And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:**

**JOS 10:32 And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.**

Lachish received the same treatment as had Libnah. It took two days to conquer this city.

**JOS 10:33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.**

There is a variation here. Perhaps this is because this king of Gezer had left his own city to assist those of Lachish. He was unsuccessful. His army was eliminated.

**JOS 10:34 And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:**

**JOS 10:35 And they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to**



**Lachish.**

**JOS 10:36** And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:

**JOS 10:37** And they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein.

**JOS 10:38** And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:

**JOS 10:39** And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.

Let us take the time to view a list of these city kings whom Joshua defeated with the assistance of the Lord God, and whose people he killed with the sword. We have the kings of:

- Jericho
- Makkedah
- Libnah
- Lachish
- Gezer
- Eglon



Hebron

Debir

We gain the impression that no man, woman or child was left in these locations.

**JOS 10:40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.**

The hills would be the high places. The vales and springs would be the low places. The cities listed above were not the only ones taken. They were but high points in the campaign.

The statement that Joshua utterly destroyed all that breathed may be only a way of saying all opposition was quenched. We do know that there were some survivors. (Compare Joshua 15:63; 16:10 and 17:12.)

Jos 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

Jos 16:10 And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Jos 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the



Canaanites would dwell in that land.

We regret that respected commentators often speak boldly when the answers are clear, but tend to evade the issues when the problems are more complex. This is particularly true with what appears to be a contradiction in the reports above. Did Joshua utterly destroy all the souls that breathed in opposition to God in the south country of Canaan, or were there some whom Israel found it impossible to drive out?

Let me quote the words found on page 260 of the New American Commentary.

“The dichotomy here is real, but the book of Joshua acknowledges it. The statements of verses 40-42 are not an example of a simplistic text, uninformed by the historical realities.— Sometimes the land remained unconquered due to the Israelites disobedience or inability.— Sometimes it would appear that the conquest simply was not yet complete. The best example of this is in Joshua 13:1-6 where the Lord detailed to Joshua the territory remaining to be taken, without censuring him or the people for not having done so.”

The reader would be wise to compare the first chapter of Judges with this present chapter of Joshua. It is the judgment of your present commentator that the Bible makes use of the words “all” and “forever” in a different sense than we commonly understand those words in present day English. “Forever” may mean until the end of an age. “All” may include



enough that the remainder is of minor significance. Translation of an ancient language is a difficult task. A comparison of several versions of the Bible will show just how difficult it truly is.

**JOS 10:41 And Joshua smote them from Kadeshbarnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.**

**JOS 10:42 And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel.**

Israel was unable to take the city of Ai when faith was lacking in God. When faith ruled, they were able to take the entire southern portion of Canaan in a single campaign. It makes a drastic difference whether God and man are on the same side, or on opposite sides.

**JOS 10:43 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.**

The southern portion of the promised land was in the hands of the children of Israel. Joshua and his forces went back to Gilgal where they had been quartered when the battle of Gibeon broke up.



## *Chapter 11*

The conquest of the southern part of Canaan had been very successful. This brought about some very great concern upon the part of the kings in the north. There was no need to initiate fighting by invading the north. The kings there were ready to attack Israel. This chapter relates some of the details of the war between these two forces.

**JOS 11:1 ¶And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard those things, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,**

Jabin was the king of Hazor, which was a dominant city. It seems that many other less powerful rulers were under some obligation to support this king. Jabin felt he would have the assistance of these other rulers in that each of them would see Israel as a threat to their own safety. He notified three of these subordinate kings of his intention to stop the oncoming Israelite troops.

**JOS 11:2 And to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in**

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## **the borders of Dor on the west,**

The call spread out to the entire territory in the northern half of the land of Canaan. Chinneroth is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Jabin expected support from those in the highlands and in the plains. He desired that all the military power of that part of the land which had not already been taken by Israel be united in one army.

**JOS 11:3 And to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and to the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and to the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.**

An examination of the map will disclose the widespread coverage of this list of people from many different locations. It is not as important to pinpoint the location of each of these cities and territories as it is to see that the threat of Israel had brought about the combined effort of those who would normally not have been allies.

This phenomenon is not confined to that time and that part of the world. Satan is a master at bringing God's enemies together when the army of God's people is prospering. If Christians bicker and divide while they are at the same time trying to defeat Satan and his friends, the spiritual war will be very difficult. We cannot afford to have Satan's forces united while Christians fight one another.



**JOS 11:4 And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.**

This was the largest army Israel had faced since the escape from Pharaoh's horses and chariots. The numbers of fighting men were so great it was as impossible to number them as it would be to count the grains of sand on a seashore. Not only did they have a large host of fighting infantry. They had horses and chariots. We are told that these chariots often had sharpened blades attached to the wheels such that the bloodshed would be enormous as they passed through foot soldiers.

In contrast, Israel had been commanded by the Lord not to depend upon horses and chariots, but to trust in the Lord Himself to bring victory in battles.

**JOS 11:5 And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.**

There is some doubt as to the exact location of the waters of Merom where Jabin and his army pitched camp. The best estimate is that they were about ten miles to the northwest of the Sea of Galilee. These northern kings of the Canaanites meant business. They were ready to fight!

**JOS 11:6 And the LORD said unto Joshua,**

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**Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.**

“Fear not!” is repeated often by Jehovah to those who battle against His foes. What reason is there to fear when the all powerful Creator of heaven and earth is on your side? Under those conditions, one faithful man can chase a thousand unbelievers.

Joshua was to come upon the enemy in a surprise attack, before they were capable of organizing their defenses. Joshua’s men were to render their horses useless by cutting the tendons on their legs. After that, the horses would be more of a handicap than an aid. As an added precaution, the chariots of the northern army were to be burned. An army which has been accustomed to fighting with horses and chariots, and which then finds it necessary to fight on foot, would find it more difficult than if they had never made use of the chariots.

**JOS 11:7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them.**

The word “suddenly” is a key to the success of Israel’s army. The Canaanites had not anticipated a surprise attack. They were unprepared to meet it.

**JOS 11:8 And the LORD delivered them**

**into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephothmaim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.**

We are not told how the Lord delivered the kings into the hand of Israel. We can certainly surmise that the surprise attack resulted in extreme fear and confusion. The lack of organization would have left them as easy prey for Joshua's army.

The Canaanites fled in three different directions. By the time the action was completed, all opposition to Joshua's army was dissolved. Israel was left to do as they pleased at the waters of Merom.

**JOS 11:9 And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.**

One of the most important characteristics of Joshua was his desire to obey the will of the Lord to the very best of his ability. He demonstrated that quality in this instance. He rendered the enemies horses useless and burned the fearsome chariots. We can guess that by this time the Canaanites were seriously demoralized.

**JOS 11:10 ¶And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.**

We see no effective resistance whatsoever. Jabin, the king of Hazor was killed, and his important city was taken. This was of major importance since Hazor had been the leader of the other kingdoms.

By the way, another Jabin is mentioned later in the old testament. This Jabin is not the same as the one who ruled over Hazor in the time of Deborah, after Hazor had been rebuilt. (See Judges 4:2.)

Judges 4:2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

**JOS 11:11 And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.**

The city which had led the northern king's unification was left desolated. The citizens were massacred and the city was left as charred ashes.

**JOS 11:12 And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.**

With the chief city of Hazor having been sidelined, the battle was rapidly decided. The remaining cities of the kings who had gathered to fight against Israel were also overrun. God had commanded Moses to take the land and have no mercy upon

the inhabitants. Their iniquity had ripened. They were hopelessly sinful and there was no hope for their salvation. Moses had begun the work. Joshua was completing it.

**JOS 11:13 But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; that did Joshua burn.**

In present day English we would reverse the words “stood still.” We would refer to the cities which still stood after the burning of Hazor. Joshua burned Hazor. He did not burn the rest of the cities.

**JOS 11:14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.**

As Israel had escaped with much spoil received from the Egyptians when they left that land, they now claimed the spoil of the northern towns for their own use. The Canaanites were slain and their possessions became the possessions of Israel. No Canaanites were left alive.

**JOS 11:15 ¶As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.**

The reader is left with no doubt at all that what was done was first commanded from the mouth of the Lord to Moses, and was then passed on to Joshua. The one who is concerned over the death of innocent women and children in this battle needs to be reminded of the social surroundings of these persons, if they had been allowed to live. If they were truly innocent, they were better off with the Lord than they were where they could be corrupted by idolatry and immorality and thus condemned to separation from everything high and holy in eternity.

**JOS 11:16 So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;**

Joshua could claim a sweeping victory for the Lord over most of the land west of the Jordan River. From the north to the south and from the river to the Mediterranean, the opposition had been rendered much less significant, even if some resistance still had to be eradicated.

**JOS 11:17 Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.**

**JOS 11:18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.**



The reader should compare this verse with verse six of this same chapter. The major battle had been decided by this time. The lesser conflicts would continue for perhaps as much as seven years.

**JOS 11:19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle.**

Only the Gibeonites, of all the people of the land of Canaan, had decided the course of wisdom was to make peace. They decided bondage was to be chosen over extinction. Those who had not made that decision, and who had decided to fight God's people, were conquered in the war.

**JOS 11:20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.**

Numerous times the scriptures tell us God hardened the hearts of those who opposed Him. This does not mean they had no say in their opposition. It means that God gave them the opportunity to crystallize their determination to live in defiance to His divine will. Those who make such decisions will be destroyed, if not now the destruction will come about when the books are opened in final

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judgment.

**JOS 11:21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.**

Even the dreaded Anakims, sometimes referred to as “Nethenim”, were sought out of the mountains and destroyed. These were the sons of Anak. They were said to be giants. They were one of the reasons for the ten spies evil report about being like grasshoppers when compared with these giants. David met one of them later on when he used his sling to kill Goliath.

**11:22 There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.**

The towns mentioned here were located in Philistine territory. Goliath is known as a Philistine. Some few of these giants remained in that part of Canaan.

**JOS 11:23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.**

Yes, Joshua made it possible for Israel to come into possession of their inheritance in the promised land. Nevertheless, they still found it necessary to take possession of their possessions. This would take a number of years. During this time there was no major war, but there were a large number of mopping up operations.



## *Chapter 12*

By the time we have reached the end of this chapter, we have also reached the end of a major section of the entire book. This present chapter is a brief overall view of the conquest of the land of Canaan. The extent of the territory is given. The major groups of people are listed. The kings of the territories are enumerated, along with an identifying city or nation. The reader would do well to have a detailed map at hand in order to follow the general movements of Israel in the conquest.

**JOS 12:1 Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east:**

The summary begins with the victory over the land on the east side of the Jordan river, under the leadership of Moses. The river Arnon was in the south and mount Hermon was in the north. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had noted the fertility of the plains on that side of the Jordan river, and had requested that they be allowed to possess that territory.

**JOS 12:2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who**

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**dwelt in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead, even unto the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon;**

King Sihon had ruled the southern portion of the land east of the river. His reign extended from the river Arnon northward to the river Jabbok.

**JOS 12:3 And from the plain to the sea of Chinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, even the salt sea on the east, the way to Bethjeshimoth; and from the south, under Ashdothpisgah:**

Sihon's rule reached from the Sea of Galilee, and from the Dead Sea (the salt sea) westward to the border of Ammon. When Israel took that land, they were looking at the Ammonites on the east and the Moabites on the south.

**JOS 12:4 And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,**

Og was a giant king, who ruled over Bashan, which lay north of the area taken from Sihon. He was one of those of the type who struck fear into the hearts of the ten spies years before this conquest.

**JOS 12:5 And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and half**

**Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.**

King Og ruled from mount Hermon in the far north to the Heshbon in the south. His rule was from the Jordan river eastward to the border of the Ammonites. A portion of the land of Gilead lay north of the Jabbok river and part lay to the south of that river. Og had ruled the northern part of Gilead. Sihon ruled over the southern part.

**JOS 12:6 Them did Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel smite: and Moses the servant of the LORD gave it for a possession unto the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.**

Moses was still the leader of Israel when the above kings were defeated. He died without entering into the land on the west of the Jordan. Joshua replaced him as the leader of the people of Jehovah.

**JOS 12:7 And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir; which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;**

The record now turns our attention to the conquest of the land between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean Sea. This was captured under the



leadership of Moses successor, Joshua. The territory extended from Tyre and the Lebanon mountains in the north, down to Beer-sheba and the south end of the Dead Sea, even to the wilderness of Zin.

**JOS 12:8 In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites:**

The area which Joshua and his forces conquered included all types of land. Some was mountainous. Some was well watered plains. Some was deserted wilderness. The people who were defeated included Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. The Girgashites who were listed in Joshua 3:10 and 24:11 are not included in the present list.

I take the liberty of splitting the verses listing the thirty-one kings below. This makes the summary slightly easier to examine.

**JOS 12:9 The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one;**

**JOS 12:10 The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;**

**JOS 12:11 The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;**

**JOS 12:12 The king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one;**

**JOS 12:13 The king of Debir, one; the king**



of Geder, one;

**JOS 12:14** The king of Hormah, one;the king of Arad, one;

**JOS 12:15** The king of Libnah, one;the king of Adullam, one;

**JOS 12:16** The king of Makkedah, one;the king of Bethel, one;

**JOS 12:17** The king of Tappuah, one;the king of Hopher, one;

**JOS 12:18** The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;

**JOS 12:19** The king of Madon, one;the king of Hazor, one;

**JOS 12:20** The king of Shimronmeron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;

**JOS 12:21** The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one;

**JOS 12:22** The king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one;

**JOS 12:23** The king of Dor in the coast of Dor, one; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one;

**JOS 12:24** The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

The kings are listed, for the most part, in the order in which they were defeated. The first kings conquered after crossing the Jordan river were those of Jericho and Ai. This separated the northern part of the land of Canaan from the south.

The next kings listed are from the southern portion of the land. The last ones mentioned are who

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combined their armies in the north to fight against Israel. Their defeat marked the end of the major wars. After these thirty-one kings were conquered, the land had rest, as the close of chapter eleven had stated.

This does not mean there were no more minor conflicts. Much remained to be done, as we will see from the book of Judges.



## Chapter 13

This chapter marks the beginning of the second half of the book of Joshua. Up to this point we have been dealing with the conquest of the land of Canaan. From this point on we will be looking at the allotment of the land to the various tribes of Israel.

The material changes abruptly from a narrative style to a more legalistic one such as we might observe in the reading of a will which specified which portions of the estate were to be given to each of the beneficiaries listed in the will. It may not be as interesting, but there was a very good reason why things were done as they were.

The reader will note that there was little argument over how much land was allotted to each tribe. If the procedure had not been spelled out very carefully, Israel could have faced civil war at a time when this would have been disastrous.

**JOS 13:1 Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him, Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.**

Yes, Joshua was an old man. He had been old enough to be a fighting man when the spies went into Canaan. He had then spent another thirty-eight years wandering in the wilderness. It has been calculated that there were some twenty years

more which passed before the present. Joshua died at the age of one hundred ten years. This was about ten years before his death. He was in the vicinity of one hundred years.

Why would Jehovah call the attention of Joshua to his aged condition? It was not to commend him for all the wonderful work he had done up to this time. It was to tell him there was still work for him to do, and there was not an unlimited time in which to do it. The major war was over. However, there were many pockets of resistance. Joshua was expected to see that the land was apportioned as God saw fit.

Old age is not an excuse for ceasing our labors. There are things which can be done by the elderly which require experiences which the younger persons do not have. When this writer was a baby, he had to have his diaper changed by someone else. At the age of seventy-four, it could be that the same thing could happen again in the near future. Does that mean there is nothing left to do? Not at all. As long as the elderly are able to function as Joshua was, God will expect them to do that. When the time comes that one can only wait to die, the person can demonstrate Christian confidence that death is but one more step toward the throne of the Almighty.

**JOS 13:2 This is the land that yet remaineth:  
all the borders of the Philistines, and all  
Geshuri,**

The Lord then proceeded to point out to Joshua just what remained to be done. Near the coast of the  
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Mediterranean, the Philistines still were capable of putting up some resistance to Israel.

**JOS 13:3 From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites:**

Sihor is thought to have been either the Nile river, or one of the delta branches to the east of the Nile proper. Five lords of the Philistines still maintained some semblance of rule. They ruled in Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron.

The list is quite extended. It extended all the way from the edge of Egypt to Ekron in the north

**JOS 13:4 From the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that is beside the Sidonians unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites:**

**JOS 13:5 And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from Baalgad under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.**

**JOS 13:6 All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.**

In effect, Joshua was told that it did not matter whether he looked north, east, or south, there was a need to drive the inhabitants of the land out, or accept them as proselytes to the religion of Jehovah as had been the case with Rahab and the Gibeonites.

God's promise was that He would drive these Canaanites, etc., from the land. Then Joshua was to divide the land among the people of Israel by using the casting of lots. This would indicate just what part of the land God wished for each tribe to possess.

**JOS 13:7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh,**

Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh had been located on the east side of the Jordan river. Moses had supervised that apportionment. Joshua was now to do the same for the other nine and one half tribes which had passed over the river to the west side.

**JOS 13:8 With whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, even as Moses the servant of the LORD gave them;**

A review is given now of the boundaries set for the two and one half tribes on the east. This chapter details all of the twelve tribes. The reader



will remember that the tribe of Joseph was split into Ephraim and Manasseh, and that the Levites were not to have land inheritance other than the cities in which they dwelt.

**JOS 13:9 From Aroer, that is upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba unto Dibon;**

**JOS 13:10 And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon;**

**JOS 13:11 And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah;**

**JOS 13:12 All the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did Moses smite, and cast them out.**

The territory previously ruled by King Sihon of the Amorites, and the territory ruled by King Og in Bashan were allotted to the two and one half tribes which Israel overcame under the guidance of Moses. The rest of this thirteenth chapter merely gives the more detail concerning which part of the land each of the two and one half tribes received. The next chapter will then go on to discuss the allocation of the land west of the Jordan.

**JOS 13:13 Nevertheless the children of**

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**Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.**

Even until the day of the writing of this book of Joshua, Israel had failed to follow the commandment of the Lord. Such laxity would later catch up with them in that they would intermarry with these strangers and find themselves worshiping Baal and other false gods.

**JOS 13:14 Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as he said unto them.**

Levi was a special tribe from many years back. God had selected this tribe to tend to the duties of the tabernacle and the sacrifices. The tithes of the people were to support them. They would have no need of cultivating the land.

**JOS 13:15 And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben inheritance according to their families.**

**JOS 13:16 And their coast was from Aroer, that is on the bank of the river Arnon, and the city that is in the midst of the river, and all the plain by Medeba;**

**JOS 13:17 Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain; Dibon, and Bamothbaal, and**

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**Bethbaalmeon,**

**JOS 13:18 And Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath,**

**JOS 13:19 And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zarethshahar in the mount of the valley,**

**JOS 13:20 And Bethpeor, and Ashdothpisgah, and Bethjeshimoth,**

**JOS 13:21 And all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote with the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, which were dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country.**

Moses had assigned the southern part of the land east of the Jordan to the tribe of Reuben. The exact locations of several of the cities named are unknown. The artist's maps of the borders of these tribes may appear to be pinpoint perfect. That is not the case. The border at the Dead Sea is clear. The Arnon river marked the southern edge. The northern border was just a few miles above the north end of the Dead Sea. Ammon lay to the east and Moab to the south.

Any attempt to give detailed data about each of the places noted will not profit the average student of the scriptures. The people of Israel knew where these cities were. Our knowledge does not have to be as precise as theirs.

**JOS 13:22 Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay**

with the sword among them that were slain by them.

**JOS 13:23** And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border thereof. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities and the villages thereof.

Balaam was the prophet who was to be paid for cursing the people of Israel. The intended curses were turned into blessings. Balaam lost his life by way of the sword as Israel moved through the land.

**JOS 13:24** And Moses gave inheritance unto the tribe of Gad, even unto the children of Gad according to their families.

**JOS 13:25** And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that is before Rabbah;

**JOS 13:26** And from Heshbon unto Ramathmizpeh, and Betonim; and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir;

**JOS 13:27** And in the valley, Betharam, and Bethnimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan and his border, even unto the edge of the sea of Chinnereth on the other side Jordan eastward.

**JOS 13:28** This is the inheritance of the

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**children of Gad after their families, the cities, and their villages.**

The same is true of the borders of Gad as was true of Reuben. There are enough villages and cities with unknown locations that the maps are not exact for this tribe either, particularly on the eastern side.

I am not including a map of the location of the tribes. The reader who is interested enough to pursue this line will have access to a Bible atlas which will be more accurate than one which could be included in this commentary. In general we can say that Reuben was the southernmost. Gad bordered Reuben on the north. Manasseh was the farthest north of the two and one half tribes on the east of the river.

**JOS 13:29 And Moses gave inheritance unto the half tribe of Manasseh: and this was the possession of the half tribe of the children of Manasseh by their families.**

Note that it is still Moses who is directing the allocation at this time. Moses will not be allowed to cross the river and enter into the promised land proper.

**JOS 13:30 And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, threescore cities:**

**JOS 13:31 And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth,**

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**and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, were pertaining unto the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, even to the one half of the children of Machir by their families.**

The half tribe of Manasseh was allotted much of the land of Bashan where Og had reigned. In addition Manasseh obtained half of the territory of Gilead which was located south of Bashan.

**JOS 13:32 These are the countries which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward.**

This strip of land east of the Jordan extended from Dan and mount Hermon in the north, to the Arnon river in the south. It averaged about thirty miles in width.

**JOS 13:33 But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance: the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them.**

As mentioned before, the tribe of Levi did not receive land acreage. They were to reside in the cities which were assigned to them. God was their inheritance. This, of course, means that they were supported by the tithes and sacrifices which were offered to Jehovah.

## *Chapter 14*

This short chapter of just fifteen verses serves an important role in that which is to come in the rest of the book. The chapter is an introduction to the distribution of the land to the nine and one half tribes who received their inheritance on the west side of the Jordan river.

A considerable portion of the chapter discusses the fulfillment of the promise Moses made to Joshua and Caleb as a result of their faith in Jehovah, and their encouragement of the people to go in and take the land, even though the other ten spies hearts melted in the face of the giants and the walled cities.

**JOS 14:1 And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.**

Verse one is not limited to the information provided in this chapter. It speaks of that which is to be presented in most of the rest of the book of Joshua.

Take note of the difference between the word “Canaan” and the term “promised land.” Not all of the tribes were to receive their inheritance in



Canaan. Reuben and Gad did not receive their inheritance in Canaan. Their inheritance was “beyond the river.”

This verse indicates the identity of those who were main officials in the casting of lots. Joshua was important as the successor to Moses. Eleazar was included as the High Priest and son of Aaron. In addition to these two we have the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel. This group would command the attention and the trust of the vast majority of the congregation.

**JOS 14:2 By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.**

The apportionment of the land was commanded by Jehovah and had been relayed by His servant Moses. The method by which the inheritances were to be assigned was the casting of lots.

The casting of lots is mentioned numerous times in the scriptures. The scapegoat was chosen by casting lots. The soldiers at the foot of the cross cast lots for the garment of Christ. There is no indication in the New Testament that such a procedure is to be followed by Christians. The Holy Bible is sufficient to guide spiritual Israel in the Christian age.

It is not possible to determine the exact mechanics by which the lots were cast. The writer of the Psalms gives us a hint in Proverbs 16:33.

Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the



whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

According to this verse, some object was allowed to fall into the lap. The will of the Lord was determined by observing it's position after coming to rest. Even so, the will of God could be determined without God actually speaking audibly to those who wished to know His decision. If, for example, the head of one of the tribes came forward. Then a pair of objects similar to dice could be dropped into the lap of a person. Twelve pieces of parchment could be laid out in a line. If the combination added up to three, the person would pick up the third piece of parchment in the line. The territory listed on that piece of parchment would then become the possession of that leader's tribe. The casting of lots could have been done in many other ways.

The primary fact to be observed is that this allowed God to direct the distribution of the land without appearing to them face to face.

**JOS 14:3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.**

Moses had already directed the allotment of the land on the east side of the river. There was no need to repeat that which took place before entering Canaan.

Moses had done nothing with respect to the Levites. Their claims would not be considered until the very last chapters of this book of Joshua.

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**JOS 14:4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.**

The number twelve is a very important one with respect to the tribes of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons. The number of the tribes of Israel was to coincide with the number of his sons. The names of the tribes would not remain the same, the number would.

There was no tribe of Joseph. Joseph had a special place in the heart of his father. He received a double portion through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This would have added up to a total of thirteen tribes. In order to maintain the number of tribes at twelve, the tribe of Levi was not given an inheritance of the same nature as that of the others. The tribe of Levi would be devoted to religious services. They would be scattered over the entire land in special cities and the suburbs of those cities. There will be more about the Levites and their “pasture lands” toward the end of the book.

**JOS 14:5 As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.**

Israel was obedient to God’s commandments. This will be detailed in the chapters to come. This

is but the introduction.

If only Israel had been as careful to do as the Lord commanded after they received their inheritance as they were while receiving it, they would not have spent those later years in Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.

**JOS 14:6 Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea.**

Caleb was the leader of the tribe of Judah. It seems that large numbers of the tribe of Judah came to Joshua with Caleb at their head. Most of the comments on this incident assume that the promise to Caleb was a personal and individual promise. The presentation here could possibly mean that it was not Caleb alone who received the promise, but that it included the tribe of Judah also, since Caleb came with the children of Judah to remind Joshua of the promise.

**JOS 14:7 Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Jos 14:8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the**

**people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God.**

The children of Israel had been wandering in the wilderness for a period of two years by the time Moses sent the spies into Canaan from Kadesh-Barnea. At that time Caleb was forty years of age. He had been a man of vigor, and able to go out to war. Only he and Joshua had brought back a positive report. With the Lord on their side, they could take the land in spite of the giants and the walled cities.

It would not have been easy for Caleb to speak his convictions in the presence of the majority of the spies who disagreed with him. Still, he did so.

**JOS 14:9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.**

Moses had appreciated Caleb's stand and he expressed the mind of the Lord when he promised the land upon which Caleb's feet had trodden would become he and his children's inheritance. This promise is found in Deut. 1:35-36.

Deu 1:35 Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers.

Deu 1:36 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he

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shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.

**JOS 14:10 And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old.**

The children of Israel wandered for thirty-eight years more before entering the land. Joshua says he had been kept alive by the Lord for forty-five years since the promise had been made to him. If he was forty at the time of the promise, and God had kept him alive for another forty-five years, He must have been eighty-five at this time, as stated in this verse.

However, if Israel wandered for thirty-eight years after the spies returned with their reports, Caleb would have been seventy-eight when Israel reached Canaan. The other seven years must have covered the time between arriving at Canaan and the time in which Caleb is speaking.

**JOS 14:11 As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.**

The more important thing is that God's promise was about to be kept, and God had preserved Caleb's vigor to the point that he was still able to lead the tribe of Judah into their inheritance.

**JOS 14:12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.**

What territory was it that the Lord had promised Caleb those long years before? It was the land where his feet had trodden as he spied out the giants and the walled cities. That was precisely what Caleb was asking Joshua to award to him before the general allotment to all of the tribes.

Caleb was just as certain the land where the Anakim lived could be taken these forty-five years later, as he was when he first declared the certainty of victory with the Lord on Israel's side.

The word "if" does not indicate doubt. It is a simple statement of confidence in Jehovah. With Jehovah helping Caleb could take the land of the giants.

**JOS 14:13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.**



Joshua recognized the truth of Caleb's claim. He therefore assigned Caleb Hebron as his portion. The blessing may well have meant two things. First, it could have meant Joshua pronounced God's blessing upon Caleb. It could also have meant that the inheritance which Caleb received as a blessing.

**JOS 14:14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.**

God's promise to Caleb was honored. Hebron was given to Caleb and his descendants until the day this record was being written.

Some have been concerned that Joshua was called the son of a Kenezite. We do not know this means his ancestry was blighted by non-Israelite blood. What we do know is that Rahab and the Gibeonites were blessed among the Israelites. We also know that here was a leader of the tribe of Judah who had demonstrated magnificent faith and courage before the eyes of his Creator.

**JOS 14:15 And the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.**

Kirjath-arba means the "city of Arba." Arba was a famous figure among the Anakims, or giants. As the territory passed into the hands of Caleb it would lead to at least a momentary rest from the conflicts

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up to this point. Notice that it does not say “unto this day.”



## *Chapter 15*

Chapter fifteen considers the borders of the territory allocated to the tribe of Judah. Caleb had approached Joshua concerning the promise made by Moses that Caleb would receive an inheritance in the land. Joshua honored the promise by assuring Caleb of an inheritance within that of the tribe of Judah.

Judah was to be a very prominent tribe. It is the first of the nine and one half tribes receiving territory west of the Jordan river to be mentioned in the allotment process. It is also the tribe from which the line of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, arose.

**JOS 15:1 This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin southward was the uttermost part of the south coast.**

Edom was Israel's neighbor to the south. Judah's southern border was part of the northern border of the Edomites. The wilderness of Zin should not be confused with the wilderness of Sin which was located farther west.

**JOS 15:2 And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea, from the bay that looketh southward:**

The border began at the southern end of the salt

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sea, which is also called the Dead Sea. All of the seas of the world are salty, but this sea is claimed to have a higher concentration of salt than others.

**JOS 15:3 And it went out to the south side to Maalehacrabbin, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadeshbarnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa:**

**JOS 15:4 From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south coast.**

We will not take the space to describe the location of each of the cities and geographical locations mentioned. Basically, the border extended from the south end of the Dead Sea westward until it met one of the branches of the delta of the Nile river. There is some difference of opinion as to whether the river of Egypt was the Nile proper, or one of the eastern branches of the Nile delta.

**JOS 15:5 And the east border was the salt sea, even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan:**

**JOS 15:6 And the border went up to Bethhogla, and passed along by the north of Betharabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben:**



**JOS 15:7 And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is before the going up to Adummim, which is on the south side of the river: and the border passed toward the waters of Enshemesh, and the goings out thereof were at Enrogel:**

The eastern border of Judah followed the coast of the Dead Sea and then followed the west side of the Jordan river until it reached a point just south of the city of Jerusalem, and then turned westward.

**JOS 15:8 And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward:**

**JOS 15:9 And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron; and the border was drawn to Baalah, which is Kirjathjearim:**

Some of the details listed in verses eight and nine are closely related to the city of Jerusalem itself. The valley of Hinnom was a waste dump for the city. The dump was constantly burning which caused it to be used as a type of the eternal fires of hell.

**JOS 15:10** And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which is Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Bethshemesh, and passed on to Timnah:

**JOS 15:11** And the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea.

**JOS 15:12** And the west border was to the great sea, and the coast thereof. This is the coast of the children of Judah round about according to their families.

The border passed Jerusalem on the south and moved westward until it reached the Mediterranean Sea. Thus the western border was the shore of the Mediterranean, following that shore southward until it reached the point where it met the river of Egypt, mentioned in verse four.

**JOS 15:13** And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron.

As he had promised, Joshua arranged for Caleb to have a portion within the territory assigned to Judah. God had recognized Caleb's faith by rewarding him with a special lot.



**JOS 15:14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.**

Caleb had said that with God by his side, he could defeat giants. These three who are listed were men of great stature. They were the sons of a giant.

**JOS 15:15 And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher.**

**JOS 15:16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.**

**JOS 15:17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.**

It was not uncommon at that time for a man to make arrangements for his daughter to become the wife of some young man with prestige and power. The city of Debir, which had been known by the name Kirjathsepher, was within the lot which had been given to Caleb. He made a promise that the man who succeeded in conquering that city would be privileged to have his daughter Achsah as a wife.

Othniel, who was Caleb's brother's son, was able to take the city of Debir. Caleb then kept his promise and gave his daughter to Othniel. Since Caleb and Achsah's father were brothers, Othniel married his own cousin. This would not have been frowned upon at that time and place. Othniel later became one of the judges of Israel.

We have no hint as to whether or not Achsah had already flirted with Othniel. There is no indication that Achsah objected. A wife who did not wish to be a wife would not be the best possible choice as a mate.

**JOS 15:18 And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?**

A dowry of some kind was often provided by the family of the bride. When Achsah and Othniel met, Achsah persuaded Othniel to ask for a dowry from Caleb, her father. Caleb was ready to oblige his daughter and her husband in the request. He asked what she would like. She had already told Othniel she wanted some real estate.

**JOS 15:19 Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.**

Caleb had apparently already given Achsah some gift of land. It was, however, a piece of property that was not well watered. Achsah wanted to include access to a supply of fresh water. This was reasonable to Caleb and he complied with her request.

**JOS 15:20 This is the inheritance of the**



**tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.**

We have been given the general outline of Judah's territory. The borders have been described. Now we will be given a very detailed report of the cities within those borders. Since the verse above speaks of their inheritance by families, a large number of the cities below were probably fairly small and made up of family clans.

**JOS 15:21 And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur,**

Verses twenty-one through thirty-two list a number of cities near the border of the Edomites. We will not attempt to associate each of the cities with events recorded in other places in the scriptures. That is not the purpose of this list. The purpose is apparently to show the great importance of the tribe of Judah.

**JOS 15:22 And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah,**

**JOS 15:23 And Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan,**

**JOS 15:24 Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,**

**JOS 15:25 And Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, and Hezron, which is Hazor,**

**JOS 15:26 Amam, and Shema, and**

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**Moladah,**

**JOS 15:27 And Hazargaddah, and Heshmon,  
and Bethpalet,**

**JOS 15:28 And Hazarshual, and Beersheba,  
and Bizjothjah,**

**JOS 15:29 Baalah, and Iim, and Azem,**

**JOS 15:30 And Eltolad, and Chesil, and  
Hormah,**

**JOS 15:31 And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and  
Sansannah,**

**JOS 15:32 And Lebaoth, and Shilhim, and  
Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty and  
nine, with their villages:**

The names of the cities do not always agree with the number given at the end of the group. In this case the cities named total thirty-six while the total given in verse thirty-two is only twenty-nine. This discrepancy may be due to the fact that some of the so-called cities were more like villages than cities.

**JOS 15:33 And in the valley, Eshtaol, and  
Zoreah, and Ashnah,**

**JOS 15:34 And Zanoah, and Engannim,  
Tappuah, and Enam,**

**JOS 15:35 Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh,  
and Azekah,**

**JOS 15:36 And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and  
Gederah, and .Gederothaim; fourteen cities  
with their villages:**



There are several subgroups in the second major grouping. All of these subgroups were located in the foothills to the southwest of Jerusalem. The first of these lay north of the others. It contained fourteen cities.

**JOS 15:37 Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdalgad,**

**JOS 15:38 And Dilean, and Mizpeh, and Joktheel,**

**JOS 15:39 Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon,**

**JOS 15:40 And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,**

**JOS 15:41 And Gederoth, Bethdagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages:**

Here we have the second subgroup of sixteen cities with their villages.

**JOS 15:42 Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,**

**JOS 15:43 And Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib,**

**JOS 15:44 And Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages:**

This is the third subgroup of nine cities and villages.

**JOS 15:45 Ekron, with her towns and her**



villages:

**JOS 15:46** From Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages:

**JOS 15:47** Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border thereof:

The last of the subgroups is found in verses forty-five through forty-seven.

**JOS 15:48** And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,

**JOS 15:49** And Dannah, and Kirjathsannah, which is Debir,

**JOS 15:50** And Anab, and Eshtemoh, and Anim,

**JOS 15:51** And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages:

**JOS 15:52** Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean,

**JOS 15:53** And Janum, and Bethtappuah, and Aphekah,

**JOS 15:54** And Humtah, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, and Zior; nine cities with their villages:

**JOS 15:55** Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,

**JOS 15:56** And Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah,

**JOS 15:57** Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages:

**JOS 15:58** Halhul, Bethzur, and Gedor,

**JOS 15:59** And Maarath, and Bethanath, and



**Eltekon; six cities with their villages:**

**JOS 15:60 Kirjathbaal, which is Kirjathjearim,  
and Rabbah; two cities with their villages:**

The above main group was in the hill country or mountainous area.

**JOS 15:61 In the wilderness, Betharabah,  
Middin, and Secacah,**

**JOS 15:62 And Nibshan, and the city of Salt,  
and Engedi; six cities with their villages.**

This last group was made up of cities found in the wilderness, or more deserted area.

There are serious difficulties in the way of arithmetical agreemen between the lists and the totals given. Some of these have to do with tribes lying within the territory of another tribe. Some are related to the size of the village or city. Then there are some which come about through differences in the listings of the oldest major documents we have available.

These problems are not of sufficient importance that they should mar our faith in the Holy Bible. There is a God in heaven. We would certainly expect Him to reveal His will to those who were made in His image. He has done that through both the wonders and organization of nature, and also through His inspired Word.

This present commentator has found many difficulties in the past for which he had discovered solutions after more study. The reader is urged to study to show himself approved. If we seek the

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truth with all of our heart, that truth shall make you free!

**JOS 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.**

At the time of the writing of the book of Joshua there were some of the earlier inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem who were living among the Israelites. We are told they could not drive them out. There may have been two reasons for that fact. Israel may not have conducted themselves in such manner that God was pleased with them and did not aid them in the conflict. Also, God had said that He would not drive out the inhabitants all at once. If this had been done, thorns, thistles and wild beasts could have dominated the land before Israel could completely populate it. (See Deut. 7:22-23.)

Deu 7:22 And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.

Deu 7:23 But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

It was not until the time of David that Jerusalem was completely controlled by Israel (2 Sam. 5:5-10.)

## Chapter 16

The borders and inheritances of the two tribes arising from the two sons of Joseph are introduced in this chapter. The tribe of Ephraim is given more attention in the latter part of this chapter, while the tribe of Manasseh is attended to in the seventeenth chapter. These two tribes play a very important role in the history of the Jews, though certainly not equal to that of the tribe of Judah.

A main point of the chapter has to do with the failure of these tribes to drive out the Canaanites, or to subject them to bondage. This failure led to serious consequences later as first the northern kingdom of Israel fell into idolatry, and then the southern kingdom of Judah followed suit.

**JOS 16:1 And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Bethel,**

These first three verses outline the territory of both Ephraim and Manasseh, as if they were a single tribe. The two tribes inherited some of the finest and most fertile land available. Jacob had spoken with pride about these two tribes. The portion of the land which fell to them reflects that pride.

The southern border ran from the Jordan river near Jericho eastward toward the Mediterranean Sea. The wilderness means a less populated area rather than jungle land.

**JOS 16:2 And goeth out from Bethel to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,**

There is some concern over this statement which seems to indicate Bethel and Luz were two different cities. The NIV translates these first two verses as:

The allotment for Joseph began at the Jordan of Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, and went up from there through the desert into the hill country of Bethel. It went from Bethel **(that is Luz)**—

It is quite possible that the sites of the two cities were changed over a period of time and were seen as a single city.

**JOS 16:3 And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Bethhoron the nether, and to Gezer; and the goings out thereof are at the sea.**

This is the only place in the scriptures where the Japhleti are mentioned. Gezer is several miles from the coast of the Mediterranean, but no cities are mentioned over that distance.

**JOS 16:4 So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.**

This verse is but a summary statement of the fact that both of the tribes through the two sons of Joseph received an inheritance, making that of Joseph double. The reader would do well to look back carefully at the forty-eighth and forty-ninth chapters of Genesis where Jacob blessed his twelve sons.

**JOS 16:5 And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families was thus: even the border of their inheritance on the east side was Atarothaddar, unto Bethhoron the upper;**

The two tribes are now considered separately. Ephraim is first. Ephraim was located to the south of Manasseh. It's southern border coincided with the northern borders of Benjamin and Dan. It was bordered on the east by the Jordan river. It seems that Ephraim had some access to the ports on the Mediterranean, although the description of it's territory does not show a shoreline.

**JOS 16:6 And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanathshiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;**

**JOS 16:7 And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.**

**JOS 16:8 The border went out from Tappuah westward unto the river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is**



**the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families.**

The cities and villages mentioned above were intended to point out the general directions of the borders of the tribe of Ephraim. Even though they have been difficult to pinpoint, the general outline of the inheritance of Ephraim is identifiable.

The names of the cities within the territory are given almost no attention. Many Bible students have wondered why so many cities are mentioned within the borders of the tribe of Judah, while those located within Ephraim and Manasseh are almost wholly omitted. The reason may be that God recognized beforetime just how important the tribe of Judah would be in the development of the Jewish people.

**JOS 16:9 And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.**

The relationship between the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh was so close that certain cities which actually belonged to Ephraim were located within the territory commonly seen as that of Manasseh.

**JOS 16:10 And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.**



This is a key verse in the chapter. Ephraim, like all the other tribes, was expected to either drive out the Canaanites who formerly controlled their land, or they were to subjugate them to forced labor. In the case of the Gibeonites, a treaty was made such that they were expected to conform to the worship of Israel. The condition of the Canaanites who remained in the territory of Ephraim was not a treaty in which the Canaanites adopted the religious worship of Jehovah. They were only placed under bondage or servitude with the expectation that they would reward Ephraim with material profit.

This was a mistake leading to serious consequences for all of God's people. Both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah adopted the religious practices of the Canaanites. This resulted in their own bondage in Assyria and Babylonia.



## Chapter 17

At this point we have discussed the inheritances of Judah and Ephraim. Judah was taken up first because of the greater importance of this tribe with reference to the history of Israel. The two Joseph tribes follow because of their prominent position. They are not equal in importance with Judah, however they do hold a higher position than the rest of the tribes.

We now turn our attention to the inheritance of Manasseh. We will find it to be intertwined with that of Ephraim in some instances.

**JOS 17:1 There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.**

Yes, Manasseh was the first son of Joseph. Nevertheless, Ephraim stood higher as predicted at the time Jacob blessed his sons. We turn back the pages to Genesis forty-eight for a moment.

Gen 48:17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

Gen 48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not

so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

Gen 48:19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Gen 48:20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Jacob left no doubt that he knew Manasseh was the firstborn, but that Ephraim would stand in a higher position.

Machir was the firstborn of Manasseh. He had established himself as a valiant warrior in the taking of the land. He received the territories of Gilead and Bashan on the east side of the Jordan. This was the territory allotted to the half tribe of Manasseh. Machir was very likely dead at this time. He would have been a man of some two hundred years if still living. This is highly doubtful. The lot was probably given to his descendants.

**JOS 17:2 There was also a lot for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hopher, and for the children of Shemida:**



**these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families.**

There was still a lot for the rest of Manasseh's descendants. There were six more sons of Manasseh who had not yet received their lot. They were:

- Abiezer
- Helek
- Asriel
- Shechem
- Shemida
- Hepher.

**JOS 17:3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.**

Zelophehad, who was a great great grandson of Manasseh, had no sons. He did have five daughters. They were:

- Mahlah
- Noah
- Hoglah
- Milcah
- Tirzah

**JOS 17:4 And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance**

**among our brethren. Therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.**

The daughters of Zelophehad were very outspoken about being given no inheritance as the five sons mentioned above. Their plea was accepted and they were given an inheritance, even though the inheritance normally passed through the males.

This event is recorded also in Numbers 7 and I Chronicles 27.

**JOS 17:5 And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan;**

**JOS 17:6 Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.**

We have already discussed the portions which fell to the one half tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan. Now we find that ten portions were received on the west side. Hephher is represented through the five daughters of Zelophehad while the other five sons of Manasseh each received their own inheritance. The total number of portions on the west side added up to ten.

**JOS 17:7 And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that lieth before Shechem; and the border went along**

**on the right hand unto the inhabitants of Entappuah.**

There were three tribes that bordered Manasseh on the north. They were Issachar, Zebulun and Asher.

**JOS 17:8 Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim;**

This is one of those instances in which Ephraim and Manasseh seem to have had intermingled possessions. Tappuah was on the border of these two tribes, but belonged to Ephraim.

**JOS 17:9 And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea:**

The Kanah river ran westward toward the Mediterranean Sea. Several cities belonging to Ephraim were found among the territory of Ephraim.

**JOS 17:10 Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea is his border; and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east.**

Land south of the Kanah river belonged to Ephraim. That north of the river belonged to Manasseh.

**JOS 17:11 And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Bethshean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Endor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries.**

In addition to the cities belonging to Ephraim, Manasseh claimed a number of cities in both the tribes of Issachar and Asher.

**JOS 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.**

**JOS 17:13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, but did not utterly drive them out.**

Have we not heard this song before? Every tribe mentioned to this point failed to drive out the Canaanites from their inherited land. God had commanded it, but they failed to obey the command. With God's help, they could have done so. With a lack of faith and trust, they could not.



**JOS 17:14 And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?**

Here it appears that both the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were unhappy over the amount of land assessed to them. They claimed that since they were so numerous and had been blessed by the Lord Himself with many children, they needed more land than other tribes.

**JOS 17:15 And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.**

Joshua did not appreciate the attitude of Joseph's descendants. There was a sufficient amount of land for them. It was true that it was covered with trees, but if they were so numerous this should be not great problem.

**JOS 17:16 And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.**

Joseph's descendants replied that the land Joshua had spoken about could only be deforested if the Canaanites who dwelt in the valley which they had to cross were to be defeated. These Canaanites had chariots made of iron, while their own arms were not equal to their opponents. They could not get past the Canaanites.

**JOS 17:17 And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only:**

Joshua admitted there were many people in the two tribes which had come to him. They were strong and numerous. Still, there would be no change in the territory awarded to them.

**JOS 17:18 But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.**

They were to arise and go forward. Iron chariots are not sufficient to defeat God's faithful children. They were not sufficient in the days of Pharaoh, and they were not sufficient to defeat the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

There is a strong lesson here for present day Christians. Paul told the Ephesians to put on the whole armor of God and fight unrighteousness, even



though is may seem to have overwhelming power.  
(See Ephesians 6:10-13.)

Eph 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.



## *Chapter 18*

The Bible record given in this chapter tells of the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh. The surveying of the land which was still to be allotted to the seven remaining tribes was commanded. The borders and cities of the tribe of Benjamin are then listed.

**JOS 18:1 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.**

After crossing the Jordan river the tabernacle had been erected at Gilgal. It remained there until it became safe to move it to a more central location in the promised land. Shiloh was to become the resting place for the tabernacle until the Philistines captured the ark in the time of David. The time it had remained in Gilgal was only a few years. The time it remained at Shiloh is debated, but may have been as much as three hundred years.

The statement that the land was subdued does not imply that no opposition remained. It informs us that resistance was reduced to a level safe enough to locate the tabernacle.

**JOS 18:2 And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.**

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Reuben, Gad and half the tribes of Mannaseh had received their allotments on the east side of the Jordan. The other half of Manasseh, plus Judah and Ephraim had by this time received their land within Canaan on the west side of the river. This left the tribes of Simeon, Asher, Issachar, Benjamin, Levi, Naphthali, and Dan. Levi did not inherit land. The tribe of Joseph had been divided to become the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. It was time for apportionment of the rest of the land.

**JOS 18:3 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the LORD God of your fathers hath given you?**

Joshua was concerned about the lack of action in claiming the tribal possessions. They had been entirely too willing to begin a life of ease and absence of conflict. God had supported them with miracles from the time they left Egypt until they crossed the Jordan. It was now difficult to accept the fact that they were to exert more of their own strength to continue in obedience to God's command that the rest of the Canaanites be defeated.

God had given them the land, but it remained for them to take that which was rightfully theirs. The Canaanites were vile and wicked. They were actually trespassers on a land which they did not deserve.

**JOS 18:4 Give out from among you three**

**men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come again to me.**

A total of twenty-one men, three from each of the remaining seven tribes, was to be selected to survey the land. They would go through it and make careful records of the quality of the land and the cities found there. They were to return and report their findings to Joshua. Division among the seven tribes would be made according to their records.

**JOS 18:5 And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north.**

The text is not saying Ephraim and Manasseh were to be located in the far north. They were to be located north of Shiloh. Judah was to be south of Shiloh.

**JOS 18:6 Ye shall therefore describe the land into seven parts, and bring the description hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.**

The men who had made the survey were to partition the land into seven lots. As we see later, these lots were not equal in size. They were to be distributed fairly with respect to overall value.

Joshua would oversee the matching of the seven lots with the seven remaining tribes. He would do this “before the Lord our God.” This means he expected God to control the casting of the lots in such manner that His will was followed. It is not mentioned that Eliazar, the High Priest, was present. It is probably safe to assume that he was.

**JOS 18:7 But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.**

No lot was to be assigned to the Levites. They had the privilege of serving in the priesthood. They would not cultivate land. They would be supported by the sacrifices and offerings that were made to Jehovah.

The tribes of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh had received their lot under the supervision of Moses before the crossing of the Jordan. Moses had made the decision by the command of the Lord.

**JOS 18:8 And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land, and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots for you before the LORD in Shiloh.**

**JOS 18:9 And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities**  
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**into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh.**

The twenty-one surveyors did as they were told. They walked through the land and noted the cities which were there. Then they divided the land with reference to the cities. Their conclusions were recorded in writing making it possible for later generations to verify what had been decided.

**JOS 18:10 And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD: and there Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their divisions.**

Joshua did not divide the land. The surveyors had done that. Joshua, under the providential guidance of Jehovah, cast lots to match each of the tribes with one of the lots the surveyors had laid out.

It is well to note here that this was a different type of expedition than that of the spies sent out by Moses years earlier. Moses spies were expected to bring back word as to what kind of resistance might be expected. These men Joshua sent out were to determine how the land was to be allotted.

**JOS 18:11 And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.**

Benjamin was the first of the tribes to be assigned.

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Even the families of the tribes were considered in the assignment. Certain portions of the lot would be able to support more people than others. The tribe of Benjamin was to be sandwiched between the tribe of Judah and the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

**JOS 18:12 And their border on the north side was from Jordan; and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward; and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Bethaven.**

The Jordan river bordered Benjamin for a short distance of four or five miles on the east side. The border ran westward past the cities of Jericho, Ai and Bethel. On the west side was another short border with the tribe of Dan. The remainder of the border faced the tribe of Judah on the south side.

The two tribes of Benjamin and Dan possessed a strip of land across the land of Canaan averaging perhaps ten miles in width.

**JOS 18:13 And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, which is Bethel, southward; and the border descended to Atarothadar, near the hill that lieth on the south side of the nether Bethhoron.**

**JOS 18:14 And the border was drawn thence, and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that lieth before Bethhoron**



southward; and the goings out thereof were at Kirjathbaal, which is Kirjathjearim, a city of the children of Judah: this was the west quarter.

**JOS 18:15** And the south quarter was from the end of Kirjathjearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah:

**JOS 18:16** And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to Enrogel,

**JOS 18:17** And was drawn from the north, and went forth to Enshemesh, and went forth toward Geliloth, which is over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben,

**JOS 18:18** And passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah:

**JOS 18:19** And the border passed along to the side of Bethhoglah northward: and the outgoings of the border were at the north bay of the salt sea at the south end of Jordan: this was the south coast.

**JOS 18:20** And Jordan was the border of it on the east side. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families.

We are not going to use the space to give the history of each of these cities. The reader should note the agreement of the above verses with what was said about the ones who made the survey dividing the land by it's cities. Throughout the descriptions of the land inherited by each of the tribes of Israel, the borders are identified by telling what cities were nearby. A large number of these cities are listed in the borders of both of the tribes on the two sides of the border. This has caused some to be concerned over error in the Holy Bible. This is not a justified accusation.

**JOS 18:21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, and Bethhoglah, and the valley of Keziz,**

Now we come to a list of cities within the tribe of Benjamin. These are not necessarily border cities. They might be located anywhere within the allotted territory. Some of these cities are important enough that they need to be given special attention.

**JOS 18:22 And Betharabah, and Zemaraim, and Bethel,**

**JOS 18:23 And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah,**

**JOS 18:24 And Chepharhaammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages:**

**JOS 18:25 Gibeon, and Ramah, and**



**Beeroth,**

**JOS 18:26 And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,**

**JOS 18:27 And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,**

**JOS 18:28 And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, which is Jerusalem, Gibeath, and Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.**

Bethel means “house of God.” Jacob had declared that “Surely God is in this place.” It later became a center of idol worship. A golden calf was set up there.

Jerusalem was the most important of all the cities in Palestine. It was so important the one of the names of heaven is the “New Jerusalem.”

Jericho is well known as the city whose walls came tumbling down after Israel marched around it and then blew their trumpets.

Geba, or Gibeah became a hotbed of immorality and pagan worship. The prophet Hosea described it’s wickedness in the ninth and tenth chapters of the book titled with his name.

Mizpeh was the city from which Samuel acted as judge and instructed the people to select a king.

There are two men, both named Saul, who magnify the importance of this tribe of Benjamin. Saul, the king, was from this tribe. Saul, the apostle was also from the tribe of Benjamin. One does not have to come from the largest state or the largest

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country to make a great contribution to the progress of mankind. The greatest contributions are made by those with the greatest faith and spiritual stature, regardless of their geographical origin.



## Chapter 19

The tribes of major importance had by now received their inheritances. This chapter will record the allotment of the remainder. The cities and villages associated with each tribe will be listed. This helps to define the borders of each tribe.

Joshua is given an individual lot within the territory of Ephraim, which was the tribe of his birth.

**JOS 19:1 And the second lot came forth to Simeon, even for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.**

Shortly before his death, Jacob had spoken of the future of his son's descendants. (See Genesis 49:5-7.)

Gen 49:5 Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.

Gen 49:6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Gen 49:7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Note that the inheritance of Simeon was within that of Judah. Simeon and Levi had been responsible for the cruel death of Shechem and Hamor his father, as a result of Shechem's defilement of Jacob's daughter Dinah. They plotted to have the men of Shechem circumcised and then attacked them while they were still sore from the circumcision and unable to defend themselves. Jacob saw this as unreasonable cruelty, and thus foretold of their scattering within the other tribes.

Judah considered their lot to be more than they needed. Perhaps they saw themselves unable to defend their entire territory from enemies who might invade from the south, since they were located near strong enemy forces. They offered to share their land with Simeon. As a result there are no border cities listed for Simeon. Some significant cities are mentioned within their territory, but no border is drawn out.

In a sense, it seems that Simeon was almost seen as a part of the lot of Judah. Several towns are mentioned as being in both Judah and Simeon.

**JOS 19:2 And they had in their inheritance Beersheba, and Sheba, and Moladah,**

Beersheba was thought of as the southernmost city in the land of Canaan. A number of times the entire land of Israel is described as being from "Dan to Beersheba.

**JOS 19:3 And Hazarshual, and Balah, and**  
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**Azem,**

**JOS 19:4 And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,**

**JOS 19:5 And Ziklag, and Bethmarcaboth, and Hazarsusah,**

Ziklag was given to David by king Achish. It is associated with several events in the life of David.

**JOS 19:6 And Bethlebaoth, and Sharuhem; thirteen cities and their villages:**

**JOS 19:7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:**

**JOS 19:8 And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalathbeer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.**

**JOS 19:9 Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.**

An overview of the location tells us that the lot of Simeon lay to the south of Judah. It was not surrounded by Judah, as the statement in verse one, that it was within the tribe of Judah might be understood. The statement means that the lot of Simeon was previously a part of that of the tribe of Judah. Simeon's border on the north was Judah. On the west it was the Mediterranean. On the east it

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was the Dead Sea. On the south it was Edom.

In fact, it may have been possible that Judah felt more comfortable with Simeon as a buffer between themselves and the Edomites.

As in previous descriptions, the number of cities mentioned does not equal the names of the cities given. This is probably due to the small size of some of the villages, resulting in not counting them as cities.

**JOS 19:10 And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:**

**JOS 19:11 And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam;**

**JOS 19:12 And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the border of Chislothabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia,**

**JOS 19:13 And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittahhepher, to Ittahkazin, and goeth out to Remmonmethoar to Neah;**

Gath-hepher was the birthplace of the prophet Jonah.

**JOS 19:14 And the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jipthahel:**



**JOS 19:15 And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages.**

The Bethlehem mentioned here is not the same as the village in which Jesus Christ was born. This one was in the lot of Zebulun. The one where Christ was born was in Judah.

**JOS 19:16 This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.**

The lot of Zebulun was farther north than those we have been discussing. It was bounded by Asher and Naphtali to the north and Issachar on the east. The half tribe of Manasseh was on the south. One can draw a straight line from the Sea of Galilee westward and follow it right through the heart of the lot of Zebulun

**JOS 19:17 And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families.**

The reader is reminded again that the word “families” refers to a larger unit than a father and mother with their children. It embraces an entire clan. The word “clan” is used in a number of translations.

**JOS 19:18 And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,**

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Jezreel was the site of King Ahab's palace, with the vineyard of Naboth nearby.

Shunem was the city from which the young maiden came to keep King David warm when he became old and his health was failing. Elisha also restored the son of a widow to life at Shunem.

**JOS 19:19 And Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anaharath,**

**JOS 19:20 And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,**

**JOS 19:21 And Remeth, and Engannim, and Enhaddah, and Bethpazzez;**

**JOS 19:22 And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Bethshemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages.**

The name "Beth-shemesh" means "house of the sun." The reader will notice that there are several locations in Palestine with the same ending as this city. This is indication of the worship of the heavenly bodies by the Canaanites.

**JOS 19:23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.**

The lot of Issachar was bounded by the Jordan river on the east, by the half tribe of Manasseh on the south, by the tribe of Naphtali on the north and by Zebulun on the west.



**JOS 19:24 And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.**

Four of the Levite cities were located in the lot of Asher. They were Abdon, Hammon, Kanah and Rehob.

**JOS 19:25 And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph,**

**JOS 19:26 And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihorlibnath;**

**JOS 19:27 And turneth toward the sunrising to Bethdagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthahel toward the north side of Bethemek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand,**

King Solomon gave a portion of land containing twenty cities, including Cabul, to Hiram the king of Tyre. In return Solomon received materials for the building of the temple in Jerusalem.

**JOS 19:28 And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great Zidon;**

Hebron was in the highlands near Sodom. When Abraham offered Lot the choice of the land. Lot choose to pitch his tent toward Sodom. Abraham then made Hebron his home. It was at Hebron that Abraham purchased the cave of Macphelah where Isaac was buried.

**JOS 19:29 And then the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:**

Tyre was a fortified island city offshore in the Mediterranean Sea. Tyre and Sidon are often mentioned together.

**JOS 19:30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.**

There were at least three cities by the name Aphek. There was one in Ephraim, one in Geshur and the one mentioned here in Asher.

**JOS 19:31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.**

The lot of Asher was bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea. To the north was the land of the Sidonians. To the south and the west it touched on territory of three other tribes. They were Naphtali, Zebulun and the half tribe of Manasseh.

**JOS 19:32 The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families.**

**JOS 19:33 And their coast was from Heleph,**



**from Allon to Zaanannim, and Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings thereof were at Jordan:**

The land allotted to Naphtali was some of the most fertile in all of the promised land. It was excellent for pasture and for the growing of crops. It was positioned in a strip running along the plains of the Mediterranean.

**JOS 19:34 And then the coast turneth westward to Aznothtabor, and goeth out from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon Jordan toward the sunrising.**

**JOS 19:35 And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and Chinnereth,**

There are not many mentions of fortified cities in Canaan. Here we have a list of a sizable number. We must ask ourselves if some of these were among those the spies saw when Moses sent them in to survey the defenses which must be overcome in taking the land.

**JOS 19:36 And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,**

**JOS 19:37 And Kedesh, and Edrei, and Enhazor,**

**JOS 19:38 And Iron, and Migdalel, Horem,**

**and Bethanath, and Bethshemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.**

**JOS 19:39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.**

Not mentioned above are the cities of Capernaum and Bethsaida. Christ did much teaching and powerful works in this area.

Naphtali's inheritance was bounded on the south by the tribe of Issachar. On the east it followed the course of the stream which passed through the Sea of Galilee and then was known as the Jordan river. The tribes of Zebulun and Asher were on the west between Naphtali and the Mediterranean.

Lying in the far north of Canaan, Naphtali had to contend with enemies such as Damascus and the Assyrians.

**JOS 19:40 And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.**

The record of the tribe of Dan is unique. This tribe was awarded land in the midst of the land west of the Jordan and approximately midway between the northern tribe of Asher and the southern tribe of Simeon. Later, they moved to the north and settled there. The statement that Israel extended from Dan to Beersheba could not have meant the northern and southern extremes of the land of the twelve tribes before the tribe of Dan moved into the north.



**JOS 19:41 And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Irshemesh,**

**JOS 19:42 And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,**

**JOS 19:43 And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron,**

**JOS 19:44 And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,**

**JOS 19:45 And Jehud, and Beneberak, and Gathrimmon,**

**JOS 19:46 And Mejarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.**

**JOS 19:47 And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.**

The reason for the departure of Dan from their original allotment was that they felt they did not have sufficient room. They therefore went north and took the territory of Leshem and changed it's name to honor their ancestor.

The book of Judges informs us that the tribe of Dan was unable to drive out the Canaanites from their original allotment. (See Judges 1:34-35.)

Jdg 1:34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

Jdg 1:35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

**JOS 19:48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.**

At this point in time, Dan was bordered by Judah on the south, The Mediterranean Sea on the west, Ephraim and Benjamin on the east and the half tribe of Manasseh on the north.

**JOS 19:49 When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:**

This marks the end of the dividing of the land to the tribes as tribal inheritances. There still remained one item which needed attention. Joshua had been a valiant leader from the earliest days when Israel had left the bondage of Egypt. He deserved a special individual allotment.

Joshua could have used his accomplishments to demand a portion before any of the tribes received theirs. He was not a selfish man. Thus he waited until all of the tribes had been taken care of.

**JOS 19:50 According to the word of the LORD they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnathserah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.**

Jehovah had commanded that Joshua receive a request. The people of Israel were happy to obey that command. They gave Joshua a city for which he asked in the territory of Ephraim. Ephraim was the tribe into which he was born.

**JOS 19:51 These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.**

The method of dividing the land among the tribes could hardly be questioned. Eleazar the High Priest presided along with Joshua the military leader. Each of the tribes had a prince or leader present when the lots were cast. The action was taken at the door of the tabernacle of the Lord at Shiloh.

Some commentators have made the statement that although there were minor quibbles later on, there were no major disagreements at the time of the allotment. Considering the statement of the tribe of Ephraim that their portion was not large enough for a tribe as blessed and numerous as they, and considering the move of Dan from the original allotment to one a significant distance away, there might be some question about whether these were “quibbles” or not.

The detailed lists of cities and villages may seem



difficult to follow in this part of the book of Joshua. God had His reasons for passing this information down to those who live in the latter days. One possible reason is to demonstrate the impossibility of major fraud in the divine book. The events and the places where they took place were not figments of human imagination. They were real. The unbelievers and Bible critics must admit the evidence.



## *Chapter 20*

By this time the land had been allotted to the tribes and Joshua had received an individual portion. However, there were still a couple of actions that needed to be taken. Cities of refuge were to be identified and cities for the Levites were to be appointed throughout the land. This chapter will discuss the cities of refuge and the next will deal with the Levite cities.

**JOS 20:1 The LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying,**

**JOS 20:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:**

Joshua was reminded that Moses had passed on to him a commandment to appoint certain cities as places of refuge. This had not yet been done and it was time to attend to that command.

These cities of refuge had been spoken of in several places in the writings of Moses. Exodus 21:12-13, Numbers 35:6 and Deuteronomy 19:2-10 all deal with these cities.

Exo 21:12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

Exo 21:13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.

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Num 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.

Deu 19:2 Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

Deu 19:3 Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither.

Deu 19:4 And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past;

Deu 19:5 As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:

Deu 19:6 Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

Deu 19:7 Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.

Deu 19:8 And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto



thy fathers;

Deu 19:9 If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

Deu 19:10 That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.

**JOS 20:3 That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.**

God had commanded that the man who deliberately murdered another human was to have his own life taken. It was not just the right of a near kinsman to see that this sentence was carried out. It was his duty. This near kinsman was called the “avenger of blood.” (See Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17.)

Gen 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Lev 24:17 And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

In earlier times the one who had killed could flee to the altar and could not be taken from it without proof that he had committed deliberate murder.



With the appointment of these cities of refuge, the fortified city replaced the altar. If a person had been responsible for the accidental death of another, such as is called manslaughter in our own days, the city of refuge provided protection from the avenger of blood until his innocence or guilt could be determined.

**JOS 20:4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.**

The one who had killed another person and was fleeing from the avenger of blood was to approach the gates of the city where court cases were normally considered. He was to explain his situation to the elders of the city. They were then to allow him to enter the city where he could escape from the pursuer for the time being.

This process would tend to eliminate family feuds which are so common in some parts of the world. There would be time for the cooling of hot tempers.

**JOS 20:5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.**



If the avenger of blood came to the gates of the city to kill the one who had shed blood, that one who had killed was not to be delivered to the avenger of blood.

It is assumed here that the action was manslaughter rather than premeditated murder. The accused was considered innocent until proven guilty. If the killing was accidental and not deliberate, this would be established a bit later by an impartial group.

As an example of accidental killing the Bible cites the case of one who is chopping wood with an axe, and the head of the axe slips off and kills a person who is standing by. A modern case might be that in which a person steps out from the curb of a street into the way of an oncoming car and there is not time enough to stop before striking and killing him. (See Deut. 19:5 above.)

**JOS 20:6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.**

There are two views as to the identity of the congregation which was to judge the person. One contends that the slayer was to be returned to his own congregation for judging. The other believes



it to be the congregation of the city of refuge. The latter is far more likely. If the slayer left the city of refuge the avenger of blood could take his life.

After the High Priest died, the slayer could return to his own city from which he had fled. Even if he was found innocent of deliberate murder, he was not to leave the city of refuge until the High Priest died.

**JOS 20:7 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.**

Three cities of refuge were selected on the west of the Jordan river. They were placed in such position that the manslayer could reach one of them within a single day. Some say half a day would be sufficient.

The three cities appointed on the west of the Jordan were:

1. Kedesh- in Galilee
2. Shechem- in Mount Ephraim
3. Hebron- in Judah

**JOS 20:8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.**

Another three were appointed on the east side of the Jordan. Thus no one had to cross the river to reach the most accessible city of refuge.

The three cities appointed on the east of the Jordan were:

1. Bezer- in Reuben
2. Ramoth- in Dan
3. Golan- in Manasseh

Some see the meanings of the names of these six cities, and the mention of the death of the High Priest are evidence that the combination of the six cities are typical of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, whose death provides a refuge for those who desire to place their lives in His hands. The meanings of the names of the six cities are as follows.

1. Kedesh      Set apart
2. Shechem     Shoulder or burden bearer
3. Hebron      Fellowship
4. Bezer Enclosed or fortified
5. Ramoth      Exalted
6. Golan To remove

Each of these meanings can be associated with the nature of Christ, who died as the Christian High Priest. Yet, it may be stretching the matter a bit to state that this was an undoubted type of Christ. The reader is urged to personally examine the possibility.

**JOS 20:9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that**

**whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.**

Not only were the cities of refuge to be available to the children of Israel. They were also to be available to any who were non-Israelites, but were either passing through or who had become proselytes.

## *Chapter 21*

This chapter deals almost exclusively with the apportionment of the cities to the Levite tribe. We have first the request of the Levites that Moses commandment to allot them cities be honored. The cities are then chosen. They are assigned to the various tribes, and a statement is made that God's promise to his people has been fulfilled.

**JOS 21:1 Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;**

Chief men of the tribe of Levi, of which there were four major families, approached Eleazar the High Priest, Joshua who had replaced Moses, and the chief men of the other tribes with an important request. They had waited patiently until the other allotments had been made. Now they reminded the others that Moses had commanded cities to be assigned to them.

**JOS 21:2 And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.**



Shiloh was the location of the tabernacle and was the center of religious activity. It might have been expected that the Levites be given a portion of the land around this city. It was not to be so. They were to be scattered throughout the territories of the other tribes.

They were to be assigned cities in which they could dwell. They were also to have a small portion of land some two thousand cubits in each direction from their city. This would serve as pastureland for their cattle. The cattle would have been the result of tithes from the rest of the tribes. (See now Numbers 35:4-5.)

Num 35:4 And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about.

Num 35:5 And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

**JOS 21:3 And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.**

There was no problem in receiving approval for the granting of the cities. The other tribes did as



God had commanded through Moses.

**JOS 21:4 And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, which were of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.**

Aaron was the Levite family of the Kohathites. Not all of the Kohathites were priests, but all of the priests were of the family of Aaron and were thus Kohathites. Thirteen cities were assigned to the priestly family. These cities came from the tribes of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin. These cities were all located near the city of Jerusalem which would later become the site of the temple, and the center of religious activities.

**JOS 21:5 And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.**

Only descendants of Aaron were admitted as priests. The rest of the family of Kohath received their cities from the tribes of Ephraim, Dan and one of the half tribes of Manasseh.

The total number of cities allotted to the family of Kohath was thirteen cities for the descendants of Aaron. The ten cities awarded to the rest of the

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children of Kohath made a total of twenty-three cities.

**JOS 21:6 And the children of Gershon had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.**

The Levites descending from Gershon received their cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, plus the other half of the tribe of Manasseh. There were thirteen cities given to the Gershonites. We now have a total of thirty-six.

**JOS 21:7 The children of Merari by their families had out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.**

The Levites descending from Merari received cities out of the tribes of Gad and Zebulun. There were twelve of these cities. These twelve plus the thirty-six above total forty-eight.

It is quite possible that not all of these forty-eight cities were used. They were, however, assigned to the Levites.

**JOS 21:8 And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.**



As seen above, in the comments on verse two, the cities included suburbs as pastureland for the livestock of the Levites.

**JOS 21:9 And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are here mentioned by name.**

Whereas up to this point we have only the number of cities involved, we now have a listing by name.

**JOS 21:10 Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot.**

**JOS 21:11 And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.**

The children of Aaron received the cities of Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Holon, Debir, Ain, Juttah, Beth-Shemesh, Gibeon, Geba, Anathoth, and Almon.

**JOS 21:12 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.**

**JOS 21:13 Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to**

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be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,

JOS 21:14 And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs,

JOS 21:15 And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs,

JOS 21:16 And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Bethshemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

JOS 21:17 And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs,

JOS 21:18 Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities.

JOS 21:19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs.

JOS 21:20 And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.

JOS 21:21 For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs,

JOS 21:22 And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Bethhoron with her suburbs; four cities.

JOS 21:23 And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,

JOS 21:24 Aijalon with her suburbs,

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**Gathrimmon with her suburbs; four cities.**

**JOS 21:25 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gathrimmon with her suburbs; two cities.**

**JOS 21:26 All the cities were ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.**

**JOS 21:27 And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh they gave Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Beeshterah with her suburbs; two cities.**

**JOS 21:28 And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs,**

**JOS 21:29 Jarmuth with her suburbs, Engannim with her suburbs; four cities.**

**JOS 21:30 And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,**

**JOS 21:31 Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.**

**JOS 21:32 And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammothdor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.**

**JOS 21:33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their suburbs.**

**JOS 21:34 And unto the families of the**

children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and Kartah with her suburbs,

JOS 21:35 Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.

JOS 21:36 And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs,

JOS 21:37 Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities.

JOS 21:38 And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Mahanaim with her suburbs,

JOS 21:39 Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all.

JOS 21:40 So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which were remaining of the families of the Levites, were by their lot twelve cities.

JOS 21:41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs.

We now have a complete list of each of the forty-eight cities assigned to the Levites. Out of these forty-eight, six were designated as cities of refuge. They were:

On the east side of the Jordan

1. In the north part—Golan
2. In the mid part—Ramoth-Gilead
3. In the south part—Bezer

On the west side of the Jordan

1. In the north part—Kedesh
2. In the mid part—Shechem
3. In the south part—Hebron

The cities of refuge were located in such positions that those in every part of Canaan might reach one of them without having to travel an enormous distance.

**JOS 21:42 These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.**

**JOS 21:43 And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.**

The Lord had not promised that the former inhabitants of Canaan would be driven out within a short period of time. In fact He had said He would see them driven out little by little that the land might not be overcome with wild animals and vegetation.

The latter part of verse forty-three does not indicate that there was no longer any opposition whatsoever from the former inhabitants. In addition, the giving of the land did not excuse Israel from doing their part. In many cases, the Israelites failed to drive out the Canaanites. This led to intermarriage and idolatrous worship later.

**JOS 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware**

**unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.**

Israel had control. The enemies dared not mount a major offensive against them. God had done His part in keeping His promises. Israel needed to do their part.

**JOS 21:45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.**

This verse is meant to be a period at the close of a long chapter in the Bible story. The book of Judges will show that Israel did not live up to the will of the Lord after having received control of the land. Every man proceeded to do that which was right in his own eyes. As this twenty-first chapter of the book of Joshua closes, there is reason for joy among the people of God. He had led them from the bondage of Egypt. He had guided them through the wilderness in spite of their spiritual weakness. He had brought them into the land which He had promised from the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was up to them to live by faith, walking in uprightness!



## *Chapter 22*

We have now reached a very critical point in the history of Israel. A wrong choice in the events recorded in this chapter could have led to civil war within God's people. Fortunately passions did not reach such a point that such a war erupted. The point of contention was carefully analyzed and Israel escaped disaster.

**JOS 22:1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,**

**JOS 22:2 And said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:**

When the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh saw the fertile land on the east side of the Jordan river, they had requested that they be allowed to claim their inheritance on that side. Joshua agreed, but under the condition that they cross into Canaan proper and help the rest of the tribes claim the territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

This was agreeable and the armies of the two and one half tribes crossed the Jordan with the rest. The task had been completed. Joshua commended the two and one half tribes for doing their part and helping their brethren.

**JOS 22:3** Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God.

**JOS 22:4** And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan.

Through the help of Jehovah, the land had been subdued. There were still pockets of Canaanites scattered in several areas, but they were unable to mount any serious offensive to drive the Israelites out of the land. Joshua was certain that a certain degree of relaxation could be enjoyed. The tribes on the west could rest without serious fear of retaliation by the Canaanites. The two and one half tribes could cross back over the Jordan and enjoy the fertile land on the east side of the river, which Moses had assigned to them.

**JOS 22:5** But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

There was a condition which had to be respected.  
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The tribes that remained on the east side of the river were bound by the law of the Lord just as truly as those on the west side were. They must serve Jehovah with all their heart and soul.

We are reminded of the words of Solomon when he stated that “The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments.” (See Eccl. 12:13; Matthew 22:37.) Joshua did not say a word indicating that he thought they might at some later time fail to keep such truths near and dear to their hearts.

**JOS 22:6 So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.**

To bless another is to ask God to provide such things as will bring happiness, health and spiritual well being. With such a blessing following them, the two and one half tribes had permission to return to their loved ones who still on the east side of the Jordan.

We do not know exactly how long these soldiers had been away from their families. Some have guessed that it was six or seven years. Others have suggested that there may have been a rotation in which some men stayed with the women and children while others joined the forces on the west side of the river. This is guesswork. The Bible does not tell us.

**JOS 22:7 Now to the one half of the tribe**



**of Manasseh Moses had given possession in Bashan: but unto the other half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them,**

Half the tribe of Manasseh was given territory on the east side of the Jordan in Bashan. The other half of that tribe received their allotment on the west side. Both halves of the tribe of Manasseh were given approval to move to their assigned land with the approval of Joshua. Recall that Joshua was God's spokesman at this time.

**JOS 22:8 And he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.**

Not only were the two and one half tribes allowed to cross back over the river to that fertile area they had previously requested. Joshua told them they could take a share of the wealth which had been wrested from the Canaanites during the war. They had assisted the rest of the tribes in the conflict. They deserved a portion of the spoils.

**JOS 22:9 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of**

**Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**

**JOS 22:10 And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.**

There is a sharp division of thought here as to whether the altar was built on the east or the west side of the Jordan. I believe the question can be answered through the two verses above.

The two and one half tribes left Shiloh after Joshua had blessed them and wished them well as they returned to the land they wished to claim on the east of the river. They left Shiloh to go to Gilead in the land where they expected to settle. Look carefully at verse twenty-two. This verse speaks of coming to the edge or border of Jordan. It then adds that this border was in the land of Canaan. Canaan proper was on the west side of the Jordan river. It was in the land of Canaan that the altar was built. The record tells us the altar was built to be seen, not as a place of sacrifice.

**JOS 22:11 And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the**

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**children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.**

This verse almost sounds as if the ten tribes were doubting the two and one half tribes were even a part of Israel. It speaks of the children of Israel observing what the others had done.

Those who believe the altar was built on the east side of the Jordan point out that the altar was built “over against the land of Canaan.” They claim one could look from the west side of the river and see the altar on the other side of the river right up close to Canaan proper.

**JOS 22:12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.**

The Bible does not tell us how long it was from the time the two and one half tribes set out from Shiloh until the time the altar was discovered. It does seem that if the altar had been built on the west side of the river, it would have been discovered quickly. On the other hand, if the two and one half tribes had passed over the river and some time had passed, it might not have been as obvious to the tribes on the west.

The key point is that those on the west side made the decision to go to war against the two and one half tribes because, as they saw it, the ones

who built the altar were forsaking God specific commandments that there be but one altar for the observance of the three major feasts of the people of Israel. (See Deut. 12:5-7.)

Deu 12:5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

Deu 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

Deu 12:7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

**JOS 22:13 And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,**

**JOS 22:14 And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.**

It would have been well if the two and one half tribes had consulted with Eleazar and Joshua before building the altar and explained the purpose for

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which it was built. It is possible that all concern could have been erased without considering war.

It is commendable that the leaders of the tribes on the east side of the river did not rush into action with military force before having investigated the situation. They decided to send a delegation of leaders to inquire about the seriousness of the problem before taking military action.

**JOS 22:15 And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying,**

**JOS 22:16 Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?**

The delegation was very clear as to the seriousness of their concern. It was obvious that the two and one half tribes had built an altar in addition to the one in Shiloh. They saw this as a sin which would place Israel in opposition to the will of God. This was wrong. God had delivered them from Egypt. He had guided them through the wilderness. He had given them the promised land. It appeared that they had forgotten His blessings and had decided to ignore His commandments concerning the altar and the sacrifices.

**JOS 22:17 Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD,**

Terrible consequences had arisen in the past when the men of Israel had ignored the commandments of Jehovah and had committed fornication with the women who worshipped Baal. It was not just the men themselves. It reached out into the entire congregation. The twenty-third chapter of the book of Numbers tells of twenty-four thousand who lost their lives as a result of turning to the sexually centered worship of the false god Baal. Was that catastrophe not sufficient to prevent setting up an altar in addition to the one Jehovah had approved in Shiloh?

**JOS 22:18 But that ye must turn away this day from following the LORD? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to day against the LORD, that to morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.**

The delegation from Joshua insisted that an even worse plague might come upon the entire twelve tribes if worship was begun at an altar which God had not approved.

**JOS 22:19 Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the LORD,**

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**wherein the LORD'S tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the LORD, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar beside the altar of the LORD our God.**

They suggested another solution. If they felt that they were too far from the altar at Shiloh and they saw it necessary to use an altar to secure cleansing of the land or the people from sin, they would be permitted to come over to the west side of the Jordan and settle among the nine and one half tribes there.

But above all, they must not defy the commandment of the Lord to offer sacrifices only at the altar which He approved. That altar was at Shiloh.

**JOS 22:20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity.**

Another example of the seriousness of false worship was then pointed out. Achan had decided to take an object of false worship. The entire congregation of Israel had suffered as a result of Achan's folly.

The case seemed very clear in the minds of the delegation. They waited for a response from the leaders of the tribes on the east of the river.

**JOS 22:21 Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,**

**JOS 22:22 The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day,)**

The reply was just as firm as the accusation. Look at the unusual form of the statement in the twenty-second verse. The word “Lord” is used three times. “God” is used four times in this one sentence. The two and one half tribes were quite willing to lay their case before the God of gods. He knew their hearts were true to Him. If they had built the altar in rebellion against God, they would take the punishment. They had not transgressed His will. God knew this, even if their brethren from the other side of the river did not.

**JOS 22:23 That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it;**

The defense continued. They had not built this altar to offer burnt offerings, meat offerings or peace offerings, as would be done at the major feasts. God knew they were speaking the truth. Let Him administer any punishment which was due.

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**JOS 22:24 And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the LORD God of Israel?**

The real reason they had built the altar was that they feared the time might come when the descendants on the west of the river might see those on the east side as not being children of God.

**JOS 22:25 For the LORD hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the LORD: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the LORD.**

They realized the Jordan river was a dividing line between the two and one half tribes on the east and the nine and one half tribes on the west. They wished to insure that all on both sides of the river would keep in mind the oneness of the entire congregation of Israel. They saw a danger that the people on the east might be rejected as a part of the servants of Jehovah.

**JOS 22:26 Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice:**

**JOS 22:27 But that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations**



**after us, that we might do the service of the LORD before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the LORD.**

The altar had not been built for offerings and sacrifices. It was to stand as a reminder or witness that all twelve of the tribes were one fold. All of God's children must have a part in the blessings of their Creator.

**JOS 22:28 Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.**

When the time came that either the descendants of those on the east or of the west side of Jordan saw Jehovah as the God of only part of the people, this could be answered by pointing to the altar. It would not be used for offerings and sacrifices. It would be used to show the unity of all Israel under one God.

**JOS 22:29 God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt**



**offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the LORD our God that is before his tabernacle.**

They very well knew that the offerings and sacrifices were to be presented only at the altar which was located at the tent of the tabernacle at Shiloh.

**JOS 22:30 And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.**

Cool heads and great wisdom had avoided a civil war between the tribes. The accusations of rebellion by the two and one half tribes were admitted to be wrong. There was reason for rejoicing in that all twelve of the tribes were true to the will of the God of gods.

**JOS 22:31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD.**

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, was the spokesman for the nine and one half tribes. He admitted that



the two and one half tribes had not committed rebellious sin against Jehovah. There would be no further military action to follow.

**JOS 22:32 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.**

The delegation headed by Phinehas returned from the territory east of the river and reported on the results of their mission. The tribes were not rebelling. They were true to God.

**JOS 22:33 And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.**

Would it not be wonderful if religious differences could be settled today as completely as these were? Instead, we find men fighting and devouring one another, crippling the growth of the Kingdom of God, and causing atheists and infidels to go on their way toward eternal destruction.

**JOS 22:34 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it**

**shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God.**

The altar was not torn down. It was given a name. That name was "Ed." The name proclaimed that altar to be a witness that Jehovah is God. Baal, Mars, Jupiter, Venus and the sun are not God. They were all brought into being by God.

Is there some type of memorial which could serve the same purpose as "Ed" did in the long ago? Perhaps the cross of Jesus Christ is as close as we can come to a parallel. All men need to come as one to kneel before the sacrificial death of the Lord at Calvary. Even then, it is the Son of God who is the object of worship, and not the wood upon which He hung and the nails which pinned Him there.

## *Chapter 23*

It is very difficult, if not impossible to determine just how long the time period was between that which was recorded in chapter twenty-two and the events of this present twenty-third chapter. It is generally agreed that Joshua was about one hundred twenty years of age.

The present chapter discusses Joshua's closing remarks to the people he had loved and led throughout the travels in the wilderness. At first he had shared the leadership with Moses. Then, after Moses' death, he had taken the primary leadership of the people upon his own back, as he received directions from Jehovah.

We can consider this chapter to be the farewell address of this great man as he prepared the people to move on after he had passed on to the afterlife.

**JOS 23:1 And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old and stricken in age.**

There were still pockets of Palestinians existing within the borders of Canaan, but organized resistance to the presence of the Israelites had been reduced to a much less significant level. Joshua's leadership responsibilities were about to come to an end.

**JOS 23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel,**  
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**and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:**

It is not an easy admission for a man to make when it becomes necessary to admit his age has rendered him in need of replacement. However, it makes it much easier if one has been as faithful to the Lord as this servant was.

He called for “all of Israel”, and particularly for those who held leadership responsibilities. Some commentators declare that this present speech was to be made before the leaders only. That is not what the text says. The leaders were there, but Joshua had requested the presence of “all Israel.”

**JOS 23:3 And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is he that hath fought for you.**

The first thing Joshua did was to remind them that they had been witnesses of the things which had been done in their midst which they could not have accomplished by their own power. God had fought for them! Large numbers of the Canaanites had been driven out of the land. They should have known that what had been accomplished could not have been done without the wisdom and the powerful arm of Jehovah.

**JOS 23:4 Behold, I have divided unto you**



**by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.**

It was not pride that brought the statement above. Joshua used the word “I”, but both he and his audience understood that he had only acted as an agent directed by Jehovah. With the guidance of the Lord, Joshua had led Israel in establishing control over the land of Canaan. This control existed from the origin of the Jordan river on the north to the southern end of the Dead Sea, and covered the land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean.

**JOS 23:5 And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.**

Only pockets of resistance still existed. This was because God knew the wild beasts and vegetation would dominate if the Canaanites were completely expelled in an extremely short time period. God had promised Israel the land, and He would be true to His promise.

At least that was true to the extent that Israel remained faithful to God. If they did not remain faithful, God was not bound by His promise.

**JOS 23:6 Be ye therefore very courageous to**



**keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;**

All would be well with Israel if they obeyed the law of the Lord, as given through Moses. Turning aside from that law would bring extremely serious consequences. Jehovah would continue to promote and protect His people if they indicated their desire to follow Him. If they ceased to follow Him and turned to follow other gods, or their own selfish desires, God's providential care would be withdrawn.

**JOS 23:7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:**

Israel was not to intermix with the Canaanites who remained in the land. They were to remain completely aloof from the false gods of the people who had been vanquished. Could God have been any more specific than He was?

They were not to:

1. Mention the name of the false gods.
2. Swear by them.
3. Serve them.
4. Bow down before them.

**JOS 23:8 But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.**

Israel had every reason to hate idolatry and cling to the true God of heaven and earth. They had done so while taking the land. Now they must continue to follow Him with all their heart in the days to come.

**JOS 23:9 For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.**

With the help of Jehovah, Israel had been successful in dominating nations more numerous than themselves. The most powerful of the kings of the land of Canaan had been unable to resist the Israelites as they were led by the only true and living God.

**JOS 23:10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.**

Even a ratio of one thousand humans to one Israelite who was backed by the power and wisdom of the true God was destined for defeat. Later, the Jews themselves tried to defeat the Son of God by murdering Him on the cross. God cannot be defeated. He and those who serve Him will see a final victory!

**JOS 23:11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.**

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This victory for those who fight on God's side will only be assured if they remain true to Him. They must love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Then they need have no fear.

**JOS 23:12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:**

This dominance would only hold true if Israel refused to intermarry with the remaining Canaanites. Otherwise the mixed marriage would result in loss of support from Jehovah.

The truth which is declared in this present verse is very much needed by Christians of later centuries. A Christian who takes a husband or a wife who is a non-Christian, is placing their own spiritual future in enormous danger. It is possible for a Christian to maintain a faithful life married to a non-Christian, but it is far from likely.

**JOS 23:13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.**

If the people of Israel were to show that they were willing to make alliances with the Canaanites,

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they need not expect the Lord to drive such infidels from the land. If Israel loved the people of the land, God would allow intermixing.

At the same time, God warned that such intermixing would result in the destruction of their faith in Him, and painful results, even reaching so far as the loss of the land which they had entered with the help of God.

**JOS 23:14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.**

It is not likely that Joshua knew he was going to die within the next twenty-four hours. The word “day” may simply mean his death was just ahead. At any rate, he was informing them that he had done all he was able to do in following the directions of his Lord, and when he was gone he wanted them to continue in faith that they might go on receiving the things God had promised to them that love and obey Him.

**JOS 23:15 Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good**



**land which the LORD your God hath given you.**

Just as surely as God had kept His promises of good things while they faithfully followed His will and His directions, He would punish them severely for disobedience and lack of faith. The final result of disobedience would be eviction from the land into which God had led them.

**JOS 23:16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.**

God does not make it impossible for men and women to turn away from Him and follow either false gods or the pleasures of the world. He gives men the freedom to “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.”

He does, however, inform we who have been made in His image that He will provide unimaginable eternal rewards for those who have the wisdom to choose righteousness. Just as surely and clearly, He states the fate of those who are so foolish as to follow in the footsteps of Satan. Every man is free to choose the unending bliss of heaven, or the eternal agony of the fires of hell!

Do not make the mistake of thinking God’s promises will not be kept. He informed Israel that if they chose to follow false gods and bow down before



them, they would perish from the good land which He had given them. They did just that, and found themselves in Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.

His promises are just as certain today. Dear reader, choose ye this day whom ye will serve!



## *Chapter 24*

This last chapter of Joshua has fascinated the commentators over the years. It contains Joshua's final remarks to the people he had led for many years, following the death of Moses.

The chapter contains a reminder of the many things Jehovah had done for His people, and also a call for the people to respond to that goodness by remaining true to Him in the ages to come.

There are three burials which close out the chapter. The bones of Joseph are buried. Joshua is buried, and Eleazar the High Priest is buried. Some see this last chapter of the book of Joshua as a fitting wrap up of the first six books of the Bible.

**JOS 24:1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.**

Chapter twenty-three had also described a similar gathering of the people and their leaders. It is considered by some that the gathering in chapter twenty-three, and this present gathering are different accounts of the same one. We consider this unlikely. We are not told of a given amount of time which passed between the events of chapter twenty-three and this last chapter. However, it may well be that in this last chapter Joshua was much more aware of his approaching death and wished to

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encourage the people of God in faithful service after his own departure from them.

It is to be noted that both gatherings included the leaders and the people. It is difficult to understand why many who write on this present material conclude that the gathering in chapter twenty-three did not include the people. The second verse of the twenty-third chapter specifically states that Joshua called for all Israel. This present verse states that Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel.

Thus we see both gatherings as all the people of Israel, and that neither was limited to the leaders alone. We still contend, however, that there were two separate gatherings, and that this present one was Joshua's true farewell address to the people he had loved and led for the years after Moses death.

We are not certain whether the two gatherings were both at Schechem or one was at Shiloh and the other at Schechem. The two places are about ten miles apart. The ark had been located at Shiloh, but since Joshua was old and infirm at the time, he could well have called for it to be brought to Schechem to add seriousness to the occasion.

**JOS 24:2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.**

I must admit that one of the most serious

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concerns I have concerning the descriptions of such gatherings of the all the people of Israel is in the vast numbers of people involved. We are talking about six hundred thousand men, plus their wives and children. The largest football stadiums hold just over one hundred thousand persons. We must be speaking of twenty times the number of persons who could fill one of these gigantic structures.

Although Schechem was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim, which might provide a natural amphitheater, it still seems doubtful that Joshua could have spoken to the entire congregation of some two million plus persons at once. It seems more likely that the entire congregations was assembled, and that the things Joshua was saying were relayed by the leaders to the rest of the nation.

Joshua spoke in the name of the Lord. Only later in his speech did he add his personal remarks. It is not “And I say unto you.” It is “Thus saith the Lord, God of Israel.”

The people were first reminded that their ancestors were worshipers of false gods. Terah, Abraham’s father lived on the other side of the Euphrates River and was a polytheist, worshiping many gods. It appears that Jehovah, the true God was not among them.

**JOS 24:3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.**

Jehovah had called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and guided him to the land of Canaan. He had lived there for some time and had seen his descendants multiply. In particular, God had given Abraham a son named Isaac.

**JOS 24:4 And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.**

Isaac then received two sons at the hand of the Lord. They were Jacob and Esau. Esau was the father of the Edomites who were allowed to settle in the vicinity of Mount Seir. The famine which plagued Palestine resulted in Jacob and his sons going to the land of Egypt where they became enslaved by the Egyptians.

**JOS 24:5 I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.**

Moses and Aaron did not just happen to arrive. The Lord had seen fit to place them in the land of Egypt when they were born. After Moses arrival at manhood, his life was providentially guided into the palace of Pharaoh. The ten plagues were then sent upon the Egyptians and Moses found himself leading God's people out of enslavement.

**JOS 24:6 And I brought your fathers out**

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**of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.**

**JOS 24:7 And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.**

Under the leadership of Moses, God arranged for the Israelites to pass through the Red Sea. When the Egyptians attempted to follow them, darkness prevented them from successfully following Israel. Then the Lord allowed the sea to return to its former position, drowning Egypt's army.

Israel had then spent forty years in the wilderness, led by the cloud and the pillar of fire. God was disappointed with them for their refusal to believe they could conquer the land after the spies dismal report. Yet, He continued to prepare them for later victory.

**JOS 24:8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.**

The land of the Amorites refers primarily to the highlands east of the Jordan river where Sihon and



Og ruled. Israel could not have conquered these kings through their own power. With the help of Jehovah, they were able to do so.

**JOS 24:9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you:**

**JOS 24:10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.**

Then Balak, the king of the Moabites hired Balaam to bring a curse upon the people. God would not allow the curse. He changed the attempted curse into a blessing.

At this point the two and one half tribes had requested that the land east of the Jordan be given to them. They were told that this would be possible if they aided their brethren in taking the rest of the land on the west of the Jordan.

**JOS 24:11 And you went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.**

Jericho resisted but fell when the walls of the city crumbled at the sound of the trumpets. The seven



influential nations in Canaan stood up to maintain possession of the land. God made it possible for seven nations to be dominated. They were:

1. Amorites
2. Perizzites
3. Canaanites
4. Hittites
5. Jebusites
6. Girgashites
7. Hivites

**JOS 24:12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.**

These victories were not a result of the great power of the army of Israel. They were possible because of the divine power and will of Jehovah. The inhabitants of Canaan had proven they were incorrigible. It was not lack of mercy upon the part of God. It was the knowledge that His own people needed a land, and that those who were in possession of Palestine would produce nothing but wickedness.

**JOS 24:13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.**

Israel had not earned the land by producing work for wages. They had not built the cities which were in the land. They had not cultivated the fields which were then producing crops of all sorts. In spite of this, God had made it possible for them to possess the land and claim it as their own.

We add that last line with the full admission that the Lord owns both the heavens and the earth. He does, however, give His people certain control of the material world for a season.

**JOS 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.**

It has been pointed out by several writers that this chapter presents a covenant which follow the same pattern as others of it's time. The pattern is as follows.

1. The king identifies himself.
2. The king points to his previous contributions.
3. The expected response of the people.
4. The blessings which follow obedience.
5. The curses which follow rebellion.

**JOS 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of**



**the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**

Israel had three choices. They might attempt to follow the false gods which were worshiped by Terah and others who had been misguided in the time when Abraham was called from among them. It seems that Rachel hid some of the false gods which her father had adored. They might attempt to follow the false gods who were worshiped by the nations which they had recently overcome in Palestine.

Or they could worship Jehovah, the true God. Joshua could not force them to worship the Lord, but he could inform them that his choice was firm. He and his family expected to follow the true God. One who had proven Himself as Jehovah had done with Israel must be served without hesitation.

**JOS 24:16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;**

At this point in time, the people considered that any rejection of Jehovah was utter folly. If they had continued this attitude later on when their rebellion and idolatry resulted in their Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, the story could have been quite different.

**JOS 24:17 For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and**

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**preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:**

**JOS 24:18 And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.**

They agreed completely with Joshua. The protection and preservation which they had enjoyed during the departure from Egypt, the travels through the wilderness, and the victories they had witnessed over the nations of Palestine had earned their utmost respect. Like Joshua, they would also serve the True and Living God.

**JOS 24:19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.**

This is a difficult verse. Does Jehovah tell those who are determined to follow Him and forsake all false gods that they cannot do so because He is a perfectly holy and righteous God, and they are a sinful people? If that were the case, non of the men of all the ages could serve the Lord. The man who says he has not sinned is a liar and the truth is not in him. All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (See I John 1:10.)

1Jo 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**JOS 24:20 If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.**

Israel had received blessings without number. That type of blessings could be continued if they kept their promise to be faithful to the Lord. If they failed to do that the blessings could be removed and replaced by curses. That would be disappointing to the Lord and disastrous for them.

**JOS 24:21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.**

How little the people realized of what the future held! God would have kept His part of the covenant if they had kept theirs. They failed, and He laid upon their backs the curses of which He had warned them.

**JOS 24:22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.**

There could be no later denial of the promise they had made. They had their ears and the eyes wide open. They knew what was expected.

**JOS 24:23 Now therefore put away, said**  
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**he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.**

The most important duty any human has is to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. All rivals for one's attention must take second place, if any place at all.

**JOS 24:24 And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.**

Dear reader, have you made such a promise to the King of kings and Lord of lords? Then keep it!

**JOS 24:25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.**

**JOS 24:26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.**

Joshua made a written record of the agreement the people of Israel had made with their God. There at Shechem he placed the record in the book of the law of God. The book of the law of God almost has to be the five books of the law as given by Moses. The book of Joshua is not a part of the five books of the law. It is a very fitting follow up. There was a real need for the agreement to follow the law of



God to be placed with that law.

Joshua also made arrangements for a large and impressive stone to be set up as a memorial that this covenant between the Lord and His people had been made. The sanctuary of the Lord was the tabernacle. This is proof that the tabernacle had been brought from Shiloh, where it had been before then, to the area of Schechem between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim.

**JOS 24:27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.**

Stones cannot hear. Why did Joshua say this one had heard the words of the Lord which He spoke to Israel? Only because it was a constant reminder that the agreement had been made. That fact has not been forgotten until the day in which I write these present words. The stone still speaks today. Israel had bound themselves to obedience.

**JOS 24:28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.**

All appeared to be optimistic for the future. Any strangers who remained in the land were to weak to provide serious resistance. Israel had promised

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to serve the True God with all their heart. It was time to be dismissed for continuing their lives in the promised land.

**JOS 24:29 And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.**

It is appointed of man once to die, and after that the judgment. Joshua had served well. Few men have had more righteous influence that he. From all appearances he should be able to hear those precious words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." Age spans for men had decreased from the time of Noah and Methusaleh. Joshua's years were quite normal for the time in which he lived.

**JOS 24:30 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.**

These last four verses of the chapter record the burial of three great men of God. They are Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar. Joshua had been given an inheritance of his own in the area given to the tribe of Ephraim.

**JOS 24:31 And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the**



**elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel.**

Would it not be wonderful if all Christians could say that their influence had caused God's people to live faithfully throughout not only their own lives but through the lives of those who outlived them. This was a great man. He was also a tremendous leader of men.

**JOS 24:32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.**

Joseph had been embalmed at the time of his death. The children of Israel had cherished his memory and protected his remains from his death until they were settled in the land of Canaan and had received their inheritance.

**JOS 24:33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.**

Eleazar had succeeded Aaron as High Priest of the people of God. His body was laid to rest in the



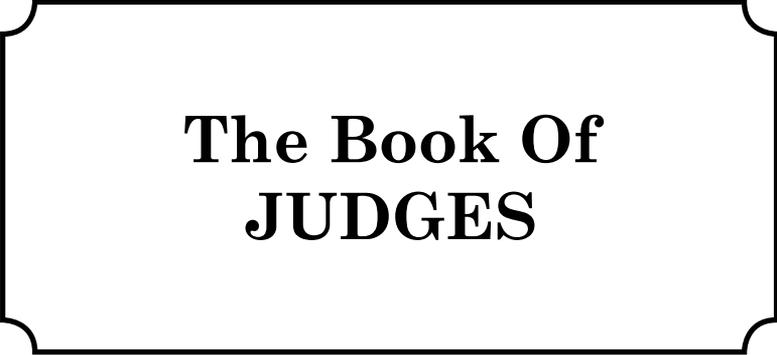
new land. It was buried on a hill which “pertained” to his son Phinehas. This is perhaps a sour note in an otherwise happy chapter. God had forbidden the priests to own land, except for the pasture land upon which their cattle grazed. If this hill in Mount Ephraim was other than that, we see a sign of disrespect for God’s law.



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**The Book Of  
JUDGES**



# Introduction To Judges

**Author:** The author of the book of Judges is highly uncertain. Since we believe the book to be divinely inspired, we see Jehovah as the original Author, Nevertheless, Jehovah works through humans in the cases of the Biblical canon. It is that human hand that we cannot identify with certainty.

There are two strong possibilities. Samuel lived at a time which would be appropriate for him to have written the book. He was close to the Lord and could well have been chosen for the task.

Other possible authors could be Ezra or Hezekiah. Or, God might even have used an editor to combine the contributions of several penmen. The simple truth of the matter is that we do not know with certainty who the author was. It has been considered an inspired book which has a rightful place in the canon immediately after the book of Joshua.

**Title:** The title which has been given to the book by men refers to the nature and responsibilities of a group of leaders who existed from the time of the death of Joshua until the time of Saul, the first King of Israel. These men were not judges in the sense we use the word in these latter days. The judges discussed in the book were men who were selected by the Lord to lead the military forces and

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see that laws were enforced. They did not reign as kings who passed the crown from father to son, etc. The real King was the Lord. The judges enforced His commandments. There were fourteen of these judges in all. The list includes:

Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli and Samuel. The reader will find different lists here also. For example, some will list Deborah as a judge. Others will not.

**Date of Writing:** There are several references to “In those days there was no king in Israel.” This tells us that at the time of the writing of the book of Judges there was a king in Israel. It is reasonable to believe that it was written during the reign of either Saul or David.

**Time Period Covered:** Paul tells us in Acts 13:20 that the period of the judges lasted about 450 years.

Act 13:20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

We are told in I Kings 6:1 that there were 480 years from the time of the exodus until the construction of the temple of Solomon.

1Ki 6:1 And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were



come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.

Let us be satisfied with approximations here and admit that the time period of the judges was in the neighborhood of four hundred and fifty years.

**Conditions in Canaan:** Under the leadership of Joshua, the tribes had managed to gain a foothold in the land. They had broken the resistance of the various nations of the land and there was a need for completion of the command God had given to drive the Canaanites from the territory. This had not been done. Their lack of obedience would come back to haunt them throughout the time of both the Judges and the Kings.

After the death of Joshua, Israel was a very loosely organized set of tribes. On occasion when a Canaanite group attacked, neighboring tribes would come to the aid of their brethren who had need of their help. But, as is mentioned several times in the book, there was no king in Israel. The judges provided some leadership, but it was certainly not that which existed after the appointment of King Saul.

**The Purpose of the Book:** The first lesson is to stress that God's authority must be recognized by any society that wishes to make progress. When God's Word is left out moral values dissolve, and



violence increases.

The book also reveals that even in the most wicked of times there will be a small segment of the people who remain true to God's plan for man. They love Him and honor his commandments. They suffer for a time, but they will be remembered in the resurrection and the final judgment of all men.

Finally, the long suffering of the Lord is demonstrated over and over again. Mankind sins. God becomes angry. Man then calls upon God for help. God raises up help.

### **A Brief Outline of Judges:**

The Preface 1:1-2:5

Five Judges 2:6-8:32

The Time of Abimelech 8:33-9:57

Seven More Judges 10:1-16:31

Concluding Remarks 17:1-21:25

## *Chapter 1*

This chapter stresses the incomplete nature of Israel's conquest of the land of Canaan. One tribe after another is said to have failed to keep Jehovah's command to drive the Canaanites from the land.

**JDG 1:1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?**

Joshua had acted as a spokesman for Jehovah. Now that Joshua was dead, it became necessary for Israel to inquire in another manner. The Urim and Thummim were still available through the High Priest. That is no doubt the avenue used to ask the Lord what was to be done next. They did not ask when they should act as a united nation. They apparently felt the need to leave most of their men at home while one or two tribes tended to the mopping up operations.

**JDG 1:2 And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.**

The answer from the Lord was clear and definite. The tribe of Judah was to be the first to take action. God assured the people that He would be with Judah and see that victory was achieved.

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Judah was very strong in comparison with the rest of the tribes. In addition, Judah was the tribe through which the Saviour was to enter the world as the Christian age came into being.

**JDG 1:3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.**

We have already been told that Simeon had received it's lot within the lot of Judah. It was quite natural that Judah would ask the tribe of Simeon to go with them into the conflict. In return, Judah promised Simeon their assistance in case Simeon later needed it. Simeon readily agreed to join forces with Judah.

**JDG 1:4 And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.**

The battle began, and God proved true to His word. He caused the tribes of Judah and Simeon to win a victory in which ten thousand of the Canaanites and Perizzites were killed. The location of the battle was the city of Bezek. Adam Clarke suggests that Bezek may have been located about seventeen miles from Shechem.



**JDG 1:5 And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.**

Sometimes persons were named after towns. Sometimes towns were named after persons. The name Adonibezek means “Lord of Bezek.” As the leader of Bezek, Adonibezek was a major target for Israel’s forces. He and his men suffered a major defeat.

**JDG 1:6 But Adonibezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.**

When Adonibezek realized the situation was hopeless, he tried to escape death by fleeing from the scene. His flight was unsuccessful. He was captured and suffered the humiliation of having his thumbs and big toes cut off. This would prevent him from handling weapons with his hands, and would slow any further attempts to flee from danger.

Notice that the man was not killed. Israel apparently thought humiliating him would be more apt to impress their enemies than killing him.

**JDG 1:7 And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.**

Adonibezek recognized the truth of the statement of the Lord that “As ye sow, so shall ye reap.” He had treated seventy of the leaders he had conquered in the same way that he had now been treated. Those whom he had defeated had been forced to take whatever crumbs he chose to toss to them. He made the admission that God had caused him to be treated as he had treated others. The number seventy is perhaps only a way of stating that there were a very large number.

Adonibezek was taken to Jerusalem where he could be seen by those who needed the lesson his physical handicap could teach. He was not killed, but was allowed to live on.

**JDG 1:8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.**

The forces of Judah and Simeon had overwhelmed the city of Jerusalem. They had defeated the Canaanite defenders and had set fire to the city.

This does not mean every Canaanite was driven from Jerusalem. Much later, the Jebusites had to be defeated by the forces of David, as recorded in 2 Samuel 5. Nevertheless, the balance of power swung from the Canaanites to the Israelites as a result of this victory by the men of Judah and Simeon.

**JDG 1:9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that**  
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**dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.**

The word “down” in the above verse has a literal meaning. Down does not mean south as would be true in the maps of the twenty-first century. Jerusalem was located at a greater height than the surrounding places. The mountain would be the elevated area around the city itself. From there Judah went southward and moved into the lowland plains.

**JDG 1:10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjatharba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi.**

Hebron was about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It served as the capitol of Judah under seven years of the later reign of David.

**JDG 1:11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher:**

From Hebron the forces of Israel moved on to Debir.

We are taken back by the writer into the time of Caleb’s leadership. At the time of Caleb, the name of the city of Debir was Kirjathsepher.

**JDG 1:12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give**

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## **Achsah my daughter to wife.**

Caleb had promised the man who led Israel to victory over Kirjathsepher that he would present his daughter Achsah to that man as his wife. This was not unheard of in that time. A father could award his daughter to a man for whom he had high respect. There was reason to believe the daughter would be well married.

**JDG 1:13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.**

Caleb's nephew, Othniel, accepted the challenge and led Judah's forces to victory over this city. Caleb proved true to his promise. He gave his daughter Achsah to Othniel as his wife.

We might frown seriously upon such an arranged marriage as this. Today, we would anticipate serious difficulties in such a marriage if the woman found her new husband to be repulsive. This did not seem to be a problem in the case of Othniel and Achsah.

**JDG 1:14 And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?**

It was common for a father to offer a dowry to the man who married his daughter. Achsah accepted

her father's decision to present her to Othniel. In harmony with the custom of the times, she suggested that Othniel ask her father for some land.

Caleb was quite willing to cooperate with Achsah's suggestion. He asked her to be a little more specific as to what field she desired to have.

**JDG 1:15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.**

Achsah directed Othniel to ask her father for a source of water. He had already given her some land, but it appears there was a shortage of water in that land. She desired that her father offer them land which contained springs which would be capable of providing the missing water. Othniel made the request and Caleb gave what was asked.

**JDG 1:16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father in law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.**

Moses served Reuel a number of years for the hand of his daughter Zipporah. Reuel is said to be a Midianite. This verse describes Moses father in law as a Kenite. The scripture does not reveal the



name of the Kenite to us. Did Moses have both a Midianite and a Kenite wife? There are probably missing facts here which the Lord did not see fit to include in the record.

The city of palm trees was Jericho. These Kenites cast their lot with the children of Judah and dwelt with them.

**JDG 1:17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.**

The armies of Judah and Simeon were still combined. They proceeded to visit destruction upon the city known as Zephath. Then they changed the name of the city from Zephath to Hormah. The name "Hormah" means "destruction."

**JDG 1:18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.**

The city of Gaza lay on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and was almost directly east of the central point of the Dead Sea. It was some thirty miles northwest of Beersheba.

The city of Gaza is mentioned in the New Testament record of Philip's conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. (See Acts 8:26.)

Act 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto



Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The word “desert” in Acts 8:26 does not refer to arid land, but to an area not populated.

**JDG 1:19 And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.**

God had indicated that He would not drive the inhabitants of the land of Canaan out all at once. This would result in the increase of wild beasts and dense vegetation. He also indicated that He would be with Israel as long as they were content to hear and obey Him. When they ceased to do that His aid would be withdrawn.

It is also well to remember that the chariots of Pharaoh were useless when God was on the side of Israel. Iron chariots, or any other weapons are unable to make headway against the power and wisdom of the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

**JDG 1:20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.**

The three sons of Anak were Sheshai, Shiman and Talmi. Moses had promised this in Deut. 1:36 and Caleb had repeated the promise in Joshua 14:9.

**JDG 1:21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.**

The phrase “unto this day” obviously means the day in which the author of the book of Judges was doing his recording. This verse is not a contradiction of verse eight of this same chapter in that the residential part of the city could have been taken while the fortress area remained under the control of the Jebusites.

**JDG 1:22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the LORD was with them.**

The house of Joseph would include the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. With the Lord on their side victory was assured.

**JDG 1:23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Bethel. (Now the name of the city before was Luz.)**

The men of Ephraim and Manasseh set out to conquer the city of Bethel, once known by it's Canaanite name of Luz. They needed some sort of organized plan for doing so.

**JDG 1:24 And the spies saw a man come**  
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**forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Shew us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will shew thee mercy.**

Spies were sent ahead to see how best to gain entrance into the city. When they saw a man whom they believed to have come out from it, they proposed an agreement. If the man would show them how to gain entrance, they would allow him and his family their freedom.

**JDG 1:25 And when he shewed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.**

The man agreed and showed them how they could gain entrance. They took the city and allowed the man and his family to go free rather than killing all of them.

**JDG 1:26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which is the name thereof unto this day.**

Over and over again the same story repeats itself. Some of the persons whom God commanded Israel to destroy were allowed to remain alive for one reason or another.

**JDG 1:27 Neither did Manasseh drive out the**

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**inhabitants of Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.**

This is a considerable list. The Canaanites were allowed to remain in a number of towns of the territory of Manasseh.

**JDG 1:28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.**

By putting the Canaanites to tribute when they could have driven them out of the land, Israel hoped to gain wealth and service from them. What they truly got was idolatry and lascivious patterns of life.

**JDG 1:29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.**

The same pattern is seen within the territory of Ephraim.

**JDG 1:30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of**

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**Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.**

Is the repetition becoming monotonous? If the reader finds it to be aggravating, think about what Jehovah must have been thinking about this complete ignoring of His commandments. Evil companionships corrupt good morals. The ultimate outcome of this mixture of God's people and those who were ripe for God's wrath can already be anticipated. Israel would be corrupted.

**JDG 1:31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:**

**JDG 1:32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.**

We have a contrast in the relationship here with that of the last few verses. This time it is not that the Canaanites were allowed to continue dwelling among the Israelites. This time it is the Israelites who Canaanites. The Canaanites were more numerous than the Asherites.

**JDG 1:33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, nor the inhabitants of Bethanath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Bethshemesh**

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**and of Bethanath became tributaries unto them.**

Just as in the previous verse, the Canaanites seem to have outnumbered those of the tribe of Naphtali. Even so, the Israelites managed to force the Canaanites into paying tribute to them. Can we not expect uprisings by the Canaanites in the face of their larger numbers.

**JDG 1:34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:**

The tribe of Dan was not even able to put the Amorites in a position of paying tribute, nor even of remaining in the better parts of the territory. The Danites found it necessary to hide in the mountains rather than descending into the richer land in the valleys.

**JDG 1:35 But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.**

**JDG 1:36 And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.**

As time passed, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were descendants of Joseph, grew stronger and were able to gain the upper hand of



the Amorites whom Dan was unable to dominate. They cause the Amorites to pay tribute, but did not drive them out of the land.

The lesson for the Christian age is clear. If Christians do not do all they are able to do with the help of Jehovah, they will find the path more and more difficult in the future as the irresponsible life styles of Satan's children pollute the world.

The writer of these present words cannot help but be reminded of a story he heard as a youngster. General Custer went through the west conquering the Indians. He would leave a few here, and another few there. In the end, the Indians who were left are said to have banded together and scalped General Custer.



## *Chapter 2*

This chapter introduces a pattern of rebellion upon the part of Israel, and resulting punishment from the hand of Jehovah. It is somewhat like the headline and the first paragraph of an article in the newspaper. Israel fails to keep the covenant between themselves and the Lord. The Lord then allows them to be chastised by their enemies.

The pattern will be repeated again and again throughout the major part of the book of Judges.

**JDG 2:1 And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.**

There is much disagreement about the identity of this angel of the Lord. The word “angel” calls up in the minds of many persons a cherub looking something like a chubby six year old with wings. The word, as it is used in the scriptures, has reference to a spiritual messenger. It can be a heavenly messenger sent from realms beyond this earth. It can also be a human with a message from the hand of God.

Some see the angel of this verse to be a man who came from Gilgal to Bochim. They maintain that this angel was not from heaven. It came from



an earthly place. Others claim it was the angel of the Lord which is mentioned many times in the holy Bible. Still others see it as Jesus Christ as the eternal Word of God.

Whichever of these positions is correct, the angel spoke with the authority of the Almighty God of heaven and earth. It spoke in the first person, using the word “I” four times in this one verse.

The question as to why the angel came from Gilgal to Bochim needs an answer. Gilgal was the first location where the people of Israel worshipped after crossing the Jordan river. Later the tabernacle was moved to Shechem. Bochim is thought by many to be another name for Shechem, due to the weeping of the people there. Bochim means “weeping.”

The angel reminded Israel that God had made a covenant with Israel. He would be their God. They would be His people. He had honored his part of the covenant. He had rescued Israel from the bondage of Egypt. He had been with them through the forty years in the wilderness and He had given them victory over the idolatrous nations in the promised land.

In return, God had called for Israel to remain separate from those nations who worshipped false gods. They were expected to destroy the altars of their worship. They were to make no agreements of peace with them.

**JDG 2:2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?**

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Through the angel, God called for an explanation of Israel's lack of obedience. Why had they not kept their part of the covenant. He had kept His part. They had not kept theirs.

Of course God had explained that He would not drive the Canaanites out in a very short time. He had said this would take place over a period of time as a means of controlling the multiplication of wild beasts and dense vegetation. This did not mean Israel had the right to cease in the struggle to oust the Canaanites over the period of time God saw fit.

**JDG 2:3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.**

A thorn in the side is not as destructive as a beheading by a sword. Still, it can be a very distressing experience. Israel would not be annihilated by the Canaanites. They would suffer much anguish because of their neglect in opposing the idolatrous nations of Canaan. In fact, they would find the false gods to be a very real trap which would catch them up in misery.

**JDG 2:4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.**

There was good reason for weeping. It is not pleasant to fall under the punishment of the outstretched arm of Jehovah. What they had heard was extremely bad news. It seems that for the moment they were truly penitent.

**JDG 2:5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.**

They even went so far as to give the name Bochim to what had been known as Shechem. Their obvious sin caused them to offer sacrifices to the God they had insulted by their neglect.

I think perhaps we should consider another possible explanation for their weeping. A child who has been spanked for misbehavior may cry for two reasons. He may cry because the spanking hurt. He may cry because he was ashamed and was ready to change his ways. Both of these could be true. Israel may well have had both reasons for their weeping.

**JDG 2:6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.**

We have a flashback here to the time before the above sinful behavior. This does not indicate a number of authors. The flashback is perfectly placed in the account. What had taken place before that had



made Israel's actions so displeasing to Jehovah?

When Joshua led the people into the land of Canaan, the record tells us things were just as God had promised. The opposition of the nations in Canaan had been overwhelmed. These nations were not completely driven out of the land, but were unable to make a successful counterattack against the takeover by God's people. Every Israelite was able to take possession of enough land to survive. God would see that the complete victory was achieved as He saw fit. This did not give the Israelites freedom to mingle with the people of the land.

**JDG 2:7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.**

As long as Joshua and those leaders who had seen the mighty works of God first hand lived, the Israelites continued to serve and worship Him. However, that was not to continue.

**JDG 2:8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.**

Joshua is one of the great heroes of the entire history of mankind. His name means "saviour" just as that of the Son of God. He led Israel through the wilderness toward a promised land just as Jesus leads those who will follow Him to the eternal

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inheritance in heaven.

The life spans of men had shortened drastically from the time of Noah and Methusaleh. Joshua lived a normal number of years for that time in history. But he died at the age of 110 years. He was to be sorely missed!

**JDG 2:9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.**

**JDG 2:10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.**

Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim. He was buried within that tribal territory. All who had lived during his lifetime also passed off the scene. The new generation which arose afterward had not experienced the bondage of Egypt, the tribulation in the wilderness, or the wonders of God in bringing them into the land of Canaan.

Why can men not learn from the experiences of others? It has now been proven beyond doubt that smoking cigarettes destroys health and often producing deadly cancer of the lungs. This does not prevent others from traveling down the same path and suffering the same end. This new generation should have been able to see the misery of their forefathers and avoided the same fate.



**JDG 2:11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim:**

The word “Baalim” is plural. The reader will remember various endings place on the word Baal, such as Baal-peor and Baal-zephon. Baal was a false god representing fertility. He was seen by his worshippers as the cause of productivity in the land and the livestock. He was also mistakenly thought to be responsible for the pleasures of sexual relationships.

What a hideous error it was for the people of Israel to turn their faces away from the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and seek out the pleasures of sin for a season!

**JDG 2:12 And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger.**

**JDG 2:13 And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.**

We can easily see the poor judgment of Israel in choosing the false gods of Canaan over the true God who had delivered them from Egypt and brought them into the promised land. It is much more difficult to see the false gods men and women worship today as they blaspheme Jehovah.

Very similar sins are committed in these later centuries to those which were committed by those of Israel. Power, wealth, and sensual pleasures are chosen over the eternal bliss of heaven in the presence of the Lord and those who remain faithful.

The male god Baal and the female goddess Ashtaroth find their latter day equals in the three attractions listed in the previous paragraph.

**JDG 2:14 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.**

This material was written after the time of the departure from faith in Jehovah. We read the words below in Romans 1:26-32.

Rom 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Rom 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Rom 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;



Rom 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Rom 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Rom 1:31 Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

God did not appreciate idolatry in Israel's time. He did not appreciate it in the Christians of the first century. He will not appreciate it in any century until the end of time.

God delivered Israel into the hands of their enemies. We might as well say that since Israel had acted as if God was their enemy, He would treat them as an enemy. They would find out the difference between being on God's side, and being on the opposite side.

**JDG 2:15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.**

Yes, Israel was distressed. They were not only distressed. They were greatly distressed. This was not to be unexpected. Joshua had said, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." They had chosen to serve Baal and Ashtaroath. To say the least, this was not a good choice.

**JDG 2:16 Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.**

God was full of grace and mercy. He could have discarded them and chosen a new people for His own. He did not do that because He knows the end from the beginning. Jesus was to be brought into the world through the providential workings of the Godhead in the nation of Israel.

God therefore sent judges to deliver them from the tribulation in which they found themselves. They had not earned such favors. The favors were granted because God intended to use them in His eternal plans.

We presently place a different meaning on the word judge than was placed on it at the time we are discussing. We think of a judge as the one who makes major decisions in court cases. The judge in the days we are discussing here are rulers to whom they should have listened. These rulers were capable of delivering them from their immorality if they would but listen.



**JDG 2:17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so.**

The cycle was becoming repetitious. A judge would condemn them for their wicked ways. They would perhaps listen for the moment. Then the attractions of the false gods and goddesses of the Canaanites would call them to blasphemous actions.

To bow themselves before the false deities can have both a literal and a symbolic meaning. People of the near east still fall to their knees and place their foreheads upon the ground. One can also bow the mind and spirit by accepting the way of either Jehovah or of the false gods. These unfaithful Israelites defied Jehovah and bowed both mind and spirit to the gods of the Canaanites.

Their behavior was quite a contrast to that of their forefathers who had listened and wept when they heard the voice of the angel of the Lord.

**JDG 2:18 And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.**

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Time and time again God had heard their cries and groans which came as a result of oppression by the Canaanites whom they should have opposed rather than joining.

**JDG 2:19** And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

The pattern or cycle followed the steps listed below.

1. Departure
2. Punishment
3. Groaning
4. Deliverance

Take note of the words “corrupting themselves more than their fathers.” Each cycle plunged them deeper into the mire of sin. The lessons God was teaching through the series of judges were not heeded.

**JDG 2:20** And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

When a covenant is broken by one of the parties



of that covenant, the other party is no longer bound by the agreement. Israel had broken their covenant with Jehovah so many times that God was ready to vomit them out of His mouth. Divine action was required.

**JDG 2:21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:**

Israel was about to become the victim of it's own disobedience. They had not wished to drive out the idolatrous people of the land. God would allow them to find out just miserable the results of this decision could be. He would allow those idolaters to remain in their midst.

**JDG 2:22 That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.**

The word "prove" could as easily be translated as "test." By leaving the nations in the land, God would find out which of His people would stand up to the wickedness and finally follow Him rather than Baal and Ashtaroth.

**JDG 2:23 Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.**

This chapter can be very meaningful to present day Christians. We sometimes ask ourselves the question, “If God is all powerful, why does He not destroy Satan and his angels and remove all temptation from the world?” The answer may be that God desires those who enter into heaven to have been tested and found faithful. Heaven will be made up of those who have loved Him and obeyed His commandments.

## *Chapter 3*

The first six verses of this chapter are actually more closely related to the first two chapters than they are to the latter part of this third chapter. They round out the introductory material which leads to the several cycles of bondage and deliverance which were experienced by the Israelites in the days between the travels in the wilderness and the period of the kings.

The latter part of the chapter discusses three of the judges whom God raised up to deliver His people from the people of the land after they had foolishly intermarried with the Canaanites, Amorites, etc., and had shared in their idolatry and immorality.

**JDG 3:1 Now these are the nations which the LORD left, to prove Israel by them, even as many of Israel as had not known all the wars of Canaan;**

The Lord could have sent plagues upon the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and wiped them off the face of the earth. He chose not to do that. He left a sizable number of them for at least two reasons. He did not wish for the wild beasts and the vegetation to multiply and take over the land which the Israelites could not occupy because of their insufficient numbers at that time. He also knew that tested faith is more enduring than that which has few obstacles to overcome.

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The Israelites who were left after the time of Joshua had not gone through the trials of open warfare with the nations which God had commanded them to drive out. Those who live in eternity with God and His saints must make the choice as to whom they will serve. After passing through a proper period of testing, God will be ready to accept them in the land of endless day, where there are no tears.

**JDG 3:2 Only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;**

Why did God's people need to be taught war? There are realities far more complex than finite human minds are capable of understanding. The Bible speaks of war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. (See Rev. 12:7-11.)

Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and



the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Those who desire to live in the presence of God forever must prove they wish to do so. That can only be proven by the choices they make while in the flesh here on earth.

**JDG 3:3 Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baalhermon unto the entering in of Hamath.**

Even though many victories had been won during the days of Joshua's leadership, and the power of the tribes listed above was reduced sharply, there were still sufficient numbers of them to present a real choice to Israel. Was it worth it to demonstrate endurance in the ways of Jehovah, or would the sensual pleasures of idol worship tear them away from obedience to the True and Living God?

The five lords of the Philistines are given as ruling Gath, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod and Ekron.

**JDG 3:4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.**



The law, as delivered by Moses, was in their hands. They could either fear God and keep His commandments, or they could worship the false gods of the heathen. They needed to learn the consequences of their choice. They would have that opportunity.

**JDG 3:5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:**

**JDG 3:6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.**

The Girgashites are sometimes included in the list above. When we are told that Israel dwelt among them, we are not to understand that there was a sharp separation between the Israelites and the Canaanites. Just the opposite was true. Intermarriage between Israel and these nations of the land took place.

As might be expected, the pagan husbands and wives exerted a strong influence upon the Israelites who had married them. It is always wise for a follower of Jehovah to take a mate from among God's people rather than from nonbelievers. Many of the Israelites began to abandon Jehovah and serve idols.

**JDG 3:7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgat the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the**

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**groves.**

Baalim is plural. As mentioned before, the word refers to false gods served in different locations such as Baal-peor and Baal-zephon.

The groves were clusters of trees among which idols had been carved out. Fertility of the land and of the people was stressed. The activities engaged in during worship were very impure.

**JDG 3:8 Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years.**

The Lord our God is a jealous God. He despises spiritual adultery. His people are to be united with Him, and Him only. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry Jehovah. If Israel wished to follow the ways of these idolatrous people, He would deliver them into the hands of their rulers.

Mesopotamia means “the land between the rivers.” The rivers are the Tigris and the Euphrates. This territory lies to the north of the land of Canaan. Chushanrishathaim must have been a powerful ruler to have extended his domain southward as far as Canaan. But, he did do so and his control over the people of Israel lasted for eight years. This may be only a small number to the present reader. It would not have been if the reader had been among those who served for those eight years.

**JDG 3:9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.**

When you are hurting seriously enough you cry out for help to anyone whom you feel might supply that help. Israel had made a deadly mistake. They had chosen to trust idols rather than Jehovah. They were now reaping what they had sown.

We do not know to what degree their cry was true repentance, and to what degree it was only a plea for relief from their oppressive captors. It no doubt had a mixture of both.

Whichever the case, God raised up a deliverer to rescue them from their captivity. This man was Othniel. He was a brother to Caleb who had taken over leadership of Israel after the death of Joshua. Thus Othniel was a nephew of Caleb.

**JDG 3:10 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim.**

We are told little about the background of Othniel. From what we can observe, he was a good man who desired to break the bondage of Chusanrishathaim.



We assume that since Jehovah is said to have raised him up he was faithful to Him.

Most of the judges which will be discussed in this book of judges had some quirk or weakness in their personalities. Othniel is not pictured as having such a peculiarity.

**JDG 3:11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.**

Forty years is sometimes considered to be one generation in the scriptures. This should have been a sufficient relief from their previous grief that they would have continued to serve God faithfully. The contrast would have been like day and night between the bondage suffered under the Mesopotamians and the freedom Othniel had brought about.

**JDG 3:12 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.**

How difficult it is for humans to learn spiritual lessons! One generation is faithful to God and enjoys His blessings. The next generation was not exposed to the harvest which is reaped when iniquity is sown. They turn away to the temptations of the flesh and find themselves overcome by the curses of sin.

After forty years of blessing, Israel found the paths of evil more attractive than the straight and



narrow pathway of the Lord. They turned away from the good and chose the evil.

We enter the same cycle again. Disobedience, followed by oppression. This time the pressure came through Eglon, the king of Moab. Moab lay on the east of the Jordan river.

**JDG 3:13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.**

Eglon, the king of Moab decided to call upon the help of both the Ammonites and the Amalekites. The three allies, working together, overcame the citizens of the city of Jericho (the city of palm trees) and took over that city.

**JDG 3:14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.**

The lesson had not been learned in eight years under Chushamrishathaim. Now they had an eighteen year period to take lesson number two.

**JDG 3:15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.**



Why did God not give up on Israel? I think we must look close to home for an answer to that question. Did the parents of the reader spank him or her, or correct them in some other way only a time or two and then give up the attempt to train? Any loving parent will continue as long as the faintest possibility exists that the child may be brought up correctly. It is so with Jehovah. The difference is that Jehovah has the ability to see the end from the beginning. He knew just how many times it would be profitable to administer more lessons. Israel had not yet reached that point.

And so God raised up a third judge named Ehud. The judges were from different tribes. Ehud was from the tribe of Benjamin. He is said to have been a lefthanded man. There are three thoughts with respect to what is meant by saying Ehud was lefthanded. One is that Ehud was an ambidextrous man and could use either his right hand or his left with equal ability. A second is that his right hand was limited in use and this caused him to rely upon his left hand. The third is that he was a true left hander as a minor portion of the present day population is.

It is highly doubtful that the present which Israel sent by Ehud was offered because of their great affection for the king of Moab. The present was a forced tribute which had to be paid to avoid punishment. It was something which was to be presented. It was not presented willfully and cheerfully.



**JDG 3:16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.**

Ehud devised a plan by which Israel might be rid of this despised king. He prepared a dagger eighteen inches long and sharpened both sides of the blade. Then he fastened it under his clothing to his right thigh. If a right handed man were to prepare himself in this way, he would fasten the dagger to his left thigh. If Ehud had been searched, it would have been less likely that the weapon would be discovered.

**JDG 3:17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.**

We are not told just how fat Eglon was. We can only see in our mind's eye some of the very fat persons we have seen in our own lifetime. I had a grandfather who weighed over three hundred and fifty pounds. He was very fat. Eglon may well have carried this weight because of overindulgence in eating. His ruling position would allow him to disdain any advice he might have been given. He could have a banquet served three times a day if he chose.

**JDG 3:18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people**

**that bare the present.**

The present which Ehud offered to king Eglon may have consisted of grain, silver and gold, fine clothing, etc. Several men were assigned to accompany Ehud in the presentation. After the tribute had been given to Eglon, Ehud sent his aids away from the room.

**JDG 3:19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.**

Ehud apparently left the presence of king Eglon and went with those he had dismissed until they came to what the Bible calls the “quarries.” Then he turned back and returned to the king.

The word “quarries” is thought to mean sculptured stones. They could have been carved out of the limestone which is found in the area. Some have wondered if Ehud stopped at the quarries to participate in idol worship. That is extremely doubtful when we consider the mission he was trying to accomplish.

When Ehud arrived back in the presence of king Eglon, he informed him that he had a secret message or errand which he needed to deliver to him personally. The king, who suspected nothing amiss, dismissed his bodyguards with the instructions to keep silent. They understood that he was



commanding them to leave himself and Ehud alone. They obeyed and left the two together.

**JDG 3:20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.**

The king was no longer in the throne room where the tribute had been offered to him. He had retired to a private parlor room where he could be alone. When Ehud arrived, he told the king he had a message from God for him. Note that he did not say he had a message from “the gods.” This was a message from Jehovah.

King Eglon was not concerned over which God or gods had sent the message. He rose up from where he was sitting to receive the message.

**JDG 3:21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:**

Eglon “got the message.” Ehud took the dagger from his thigh and thrust it into his fat belly. He did not just stab him. He “thrust” the dagger in. We are not told why Eglon did not scream out for help. It could be that he was unable to do so from shock or from physical difficulties.

**JDG 3:22 And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.**



The haft is the handle of the dagger. The dagger went in so far that the blade sunk into the man so far that fat trapped the knife and it could not be removed.

Where did the dirt come out? It seems unlikely that it came out around the haft of the dagger if the fat had enclosed it tightly. Nor does it seem likely that the dagger passed entirely through the king since the dagger was but eighteen inches long and the king was said to be very fat.

I leave the reader with the problem!

**JDG 3:23 Then Ehad went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.**

Ehad still had to exit from the building and make a getaway. He shut the doors of the parlor room where the king was lying and locked them, perhaps from the inside. Then he left through a porch rather than going out past the king's bodyguards.

**JDG 3:24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.**

After some time the king's servants began to wonder when the meeting would conclude. They approached the doors of the parlor room and found they were locked. This still did not distress them exceedingly. After all, the king might well have the



door locked because he was taking a nap, or maybe answering the call of nature in the bathroom.

**JDG 3:25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.**

When the servants decided something had to be done, they found a key and opened the doors of the parlor room. Their king was lying dead on the ground.

**JDG 3:26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.**

Meanwhile, Ehud had placed considerable distance between himself and the dead king. He had gone past the quarries where he had departed from the men who had borne the tribute.

We do not know the location of Seirath. It seems that it might have been close to Gilgal.

**JDG 3:27 And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them.**

Ehud proceeded to the mountain of Ephraim



and blew a trumpet to call the Israelites to battle. They assembled and followed him down from the mountain to meet the Moabites.

Can we conclude that in a very short time the word spread that Ehud had assassinated the king of the Moabites? The men of Israel were persuaded it was a good choice to follow the man.

**JDG 3:28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the LORD hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over.**

We can imagine that the Moabites were in a state of shock. It would take some time for them to organize themselves under a new leader. Ehud took full advantage of the situation and called for Israel to follow him. The Lord had proven that He would be with Israel.

The first thing they did was to march down to the fords of the Jordan river and cut off the Moabites who were on the west side of the Jordan from those on the east side. Those on the east was not able to come to the aid of the ones on the west. The ones on the west could not escape to the main Moabite country on the east.

**JDG 3:29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valour; and there escaped not a man.**

When God is with us, who can be against us? Here were ten thousand men of Moab who were strong and full of courage and ability. None of them escaped with his life.

**JDG 3:30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.**

For eighty years Israel enjoyed peace and rest from bondservice. Would this third lesson impress them to the extent that they would remain true to the Lord? We shall see.

**JDG 3:31 And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.**

Shamgar is the third of the three judges mentioned in this chapter. The verse above is all we are told about him in this place. In the song of Deborah which is recorded in the fifth chapter of this same book of Judges. Shamgar is called the “son of Anath” but that does not extend our knowledge of him but a little bit.

Some of the judges are known as “minor judges.” Shamgar falls in that list. More information is given about such as Ehud than we have about Shamgar.

This judge used an ox goad to kill six hundred Philistines. An ox goad was a pole several feet long and perhaps three inches through. It had a metal

prod on the end by which oxen could be guided. We would not expect a normal man to be capable of achieving what Shamgar did without divine help. However, it could be that these six hundred were not all killed in a short time. They might have been scattered over a lengthy period.



## *Chapter 4*

In the last chapter three judges of Israel were considered. This chapter will continue that coverage as a female judge, Deborah is the center of attention. The same pattern of rebellion, punishment, cries for relief and the raising up of a deliverer is seen.

**JDG 4:1 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead.**

Mankind does not digest spiritual lessons very well. Each generation seems to require chastisement for similar sins. The experiences which were relieved during the times of Othniel, Ehud and Shamgar did not make a lasting impression on Israel. They found it necessary to pass through the same routine.

It is strange that Shamgar is not mentioned in this first verse. It has been suggested that Shamgar is actually later in the history of Israel and is out of place here. Whatever the reason, the record moves straight from Ehud to Deborah.

**JDG 4:2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.**

The Canaanites were located in the northern part of the land. Israel had proven themselves to be in

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need of a change of direction in their conduct. God saw fit to accomplish this by allowing them to be oppressed by the Canaanites.

Jabin was the king of these people, and Sisera was the captain of his army. We do not know the location of Harosheth. The verse indicates it was in Gentile territory. This may indicate that Sisera's military forces were mercenary or professional soldiers. Jabin will fade from the picture and Sisera will become one of the centers of attention.

**JDG 4:3 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.**

Israel had good reason to cry out unto the Lord. They knew He was there because of previous situations very similar to this one. They knew they had sinned. It is quite likely that they understood the reason for their predicament. Their situation was drastic. The oppressor had nine hundred chariots of iron. We understand this to mean that they had protective shields of iron armor, and possibly had iron knives extending from the axles of the wheels. Israel did not have such weapons. They were foot soldiers. Jabin could overwhelm the army of Israel with ease.

**JDG 4:4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.**



This is highly unusual. This is the first female to become a judge in the land. From the earliest times God had placed men in the highest positions of the land. It is true that she is mentioned as being the wife of Lapidoth, but he fades out of the picture and Deborah becomes a main character.

**JDG 4:5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.**

Trees and groves were often mentioned in connection with worship and communication with both Jehovah and also of pagan false gods. Deborah was recognized as having been qualified by the Lord as a qualified judge. The people of Israel were aware that she could deliver judgment based on the mind of Jehovah.

Some of these judgments could have been differences between individuals or small groups. Others, as we can see from the following events, were of far more importance.

**JDG 4:6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?**



Deborah was well enough recognized as a spokesperson for God that when she contacted Jabin, he came to hear what she had to say.

Her message was actually that of God and did not originate in her own mind. She made this plain by saying, “Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded-.”

Mount Tabor was in the area of the highest mountain in Israel. That was Mount Hermon. Mount Tabor is said to have had a fairly level top where a large number of men might be gathered. Barak was to gather ten thousand Israelites from the two tribes of Naphtali and Zebulum at this mountain.

**JDG 4:7 And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.**

Deborah is still speaking the mind of God. When she uses the word “I”, she is filling that role. God would see to it that Sisera’s chariots and other forces would collect around the mountain, at which time God would deliver Sisera into the hand of Barak.

**JDG 4:8 And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.**

Barak was not ready to face the army of Sisera with his own strength and that of the Israelite army. In order to face the strength of the nine hundred



iron chariots, he was well aware that he would need the help of the Lord. When he told Deborah he would not go unless she went with him, he was not depending upon the strength and wisdom of Deborah as an individual. He was crying out for help from the God of heaven.

**JDG 4:9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.**

Deborah quickly agreed to accompany Barak, but the result of this would be that Barak would not receive the honor for leading the victory over Sisera's army. That honor would be given to a woman.

The question arises as to which woman Deborah meant. Was she referring to herself, or was she referring to Jael who enters the picture later? One thing is certain. Barak had shown a degree of cowardice which would remove any credit for the victory from himself. With this said, Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh where the Israelites forces were to be gathered before arriving at Mount Tabor.

**JDG 4:10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.**

As stated here, the ten thousand men were taken from only two of the tribes. In the next chapter we find the names of other tribes mentioned. It may be that the initial battle involved only men from these two tribes, and that later on there was a need for further combat with other Canaanites.

**JDG 4:11 Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab the father in law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh.**

The Kenites were neither friends nor foes to Israel. They tended to be wanderers and merely desired to exist on their own without joining forces with those around them. They were more apt to be found south of where the present events were taking place. Heber had separated himself and his family from the rest of the Kenites and had pitched his tent in the plain close to Mount Tabor and Kedesh.

**JDG 4:12 And they shewed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.**

**JDG 4:13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.**

We do not have the identity of the ones who informed Sisera that Barak was gathering the armies of Israel at Mount Tabor. The word “up” is used in verse twelve. The word up as used in the Bible normally does not refer to north and south. It has to do with the height above sea level. This seems to mean that Barak had taken his men to a position on the sides and the top of the mountain.

Sisera must have considered this pure folly. With his nine hundred chariots, he would have seen his army as being far stronger than that of Barak. He gathered his chariots and the men under his command to a point near the Kishon River.

**JDG 4:14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.**

Deborah then took the initiative. As a prophetess for God, she knew the precise time at which the battle should be started. Barak was not the leader of the army. God Himself would go before them. Neither Deborah nor Barak could claim the primary leadership. That position was in the hand of the Living God.

Barak followed the will of the Lord, as presented by Deborah. He and his ten thousand foot soldiers came down Mount Tabor toward the army of Sisera.



**JDG 4:15 And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet.**

If “discomfited” means made uncomfortable, it was the right word. Sisera and his nine hundred iron chariots became extremely uncomfortable. But, what was it that the Lord did which caused this discomfort? If the reader will turn over to chapter five in the “Song of Deborah” it will be discovered that the Kishon River overflowed it’s banks and caused the chariots of Sisera to become a burden rather than a benefit. The Kishon was nearly dry for most of the time. However, a heavy rain would cause it to become a raging torrent of water. The chariots of iron became mired in the mud and were rendered completely useless.

Sisera realized the hopelessness of the situation. He joined his men as they fled from the scene.

**JDG 4:16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.**

Without their iron chariots, the men of Sisera’s army were easily defeated. They were utterly destroyed by the men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.



**JDG 4:17 Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.**

Sisera managed to escape on foot from the slaughter which was visited upon the men of his army. He happened upon the tent of Jael the Kenite. Jael's husband, Lapidoth, is not mentioned. He must have been occupied at a distance from his tent. This left Jael alone when Sisera arrived at the tent.

Since the Kenites were not enemies of the King Jabin, Sisera felt that he was fortunate to have found his way to a Kenite tent. We do not know if the peace mentioned in the verse was simply a lack of friction, or whether a peace pact of some kind had been agreed upon.

**JDG 4:18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.**

What happened next was highly unexpected in that time and in that part of the world. With her husband absent, Jael went out and invited another male into her tent. In doing so, she placed herself under great danger of being considered unfaithful to her husband.

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Jael told Sisera to come right in. He need not be afraid. He would be safe there. She even went so far as to cover him with some type of fabric or animal skin.

**JDG 4:19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him.**

The man was exhausted and thirsty. He asked her for a drink of water. She went farther again and offered him milk. With a comfortable covering and the milk in his stomach, he must have seen fatigue leading to sleep.

**JDG 4:20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.**

Since Jael had offered so much comfort up to this point, Sisera felt she was an ally and could be depended upon to protect him from anyone seeking to do him harm. He requested that she watch at the door of the tent, and if anyone came along looking for a man, she was to tell them there was no man there.

I would not wish to have been in the place of Jael if my husband had come home while another man was lying in my tent asleep and under a cover. Jael was taking a fantastic risk.



**JDG 4:21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.**

The record does not tell us if the nail was made of wood or of iron. It was a nail of the tent and thus was a tent peg which could be used to fasten the tent in place when the nail was driven into the ground.

When Sisera was asleep, Jael took a hammer in one hand and the tent pin in the other. We can well imagine that she had driven tent pins many times before and knew how to handle both items. She drove the tent pin completely through the head of Sisera and fastened in into the ground.

Why did Sisera not put up a fight? Because if he had been lying on his side the first blow of the hammer would have created enough force to have driven the tent pin right into his brain. Then she could quickly finish the deed by driving it the rest of the way while he provided no resistance at all.

So he died! What a brief statement to end the career of a powerful commander of an army of men.

**JDG 4:22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail**

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**was in his temples.**

Jael knew the identity of the man she had just killed. She also knew the identity of Barak. As Barak came after Sisera, Jael exited her tent and told him she could show him the one he was pursuing. She led Barak into the tent where he found Sisera with his head fastened to the ground by means of the tent pin. Some sources outside the Bible speak of Sisera having had his head cut off.

**JDG 4:23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.**

Two promises of God were kept by this time. Barak had been told that the time had come for God's army to attack. The army of Sisera would be defeated through God's help. This took place. God had also informed Barak that the honor would not be his. It would come to a woman. Either Deborah or Jael could fit this picture. Barak takes a secondary place.

**JDG 4:24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.**

The Canaanites as a tribe were reduced to a weakened state and no longer posed a major threat to the Israelites. This verse leaves the impression that the forces of Sisera, who were all killed, were not all of the available men under the rule of Jabin.

But, if so, the remainder were rendered harmless.

One last point needs attention. Did Jehovah approve of the deceptive actions of Jael. The woman first invited a man into her tent while her husband was absent. She told him not to be afraid. She gave him a cover to hide him and gave him milk to refresh him and make him sleep. Then she murdered him.

The present writer feels we cannot view Jael as a heroine. Her speech and her actions were both deceptive. However, God often made use of those who were not ideal in the character as He dealt with mankind. It is certainly true that whether we fight with God or against Him, He will ultimately make use of our lives to teach lessons of obedience and disobedience.



## *Chapter 5*

This chapter is sometimes given a human title. That title is “The Song of Deborah.” The chapter is written in poetic form and is similar to the “Song of Moses.” It records the celebration of the victory over the forces of Sisera and Jabin as a combined force of Canaanites was defeated.

One of the reasons the book of Judges is not given more attention than it is has to do with the gruesome nature of materials such as that found in this and some of the other chapters. It is not the most pleasant reading in the Book of God.

**JDG 5:1 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,**

Barak was the general of the Israelite forces. Deborah was the judge and prophet who had provided confidence that Jehovah was prepared to assist them in the conflict. The song is appropriate. God had spoken through Deborah. He had intervened in the battle by causing the storm which mired up the chariots of the enemy, and He had allowed Jael the opportunity to destroy Sisera.

Although this present writer would have preferred a prayer of gratitude rather than a song, the song is what the Lord saw fit to record for us.

**JDG 5:2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered**

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**themselves.**

There are many different types of songs in the Bible. David composed dozens of them which can be read from the book of Psalms. Some are pleas for help. Some are thanksgiving for blessings. Others are praise to God for His greatness and His goodness. This one includes both praise and thanksgiving.

**JDG 5:3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.**

The kings of the earth need to realize that they are subject to the will of Jehovah. When they understand that truth, they are far more apt to act in accordance with God's commandments than they would be when those commandments are ignored.

The "I" here is Deborah. Barak has faded from the scene and Deborah is speaking in the first person. She is doing what all men and women should do every day of their lives. Both kings and paupers should lift their faces to the Lord in praise for blessings both great and small.

**JDG 5:4 LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.**

Mount Seir was located in the land of the Edomites. At critical times in the history of Israel,



God intervened and demonstrated His control over the natural forces of the universe. He is able to bring about whatever natural phenomena may be needed to assist His people.

**JDG 5:5 The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.**

The Bible student can hardly forget the lightning and the quaking of the earth which took place at the time that Moses received the law from the top of Mount Sinai. When the Creator of the heavens and the earth intervenes in the affairs of man, it is wise to be on His side!

**JDG 5:6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways.**

The thought changes somewhat at this verse. The serious condition of the Israelites is pictured. Shamgar is barely mentioned previous to this verse. We can see, however, that in the days of this judge conditions were extremely serious. It was unsafe to travel the main roads. Travellers were forced to follow the byways to avoid being ambushed and robbed or even killed. The woman Jael will be given more attention as the chapter goes on.

There are places in the world today that fit the same description. The officers of the law are at the mercy of the criminals. The citizens take the law



into their own hands and feuds develop.

**JDG 5:7 The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.**

It had reached a point where people were even fearful of living in populated areas. They were safer when they scattered out into the more deserted spots.

**JDG 5:8 They chose new gods; then was war in the gates: was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?**

Here is the main reason for their troubles. They had forsaken the True God and had decided to serve the gods of the nations around them. They had been commanded to drive the Canaanites out of the land and destroy their altars to the false gods. When they failed to do that they ended up by intermarrying with the Canaanites and worshipping their powerless gods.

There were those who were just waiting for Israel to become so weak and disorganized that they would be easy prey for an attacker. It was beginning to look as though they did not have either the strength or the weapons to protect themselves.

**JDG 5:9 My heart is toward the governors of**



**Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.**

Some of the leaders of the tribes had led their people in the battle. Deborah sings praises of their willingness to contribute to the victorious effort.

**JDG 5:10 Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.**

**JDG 5:11 They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.**

The song calls for all who have participated in the successful battle to rejoice and join in the celebration of that success. Those that ride on white asses and sit in judgment are the leaders of the people. They have reason to rejoice. Those who can now draw water safely at the wells ought also to discuss the righteousness of the Lord who granted the victory. The people of the Lord have been allowed to move freely about the city without fear.

**JDG 5:12 Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.**

Matters have been reversed. Those who had caused Israel to fear have been made to fear themselves. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

**JDG 5:13 Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.**

Those who had been recognized as being noble and seated in high places had been careless in their responsibilities. Israel had turned away from Jehovah. Now Deborah had taken the lead and as a result of the release from oppression, she was recognized as a leader of the leaders.

**JDG 5:14 Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.**

This verse begins a review of the behavior of the various tribes with respect to their contribution, or lack of contribution to the fight against the Canaanites.

Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir from the tribe of Manasseh and Zebulun all sent forces to aid in the conflict.

**JDG 5:15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak:**  
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**he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.**

The thought in this verse is divided right in the middle of the verse. The tribe of Issachar had supplied Barak, the leader of the combined Israelite forces.

It was not so with the tribe of Reuben. They had other things to think about.

**JDG 5:16 Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.**

The men of Reuben were more interested in the keeping of their sheep. There is controversy over the translation of the phrase “the bleatings of the flocks.” It is thought by many that this was a playing of the shepherd’s pipes which served as entertainment for the shepherds while other tribes were fighting against Sisera and his men.

**JDG 5:17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.**

Gilead was located east of the Jordan river and those of that tribe did not wish to cross the river to help. The tribe of Dan was busy with their fishing ships and failed to enter the fray. Asher felt the need to remain in their own territory and establish themselves.

Thus, some of the tribes deserved praise for varying degrees of support in the conflict. Others offered excuses for not participating.

**JDG 5:18 Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.**

**JDG 5:19 The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.**

The tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali are now separated out for special praise. They offered their lives in the effort to throw off the oppression of the Canaanite kings. When all was decided, these tribes made it clear that they were not seeking spoil. They participated as representatives of the True God.

**JDG 5:20 They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.**

Heaven is seen as the abode of Jehovah. He saw fit to use supernatural means to show His support for Deborah, Barak and the Israelite forces.

**JDG 5:21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.**

Rain sent from heaven caused the usually quiet stream Kishon to become a raging river, overflowing it's banks and causing a panic among both the horse

and the charioteers of Sisera. The strength of the chariots was turned to weakness. Nine hundred chariots floundered in the mud and mire caused by the rain from heaven.

**JDG 5:22 Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.**

It is doubtful that the horses hooves were shod with iron as would be the case in the present day. As they reared in fear and stamped upon the ground, the hooves were broken and the horses would have become lame. The drivers of the chariots were in danger of being trampled by the steeds.

**JDG 5:23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.**

The angel of the Lord enters the picture. This sounds very much like the same angel of the Lord that aided Israel in their wilderness wanderings. This time the angel is seen placing a curse upon those who refused to help in the fight against the Canaanites.

This is the only place in the Bible where Meroz is mentioned. It may be that Meroz represents those of the Israelites who actually sided with the Canaanite army.

**JDG 5:24 Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.**

In contrast to the curse placed upon Meroz for failing to support Israel, we have blessings asked upon Jael the Kenite who was not a true Israelite, but who risked her life to kill Sisera. This woman goes down in history as having been on the side of the Lord.

**JDG 5:25 He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.**

The report given here should be compared with the one given previously. There are details mentioned here that are not made clear before. In both accounts, Jael went far beyond what might have been expected of one in her circumstances.

The butter could have been buttermilk or even cream. It was intended to cause Sisera to drift off into sleep in what could have been considered a relatively safe place to hide from the Canaanites. Who would expect a woman to invite a man into her tent while her husband was absent?

**JDG 5:26 She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and**



**stricken through his temples.**

**JDG 5:27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.**

The women of the time and place were very often the ones assigned to the setting up and the dismantling of the tents. Jael could have been well able to handle a hammer and tent pin. The tent pin was more apt to have been made of sharpened wood than of iron.

Which came first, the bowing and falling down at Jael's feet, or the use of the hammer and tent pin? It seems that the event makes much more sense if we understand the bowing down and falling at Jael's feet to have been the result of his exhaustion and the soothing effect of the drink which she gave to the man.

In that case, she would have waited until he was unconscious and then stood over him while he was sleeping on his side. One stroke with the hammer and the tent pin could have been driven completely into the man's brain. A few more strokes and the nail would have passed all the way through his head and pinned it to the ground.

**JDG 5:28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?**

War is ugly. Oh how much we wish that it would disappear from this sorrow burdened earth! The

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mother of Sisera had every reason to think that her son with his nine hundred chariots would return victoriously. It was unbelievable that he would be both defeated and also killed. Why was it taking him so long?

**JDG 5:29 Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,**

**JDG 5:30 Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?**

The answer to the question was obvious to all. Her attendants suggested that Sisera was surely alright. The mother agreed that the outcome of the battle had to be in Sisera's favor.

As was usually the case, the victor must be dividing up the spoils. This often amounted to receiving a young woman or two of the defeated forces which he could use as he pleased. Beautiful garments might also be taken from the needlework of the wives of the foes. We might ask ourselves if this could have been a wish on the part of the women that they would fall heir to these garments.

**JDG 5:31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.**



Deborah changes the direction of the song again. Sisera is dead! She prays that all of those who oppose the will of the Lord might come to the same fate. She prays for the exact opposite in the case of those who love and serve God. As the glory of the sun is seen in the middle of the day, may the friends of God shine strong and bright!

Forty years was considered to be the average length of one generation. After this victory over the Canaanites, Israel rested from violence for that period of time. It would be wonderful to add that Israel remained true to God forever more. But sadly, that is not the way humanity has reacted to the blessings which are showered upon them.



## *Chapter 6*

The present chapter discusses the call of Gideon as a judge to deliver the people of Israel from the difficulties brought on by their neglect of Jehovah. The ability of Jehovah to take humble persons and make them highly useful in His service is very well demonstrated.

**JDG 6:1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.**

The close of chapter five informed us that Israel had forty years of peace following the victory over Sisera while Deborah was acting as judge. Those forty years could have been extended for a much longer period of time if they had remained true to the Lord. Instead, they began to neglect His commandments and tried to worship Baal and Jehovah at the same time.

Jehovah is a jealous God. He is not willing to share His people's affections with false gods such as Baal and Ashteroth. Thus Israel had to be taught the folly of idolatrous worship. This lesson was taught through allowing the Midianites to dominate them for seven years.

The Midianites were the descendants of Midian who was a son of Abraham through Keturah. At times they were fairly neutral in the attitude toward Israel. At other times they were fiercely opposed to

them. Moses married a Midianite woman. Joseph's brothers sold him to some Midianites who were passing through. For the most part, they were a wandering nomadic people who took their tents, herds and flocks with them as they moved from place to place.

**JDG 6:2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.**

About two hundred years before this time, Israel had won a clear victory over the Midianites. Now, due to their departure from the will of Jehovah, they found the tables turned. Midian has the upper hand. It has reached the point that the Israelites are forced to leave the open country and hide in caves and mountain strongholds.

How different this was from what could have been! When His people feared Him, Jehovah was with them and giants trembled before them. When Jehovah turned away from them, they trembled before those whom they had previously conquered.

**JDG 6:3 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;**



The Midianites seem to have waited in the background until the Israelites had labored to sow and cultivate their fields. Then, when the harvest was ready, they would move out into the fields and take that for which they had not worked. The reader will perhaps remember that when Israel left the land of Egypt after the ten plagues, they were told to demand that the Egyptians give them gifts. The reversed conditions are quite evident.

Not only did the Midianites come in upon Israel. They were joined by the Amalekites and the children of the east, who were Arabians.

**JDG 6:4 And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.**

When these intruders came into the land in the harvest season they left things in a state of havoc. The crops were riddled. Any livestock of the Israelites which had not been stolen had no pasturage.

**JDG 6:5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.**

The Midianites and their allies brought enormous numbers of their own livestock. They covered the land with their tents and brought in vast numbers



of camels. Furthermore, they hated the Israelites so intensely that they deliberately left the land in shambles.

**JDG 6:6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD.**

How interesting! It finally dawned upon the Israelites that they needed Jehovah. They did not cry out in repentance. They cried out for help. That will not succeed. Before they can expect the full aid of Jehovah, they must learn what they are doing that is displeasing to Him and cease from those evil ways.

Over and over the cycle repeats. Israel obeys the Lord for a time and had peace. Then they forget Him and suffer the consequences. After learning the hard way, they are given a judge, or deliverer, who leads them back to the service of the True God.

**JDG 6:7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites,**

**JDG 6:8 That the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;**

The Lord could have cut off His grace and mercy at any time. It is amazing that He did not do so



during the period of the judges. Time after time He heard and responded to His people's cries for help.

This time He sent a prophet to point out just how ungrateful the people had been. In the next few verses we will be told of an angel of the Lord who appeared to Gideon. This prophet is not that angel. The prophet came to teach the people of their error. The angel came to call Gideon as a deliverer.

**JDG 6:9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;**

Let us look at the things God had done for Israel in one, two three order.

1. He had delivered them from Egyptian bondage
2. He had led them through the wilderness.
3. He had guided them to the land of Canaan.
4. He had allowed them forty years to learn that His people were not grasshoppers.
5. He had allowed them to defeat the Canaanites.
6. He had established them in the new land.

**JDG 6:10 And I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.**

Last, but not least, He had warned them not to worship and fear the false gods of the people who had previously controlled the promised land.

What was Israel's response to the grace and mercy of Jehovah? They had either turned away from Him, or they had attempted to place their affections upon both Himself and the false gods at the same time. If they were so anxious for Him to aid them and deliver them from the Canaanites, they needed to change their ways and worship Him only. The prophet had made it crystal clear as to why God's people were in trouble.

**JDG 6:11 And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.**

Now another messenger appears. This one is an angel of the Lord. Many students of the Word of God believe this angel was Divine. They see him as the angel who led Israel through the wilderness. They also believe He was the same person as the one who appeared as Jesus Christ who came to lead back to Jehovah those who are willing to listen.

As we continue through the chapter we will point out certain facts which support this belief.

The angel of the Lord came and sat under an oak tree which belonged to Joash who was an Abiezrite. The Abiezrites were a part of the tribe of Manasseh. Joash had a son named Gideon. Gideon



was in the process of threshing wheat either near or in a winepress.

The situation was at least safe enough that he was able to leave the caves and dens in the mountains and come out into the open. It was not safe enough that he dared to thresh where the Midianites could easily see him.

**JDG 6:12 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.**

The Bible does not tell us how long it was that the angel sat under the oak tree before he made himself visible to Gideon. When he finally did make himself seen, he made a most surprising statement to Gideon. “The Lord is with thee — thou mighty man of valor.”

This is almost amusing. Here was Gideon hiding from the Midianites while he attempted thresh the wheat. How could the angel call him a “mighty man of valor?” Gideon was shocked.

**JDG 6:13 And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.**

Gideon has a question which multiplied millions have asked throughout the history of God's people. "Why do good people suffer?" There are two basic answers to that question. The first is that good people live in a world along with wicked people who have disobeyed God. The second answer is that those who are suffering may not be as righteous as they think they are.

There is more to Gideon's question. The angel had just told him God was with him. When God was with the people in Egypt and in the wilderness, He assisted them with wondrous miracles. Were those just fairy tales? If God is with me why does He not do something to relieve us of this misery? To all appearances, it seems that He does not know or does not care what is happening.

**JDG 6:14 And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?**

This time the scripture says the "LORD" looked upon Gideon. Then the verse closes by saying, "Have not I sent thee?" The angel was one of the three persons of the Godhead.

The Lord used the word **valor** in verse twelve. Now he uses the word **might**. Gideon was having great trouble understanding how he could possibly have such valor and might as to save Israel from the Midianites.



**JDG 6:15 And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.**

How much Gideon sounds like Moses did when God called Moses to lead the people from Egypt. Moses complained that he was slow of speech. Surely there must be someone else who was better qualified. Gideon objects that his family was not prominent in the tribe of Manasseh, which in itself was not one of the more important tribes. He then added that the others in his own family were greater than he was.

The fact is, however, that God loves to use the humble person to demonstrate His own power. He is able to exalt the humble, to humble the exalted. It is well that we take a close look at James 4:6 and I Peter 5:5.

Jam 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

1Pe 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

**JDG 6:16 And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.**



When God had called Gideon a mighty man of valor, He was looking ahead to the power and courage He was about to bestow upon this man whom He recognized as being diligent and industrious. This was a man whom God could use.

The Lord repeated that He would be with Gideon. That would make all the difference. Under Gideon's leadership, the entire army of the Midianites would be as easily defeated as if they were but a single man.

**JDG 6:17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.**

Gideon was still doubtful. Like Moses had done, he asked for proof that this was the Lord and that He would be with him.

**JDG 6:18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.**

It was a custom of the land to make a gift or present to a visitor of importance. Gideon decided to follow that custom and offer a present to his visitor. He asked him to stay where he was until he had time to prepare the gift and bring it to him. The angel of the Lord agreed to wait.

There was method in Gideon's madness. By



offering a present he could determine if the visitor were truly the Lord, or just a man. If he ate the food which Gideon was going to present to him, then he was a man. If he wished to use it as a burnt offering, Gideon would know He was truly the Lord.

**JDG 6:19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.**

Gideon prepared a young goat. He used an ephah of flour to make unleavened cakes, and he made broth or gravy to pour over the meat and the cakes. This was a bountiful present. An ephah was approximate equal to a bushel. This was more than a man could possibly eat at one sitting. There is a strong indication that Gideon was almost ready to accept the word of his visitor that He was the Lord.

**JDG 6:20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.**

As soon as the gift had been presented to the angel of the Lord, Gideon was given some careful instructions. He was to place the meat of the kid and the cakes on the rock beside the angel. He was then to pour out the broth, perhaps over the meat



and the cakes. Gideon must have wondered if the angel was preparing to eat the food.

**JDG 6:21 Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.**

Rather than eating the food, the angel reached out with his staff and touched the offering. When he did so, fire arose from out of the rock and burnt up the offering. This was not a man. This was the LORD! In addition, men do not just disappear into thin air.

**JDG 6:22 And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.**

Gideon was convinced! He had seen an angel of the Lord. No man could see God face to face and live. See Exodus 33:20.

Exo 33:20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

The glory of God is so bright that human eyes could not withstand it. Saul was blinded for some time after he had his vision on the road to Damascus.

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Gideon had not been comforted by the realization that God had approached him this close. He was petrified with fear that his life would be taken.

**JDG 6:23 And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.**

The LORD assured him that this would not be the case. He was to calm down and stop worrying that death was just ahead. He needed to follow the will of Jehovah.

**JDG 6:24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.**

Gideon decided to build an altar in that place that Israel might have a place to worship the True God. He called this altar “Jehovahshalom.” Shalom means peace. The name of the altar was Jehovah-peace. Peace was available to Israel if they would worship the Lord, and worship Him only.

The altar was still in existence when Samuel wrote the book of Judges.

**JDG 6:25 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:**

The same night that Gideon built the altar which he called Jehovahshalom, he was told to go and get his father's young bullock and throw down the altar of Baal which his father used for the worship of that false god. There is a problem here. It seems strange to call a seven year old animal a young bullock. Also it is said to be the "second" bullock. If so, what was the first bullock?

The most satisfactory explanation of this that this writer has seen is that the words second bullock could be literally translated from Hebrew words which say "bullock of bullocks." In that case, Gideon would be instructed to get his father's best bull, which was seven years of age. That would mean that the term did not refer to two different animals, but to the best of his father's bullocks.

The altars of Baal were usually made by building up a mound of earth. To tear down such an altar by the use of a bullock would then mean using the animal to spread the mound out over a considerable distance. These mounds were placed in groves of trees which provided shade for the worshippers. Gideon was to see that these trees were cut down.

**JDG 6:26 And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.**

Gideon was then to build an altar to Jehovah upon the rock where the angel had been seated. He

was then to take the bullock which had been used to throw down the altar of Baal and use it as a burnt offering to Jehovah. He was to use the wood from the trees of the grove to provide fuel for the burning of the offering.

All this should have been quite clear to Gideon's father and to the rest of those who had been worshipping Baal. Baal worship was to cease. Jehovah alone was to be worshipped.

**JDG 6:27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.**

It is evident that Gideon's father, and Gideon himself, were not as insignificant as Gideon had tried to present them to the angel when he was denying his ability to lead Jehovah's people. If one is in command of ten servants, he does have some degree of influence.

The wrecking of the altar of Baal and the building of an altar to Jehovah would have given rise to quite a confrontation if the townspeople had known of it. Therefore, not because of lack of confidence that it could be done, but by realizing it would create less commotion, it was done during the night. The word "fear" is used in the verse, but it is to be doubted at this point whether Gideon felt that the Lord would be unable to see him through the task.



**JDG 6:28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built.**

There was to be a monstrous shock in the morning. We can guess that the men of the city were accustomed to arising in the morning and beginning the day with a worship service at the altar of Baal. When they arrived, there was no altar of Baal. There was a new altar for sacrifice to Jehovah. Not only that, Gideon's father's finest bullock had been sacrificed upon this new altar.

**JDG 6:29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.**

There was an immediate uproar. The one who had committed this terrible act must be found out. He must forfeit his life for his insult to Baal.

It did not take long to find the culprit. The arrow of guilt pointed straight at Gideon. But, how did they determine it was Gideon who was responsible? One commentator made a very wise statement. He said that a secret which is shared by ten others is not a secret. One of the ten servants had revealed the details. It was the son of Joash who had caused the destruction of the altar of Baal and the sacrifice of Joash's prime bullock.

**JDG 6:30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.**

The men of the city demanded that Gideon be brought forth in order that he might be killed to let Baal know he was still respected. What was Joash to do? Was he to deliver his own son to the executioners, or was he to refuse and face the wrath of the townsmen? It was a decision no loving parent would relish.

**JDG 6:31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar.**

Gideon's father, Joash, came up with what must have been a surprising answer to the angry towns people. Just why was it that they felt they needed to take vengeance on Gideon? If Baal was truly a god, he could certainly handle the punishment of Gideon by himself, without the help of these men.

Joash even went farther. The man who thought he needed to help Baal to punish one who had insulted him was proving that Baal needed his assistance to defend himself. A man who would suggest that his god was unable to defend himself should be put to



death while it was still morning!

**JDG 6:32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.**

Gideon's father, Joash, changed his son's name on that very day. His new name was "Jerubbaal." According to C.F. Kiel, this name means "Baal-fighter."

**JDG 6:33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.**

It seems that the events of these last few verses had reached the ears of the Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians who were distressing Israel. They decided it was time to put down this display of disrespect for their favorite "god." They began to gather their forces in the valley of Jezreel.

The valley of Jezreel was located in the territory of the tribe of Issachar. The name means "God soweth." This indicates fertility. The Midianites, etc., had no intention of letting the Israelites defy their control of the land.

**JDG 6:34 But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.**

There are many things man cannot do without the help of Jehovah. Gideon could never have  
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successfully defeated the Midianites without God being with him and providing wisdom and power. But, God had promised to be with him, and He kept the promise.

A trumpet call was a call to arms. Now the very people who had demanded Gideon's death were coming to his side in the battle which was about to begin. The stand which Joash took must have had a powerful impact upon the thinking of the entire clan of the Abiezrites.

**JDG 6:35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.**

Gideon sent messengers to a number of the other tribes. This included the rest of the tribe of Manasseh, the tribe of Asher, the tribe of Zebulun and the tribe of Naphtali. An army of men gathered to face the multitudes of Midianites. As Gideon looked out over the forces which had been assembled by his trumpet call, and the Midianites who had readied themselves to put Israel in it's place, he felt he needed further assurance that he was really the man for the task.

**JDG 6:36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,**

Gideon wanted a miraculous sign from God which would leave him absolutely no doubt that God

would be with him in the tremendous battle which he thought would be just ahead.

He did not wait for Jehovah to tell him what sign would be given. He actually specified what he wanted God to do. This could have been a very dangerous thing to do. Jesus was once expected to show a sign at the will of the people. He refused to produce such a sign. (See Luke 11:29.)

Luk 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.

**JDG 6:37 Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.**

Gideon asked that he might place a woolen fleece upon a floor. If in the morning there was dew upon the fleece but the earth around it was dry, he could know God meant for him to lead the battle.

**JDG 6:38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water.**

Jehovah accepted Gideon's suggestion and it was precisely as Gideon had asked. The fleece was wet. The ground around it was dry.



**JDG 6:39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.**

Gideon then risked bringing the wrath of the Lord down upon his head. He went another step and begged God not to be angry with him. Would He do one more thing. If he placed a fleece upon the earth and in the morning the fleece was dry and the earth around it was wet, he would know without doubt that he was God's selection to command the forces of Israel.

**JDG 6:40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.**

Just as Moses objections were all answered when he was selected to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage, God answered every doubt of Gideon. He was now to be a mighty man of valor, with the Spirit of God directing and empowering him.



## *Chapter 7*

The record of Gideon begins in chapter six, continues through this present chapter and on into chapter eight. In this chapter we read of the defeat of the Midianites and their allies, after Jehovah reduced his army from thirty-two thousand men to three hundred.

The basic lesson in the chapter is the difference in what can be accomplished when God is with man, as compared with what can be accomplished by human wisdom and power alone.

**JDG 7:1 Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.**

Gideon's father, Joash, had changed his name to Jerubbaal after he observed his son's destruction of the altar of Baal. The new name referred to his contention with that false god. Both names will be used in the later records.

The mention of the well of Harod is important in the events which were to follow. All the people that were with Gideon amounted to thirty-two thousand. That may seem to be a sizable force until we note that the Midianites are described as a "host." One might conclude from this verse that the Midianites were on the side of a hill which was at a higher

elevation that the camp of Gideon. Verse eight of this chapter does not allow that. Gideon's three hundred men looked down upon the Midianites.

**JDG 7:2 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.**

We do not know how God spoke to Gideon. It could have been through the voice of the angel. It could have been thoughts which were implanted in his mind. The message was most surprising. Gideon was probably wondering just how his army could possibly defeat such a host as these Midianites who had covered the land like a monstrous swarm of grasshoppers. Now God informed him that rather than having too few men, he actually had too many.

If the Lord had allowed Gideon's thirty-two thousand to conquer the Midianites, they might claim they had accomplished it through their own human wisdom and power. They might claim they had saved themselves by their own hands. The size of Gideon's forces must be cut down.

**JDG 7:3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.**

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The first step in making the reduction was to excuse all who were afraid of the Midianites. Over two thirds of Gideon's men departed. Those who are fearful can be more trouble than help.

There is another point to be made here. Discussion with those who have served in the military in recent times will tell you that combat is a fearful thing. Most soldiers are afraid when they face the enemy. A large percentage of them are only enrolled in the armed forces as a duty, or to avoid being labeled as cowards.

Today's army of the Lord are Christians. To be effective they must have confidence in the ultimate victory over Satan and his angels. Certainly the contest between good and evil is not one to be relished. But the fearful and unbelieving are not the help they could be.

**JDG 7:4 And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.**

God declared the remaining ten thousand men were still too many. There must be a further reduction. There was to be a "water test." Those who passed the water test were to go with Gideon. Those who failed the test were to be dismissed.



God has used the “water test” a number of times. Naaman was told to wash in the Jordan river. Only when he did so was his leprosy cleansed. In the Christian age he has informed us through the gospel according to Mark that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved, and that those who do not follow these commands will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16).

**JDG 7:5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.**

Gideon followed the instructions which he was given. They were camped near the well of Harod. Gideon took the men to the water. God told him how the test was to be applied. The men were to be separated into two groups. One group would be made up of those who took up the water in their hands and then raised their hands to their mouth to drink. The other group was to consist of those who kneeled down when they drank.

**JDG 7:6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.**



The ones who remained standing and did not kneel down amounted to three hundred men. The other nine thousand seven hundred kneeled down when they drank. Now Gideon had only three hundred of the thirty-two thousand who were present at the beginning.

**JDG 7:7 And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.**

The Lord declared Himself to be satisfied. The three hundred who were left would be used as “He” saved Israel. Victory would have been quite impossible if the three hundred men were to face the host of Midianites without Divine assistance. All the rest who had been eliminated were free to go back to their tents. They would not be required.

**JDG 7:8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.**

The three hundred who were still with Gideon, were to take some food with them. They were also to each have a trumpet. The battle was about to



begin. How would the Lord bring victory to Gideon and his three hundred against the innumerable host of the Midianites, Amalekites and Arabians who had gathered against them?

**JDG 7:9 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.**

The Lord read Gideon's mind. He still had doubt that his small number could accomplish victory. Again, we have an application to the present day. Throughout every age God has had only a remnant in comparison to the population of the entire world. Yet He has assured His faithful that there will be a victory through Jesus Christ the Lord. That victory will be won by the preaching of the gospel and the example set through the lives of the believers.

It was time for Gideon to lead his men into battle, but since he still held doubt in his heart it would be necessary to give him one more assurance that God was with him and would deliver Israel with his leadership.

**JDG 7:10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:**

In order to remove his doubt, Gideon was to take his servant Purah with him and go down into the camp of the Midianites. They were to spy out the situation before the battle began.



No, this writer did not misspell the name of Purah. The Ph is not sounded like the beginning of the word Philemon. In the Hebrew, it is the same sound as in the word “pure.” Purah may have been one or the ten servants mentioned as helping Gideon in the matter of the altar of Baal.

**JDG 7:11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.**

What Gideon and Purah would hear in the camp of the Midianites would give them confidence in the upcoming conflict. Gideon and Purah did as God directed them. They went down to the edge of the Midianite camp. It was dark at the time and they could listen without being seen.

**JDG 7:12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.**

To be certain the reader understands the enormous difference between the army of Gideon and that of the Midianites and their allies, this verse repeats what had been stated previously. The statement is what is called “hyperbole.” It is simply a



way of saying there were too many to count. Gideon and his servant had to be impressed.

**JDG 7:13 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.**

As they came to the edge of the camp, they heard one of the Midianites tell another of them about a dream he had just had. He had dreamed that a cake of barley came tumbling into the Midianite camp and struck a Midianite tent. Even though it was so small, it caused great destruction. The tent was overturned and ended up lying flat on the earth. What could be the meaning of such a dream?

**JDG 7:14 And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.**

Just as the Lord had planted the dream in the mind of the first man, He had also provided the second man with the true interpretation of the dream. The meaning of the dream was that God would deliver the entire camp of the Midianites into the hand of Gideon, an Israelite.



**JDG 7:15 And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.**

When Gideon heard the conversation between the two men, he knew what looked like it was impossible was certain to take place. His three hundred men would defeat the Midianite host.

He praised the Lord and returned to his men, telling them it was time to take action. God would give them victory.

**JDG 7:16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.**

God apparently gave Gideon instructions which are not revealed to us here. We have trouble determining how Gideon would have known this was the correct path unless God had shown it to him.

The three hundred men were divided into three groups, with one hundred in each of the three. All three hundred were given three items; a trumpet, a pitcher and a lamp. A lamp was placed within each of the three hundred pitchers.

**JDG 7:17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come**

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**to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.**

The men were told to follow Gideon's example. They are told to look on him, but with a camp the size of that of the Midianites, and with the darkness of the night, it seems that what they were to do was wait for Gideon's trumpet to blow, for his pitcher to break and his lamp to be seen. Then, when this took place there were to do the same thing.

**JDG 7:18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.**

There is a difficulty in this verse. If the three companies of one hundred men each remained together, there would only be three locations of men around the innumerable number of Midianites. They would hardly be found on all sides of the camp unless they spread out over a wide territory. This leaves us with the conclusion that they must have disbanded in order to be found on every side of the camp of the Midianites.

They were all to cry out together, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Three hundred men, all shouting in unison would be an impressive sound. It could well lead the Midianites to imagine a much larger number of attackers.

**JDG 7:19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle**

**watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands.**

Gideon himself was with one of the three companies. It was the beginning of the middle watch of the night. There were three watches, one was from six to ten. The second was from ten until two in the morning. The third was from two in the morning until six. The beginning of the middle watch would have been ten o'clock at night.

Three hundred trumpets sounded almost simultaneously. Three hundred pitchers were broken. Three hundred lamps shed their light into the dark of the night. If the reader has ever awakened in the middle of the night to an unusual sound or an unexpected light, he or she can begin to imagine the shock which three hundred shouts, three hundred trumpet sounds and three hundred torch lights spread around the camp on every side would produce.

**JDG 7:20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.**

As a long time teacher of physical science, this present writer cannot ignore a matter which he has not seen discussed in any of the work of other



commentators. A flame requires oxygen to continue burning. If the lamps were inserted into pitchers which were left in an upside down condition, the available oxygen could be depleted and replaced by carbon dioxide. The lamp would then cease burning.

Possibly the answer to this problem lies in the position of the pitchers. If they were held sideways, and the motion of the pitchers was sufficient, there would be circulation sufficient to replenish the supply of oxygen.

**JDG 7:21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.**

With the camp encircled by the lighted lamps, the Midianites thoughts were more on fleeing than on fighting. They became thoroughly confused. Their cries were added to the cries of the three hundred Israelites, producing quite a distressing sound.

**JDG 7:22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.**

The result was that the Midianites could not determine who was friend and who was foe. They began suspecting every other person of being an Israelite, and thus began swinging their swords at

one another. In the meantime, all that the three hundred had to do was blow their trumpets, hold up their lamps and shout!

There is nothing said about the number who lost their lives to their fellow Midianites. There is reason to believe it was a very large number. Those who were not killed began trying to find their way out of Canaan and back into the land from which they had come. Bethshittah, Zererath and Abelmehola are located in what would have been their path of retreat.

Does the reader object that it would have been extremely difficult to find the way during this confusion, and in the middle of the night? It would be wise to remember that these were persons who were typically wanderers or nomads. They would have been familiar with the positions of the stars and could have found their way by that means.

**JDG 7:23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.**

The tribes mentioned were all located in the northern portion of Canaan. They were no doubt very much concerned over the movements of the Midianite masses further into their own territory. As soon as they found the Midianites were retreating, they entered the fray and increased the discomfort of the enemy.

**JDG 7:24 And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying,**  
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**come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bethbarah and Jordan.**

The confusion among the Midianites slowed down their progress in getting back to where they could cross the Jordan and leave Canaan. This gave time for Gideon to send messengers ahead and gather the forces of the tribe of Ephraim at the fords of the Jordan, where they could fall upon the disorganized Midianites and prevent them from escaping from the pursuing tribes of Israel.

**JDG 7:25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.**

The men of Ephraim captured two of the more important men of the Midianites, named Oreb and Zeeb. One was slain upon a rock which was then known as the rock of Oreb. The other was slain at a winepress which became known as the winepress of Zeeb. Earlier, we found Gideon threshing wheat at a winepress as he hid from the Midianites. Here we find a Midianite prince attempting to hide from Gideon's men at a winepress. Is this pure coincidence?

Those who had killed the two princes of the

Midianites beheaded them and brought the two heads to Gideon. Gideon had already passed over the Jordan and was in pursuit of the Midianites who had managed to keep from being killed. This may seem a very gruesome thing for the people of Israel to have done. However, we must remember that the part of the world we are discussing is somewhat barbaric even to this day when Arabs and Jews enter combat. At that time the world was less civilized than at the present.

We conclude by reminding the reader again that though only a remnant follow the Lord while the many enter in at the wide gate, that remnant will be victorious over every enemy, even to death itself!



## *Chapter 8*

In this chapter we find some mopping up operations after Gideon's three hundred, with Divine help, routed the one hundred thirty-five thousand man army of the Midianites. The Midianites had fled toward the Jordan river where they intended to cross over into safer and more familiar territory. Most had been killed as they had attacked one another with their swords. Then when they arrived at the Jordan the Ephraimites killed more of them until only a remnant of the original force was left alive to cross over the river.

**JDG 8:1 And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.**

The men of Ephraim were not at all happy that the battle was practically over by the time they were able to enter into the action. They wanted to know why they were not called upon along at the beginning of the battle. However, there is no guarantee that they would have accepted the challenge at that point. Now that the Midianites had been reduced to a small fraction of their original strength, and were fleeing in panic, Ephraim could look at the picture with great boldness.

It is very possible that the men of Ephraim were thinking about the spoils which they had missed out on. They also looked with some envy upon the glory the army of Gideon had enjoyed as a result of the victory over an army larger than their own.

**JDG 8:2 And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?**

Gideon demonstrated a fine knowledge of human psychology. He noted that the Ephraimites had captured two kings of the Midianites. That might well be more important than what had taken place before they arrived at the Jordan to meet the fleeing Midianites. It was true that the Ephraimites had entered the fray after the main harvest had been reaped, but on this particular occasion, the gleanings at the end were very crucial. Abiezer is, of course, the forces which were with Gideon in the main part of the battle.

**JDG 8:3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.**

Gideon pointed out that what he and his men had done was less important than the capturing of the two princes of Midian, Zeeb and Oreb. Their reaction to these words does indicate that the taking

of spoils was less important to them than having a part in the victory.

**JDG 8:4 And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.**

Gideon and his three hundred then crossed over the Jordan and continued to follow after the remnant of Midianites who had escaped from both his forces and those of the Ephraimites. They were now in the land east of the Jordan where the tribe of Gad had settled.

**JDG 8:5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.**

The men of Succoth were Israelites. Gideon felt that he was justified in asking that his men be provided with loaves of bread to give them strength to go onward. After all, they had driven the Midianites out of the land. This enemy had plagued the Israelites east of the Jordan just as they had those on the west.

There were two more kings of the Midianites that Gideon wished to capture in addition to Oreb and Zeeb who had been taken by the Ephraimites.

**JDG 8:6 And the princes of Succoth said,**

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**Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?**

The leaders or princes of the city of Succoth reacted quite differently than Gideon expected. They wanted to know if Gideon had these two kings already in his hand. If he had already captured the kings, they might have given his men bread. As it was, there was reason to think the Midianites might return and vent their wrath upon the city of Succoth.

**JDG 8:7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briars.**

Gideon rebuked them sharply. There was already good reason to believe his men would be able, with the help of the Lord, to capture the two Midianite kings. When that took place, Gideon would see that these who had refused his men food would be taught a lesson. They would have their flesh torn with thorns and briars.

There are those who believe this punishment consisted of beating them with these thorns and briars until their flesh was a mass of blood and gore. Others believe the men of Succoth were actually dragged across ground which was covered with these briars and thorns until they died from the punishment. The truth is that we are not given the details.

**JDG 8:8 And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him.**

From Succoth, Gideon went on to Penuel. As he had done in Succoth, he asked the men of Penuel for bread to feed his men. The answer in Penuel was identical to that which was given to him in Succoth. They refused!

**JDG 8:9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.**

Just as Gideon had warned the men of Succoth that he would return to teach them a lesson, he informed the men of Penuel that when he had taken the two kings of the Midianites, he would return and destroy their tower. It seems that they felt they had defenses enough that they need not fear either the Midianites or the men of Gideon. They were to find out just how mistaken they were.

**JDG 8:10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.**

It is thought that Karkor was about one hundred



miles east of the Jordan river. The two kings, with their remaining fifteen thousand men had gone far enough that they had relaxed to some degree. They had lost almost ninety percent of their original army.

**JDG 8:11 And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host; for the host was secure.**

There is some indication here that Gideon and his men came around the enemy and attacked them from the east rather than from the west. This would have been a surprise since that was the direction in which the Midianites were fleeing.

**JDG 8:12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.**

The Midianites who were left had good reason to flee, even though they still outnumbered Gideon's men by 15,000 to 300. They had previously found numbers of men to be meaningless when facing forces with Jehovah on the side of their enemy.

Gideon and his men succeeded in capturing the two kings and discomfiting the rest of the foe. The word "discomfited" may be a bit mild. It is safe to say that the Midianites were made "extremely



uncomfortable.” No doubt a number of them were slain.

**JDG 8:13 And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up,**

Verse thirteen hints that, like the battle before, this one took place during the dark hours of night. Since Gideon returned to Succoth before the sun rose, it is thought that the surprise factor was also an important part of this conflict.

**JDG 8:14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men.**

When Gideon arrived back at Succoth, he took one of the young men of that city and persuaded him to identify the leaders of the city. It was found that there were seventy-seven of this princes and elders.

**JDG 8:15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?**

Gideon had warned the men of the city when  
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he passed through previously that he would be back when he had captured the two kings he was pursuing, and that when he did come back he would teach them a lesson through the use of thorns and briars.

He had asked for bread for his men and they had refused and mocked him by saying he did not have the two kings in hand. They were not willing to cooperate until he had captured them.

**JDG 8:16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.**

Just how Gideon taught the elders of the city through the use of thorns and briars is not told us. We are, however, reminded of the beating that the Son of God took just before going to the cross.

**JDG 8:17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.**

When Gideon reached the city of Penuel he demonstrated to the men there that their tower in which they took such pride was far from invincible. He beat down the tower and killed the men of that city.

The student of the Bible is left to ponder why the men of Penuel were slain while the elders and princes of Succoth were only said to be taught a lesson through the use of thorns and briars. Perhaps we are talking about the leading men of each city and the men of Succoth met death just as did the men of Penuel.

**JDG 8:18 Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king.**

The scene may have changed here. Although Gideon had Zebah and Zalmunna in hand when he punished the men of Succoth and Penuel, the account from here on seems to have taken place back in Ophrah where Gideon was at the time Jehovah called him from the winepress. See verse twenty.

Gideon questioned the two kings as to the type of men they had killed while they were running rampant over the area of Mount Tabor near Gideon's home. It seems that Gideon suspected these two kings of having been responsible for the death of some of his own loved ones.

Zebah and Zalmunna confessed that they had killed some men at the time they were at the place Gideon specified. They explained that the men they had killed resembled Gideon. Just as Gideon appeared to be a child of a king, so did the men they had killed. The reader will recall that Joash, the father of Gideon, was a respected man in his community.

**JDG 8:19 And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the LORD liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.**

Gideon replied that they had good reason to  
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resemble him. They were full blood brothers. They had both the same father and the same mother as he had. If they had not been killed, he would not have killed Zebah and Zalmunna, but since they had killed his brothers, he would see that they met the same fate.

There are two contrasting lines of thought concerning the remaining verses of this chapter. Many liberal commentators see a tremendous change in the attitude of Gideon. They see him very rapidly changing from one who was extremely hesitant to carry out the will of Jehovah by doing battle with the Midianites, to a man who waged a personal effort at revenge for the loss of his brothers.

More conservative commentators point out that in killing the two kings, Gideon was fulfilling a command of Jehovah that the closest relative of a murdered man was to act as an avenger and kill the one who had committed the murder of his relative. They point to the fact that Gideon is listed in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews as a man of great faith. (See Hebrews 11:32-33.)

Heb 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

Heb 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

It is difficult for the present writer to believe Gideon would have been included in the list of



heroes of faith if his life had followed a plan of personal revenge against Zebah and Zalmunna. It is, however, true that there could have been a quite serious change in his attitude after the conquest of the Midianites. This possibility will be explored a bit more in the verses to come.

**JDG 8:20 And he said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth.**

One reason why we believe these events took place after Gideon's return to his home at Ophrah is that his youthful firstborn son was present with him. This seems unlikely while he was doing battle with the Midianites.

He commanded his son to kill the two kings with a sword. This would no doubt have been cutting off their heads. The command for his son to do the deed was a mark of disrespect for the two rulers. Gideon wished to show them just how insignificant they were.

This writer can easily understand the youth fearing to do that which his father had asked. The young lad was not as calloused to death and blood as his father. The writer was sometimes asked to be present in the butchering of cattle and hogs on the farm when he was also just a boy. Whenever possible he could not be found at butchering time. That was animals. This was humans.

**JDG 8:21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks.**

Zebah and Zalmunna sided with the boy. He did not yet possess the strength of a man. It might very well require a number of swings of the sword to take their lives. At least they should be given the respect of dying at the hands of a man instead of a youth.

Gideon did as they asked. He killed both of them. Then he took the ornaments that were on the necks of their camels. It seems that they had been placed on their own camels as they were returned to Ophrah under Gideon's power. The men of power in the area often decorated their camel's heads and necks with jewelry which had been taken from their defeated foes. Gideon may have made a mistake by doing this. Rather than giving Jehovah the honor for the victory over Midian, Gideon let his people think he was the conqueror. That was not the case!

**JDG 8:22 Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.**

The successes of Gideon and his men, plus the taking possession of the ornaments from the necks of the camels, led the men of Israel to plead with

Gideon to act as their king. Not only did they want Gideon to become king, they wanted his son and his son's son to follow him on the throne. In other words, they wanted a monarchy which was handed down from generation to generation. They proudly stated that "Thou" has delivered us from Midian.

**JDG 8:23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.**

Gideon's reply is a model of humility. He had not given them the victory. Neither he nor his son would sit upon a throne. Jehovah was the one who had made the victory possible. It was Jehovah who must be their Ruler!

**JDG 8:24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.)**

In strange contrast to the previous verse, Gideon asked his men to give the earrings they had taken from the Ishmaelites to him.

Was this a desire for personal riches, or a demonstration of power to manipulate the actions of others? It does not seem so. The use to which Gideon put the gold from the earrings was not the establishment of a personal treasury.

**JDG 8:25 And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.**

The men were happy to do as Gideon asked. They were giving up personal possessions in gracious thanks for Gideon's part in the victory over the Midianites. They spread out a cloth upon which they threw the earrings. What would Gideon do with this pile of earrings?

**JDG 8:26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks.**

Does the reader question the use of the word "pile?" This is a proper word for the contributions the men made. There were:

1. Ornaments
2. Collars
3. Purpose clothing which the kings wore
4. Chains from the necks of the camels
5. And 1700 shekels of gold

The gold itself has been estimated at nearly fifty pounds. If the reader will contemplate the cost of a gold wedding ring and the weight of that ring, he will have some idea of the value of the earrings.

**JDG 8:27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.**

Now Gideon made another mistake. He made an ephod using the gold. The verse does not tell us whether he used all of the gold to make the ephod. The ephod which the high priest wore in the tabernacle was a garment which was made partly of gold. It may be that Gideon was making a garment for either himself or a priest to wear while worshipping Jehovah in his own city. If he wished to act as a high priest, he was out of order. If he wished to build a tabernacle at Ophrah, he was again out of order. God was to select both the high priest and the place of this type of service.

The verse indicates that not just Gideon, but his household was later snared by these events. They went whoring after it. To go whoring after false gods was to place them before the True God of heaven in one's heart and life. Gideon was clearly faithful to God when he agreed to lead Israel against the Midianite horde. Something had happened. His great faith had been tested and found wanting at the end. In that case the faith referred to in Hebrews was that of his younger years and not that of his last ones.

**JDG 8:28 Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up**



**their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.**

The result of the victory over the Midianites was that Israel found peace for another forty year period in those latter years of this judge of Israel.

**JDG 8:29 And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.**

**JDG 8:30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.**

What a strange life of faith and frailty Gideon led. As soon as he had quieted the nation from those who had been plundering it, he entered into multiple marriages. Someone will reply that this was not out of the ordinary for men at that time. They had as many wives as they could support and thought nothing of it's acceptability or unacceptability with God. Yes, this is true, but that does not make it right. God made one woman for one man from the beginning. Any abuse of the plan is sin.

**JDG 8:31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.**

In addition to their multiple wives, the men of that time had concubines to satisfy the lusts of the flesh any time they felt the urge. Gideon produced a son by one of his concubines. This was another mistake. The sorrow which would be brought about



by this son called Abimelech was to be very great to his family and his nation.

**JDG 8:32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.**

Though Gideon made these several mistakes in his spiritual life, he does seem to have exerted a restraining influence upon the idolatrous trends of the children of Israel as a whole. When his life ended he was buried along with Joash his father.

**JDG 8:33 And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god.**

Gideon's death released an epidemic of idolatry and immorality among the children of Israel. There were many different Baal gods. Every community worshipped one by a different name.

**JDG 8:34 And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:**

It is worse to have known Jehovah and to forget Him than it would be to never have known Him. Those who have known Him and then turned away to the world were described by sickening terms in the New Testament record. They are like unto

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sows who return again and again to wallowing in the mire, and like the dog that returns to eat it's own vomit.

**JDG 8:35 Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.**

Gideon was referred to by both his original name and the name his father gave him after he contended with Baal. Like most of us Gideon could show tremendous strength at times, and then make some very critical mistakes at others. God apparently felt that the times of spiritual strength outweighed those of weakness, and that it was right to list his name in the midst of the heroes of faith named in that precious eleventh chapter of the New Testament book of Hebrews.



## *Chapter 9*

This chapter is the record of the Abimelech, the son of Gideon through a handmaid in the city of Schechem. It is not a pretty picture. It is the story of a bloodthirsty, power hungry man. Abimelech ruled for only three years, but during those three years the nation of Israel passed through very perilous days.

**JDG 9:1 And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,**

Gideon is known here by the name Jerubbaal which means "contention with Baal." This man was a strange mixture of humility and false pride. In the beginning of his life he objected to taking the leadership of Israel on the basis that he was not as well qualified as others. Late in his life, he had sexual relations with a handmaid in Shechem which resulted in the birth of this son Abimelech.

The name of the son means "son of a king." It was probably given to the child by his mother as a means of showing her elation as the mother of a son by Gideon. Gideon had declared that neither he nor his son would rule over Israel. He emphasized that Jehovah was Israel's king. Nevertheless Gideon

acted after that in such a manner that his handmaid was at least partly justified in the name given to his son.

After the death of his father, and after forty years of peace in the land, Abimelech saw the opportunity of rising to a position of rulership over the nation. He decided to begin his effort by working through his mother and with her side of his family. He was using a woman to rise to power.

**JDG 9:2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.**

Abimelech's approach might have made very good sense to the men of Schechem. Living under the leadership of seventy men could be extremely confusing. In addition, Abimelech was related to these men by their mother. Would they not rather by ruled by one man who was close kin than by seventy men who were unrelated to them?

Abimelech could not have cared less about the feelings and welfare of the citizens of the city of Shechem. His interest was in using them as a platform from which to reach national rulership. He was a politician in the worst sense of that word. His father, Gideon, had shown a sincere interest in the welfare of the people.

**JDG 9:3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother.**

The plan was successful. Word got around that it would be wise to aid their own half brother in his effort to become ruler. We understand that the speaking in the ears of the men of Schechem implies the speaking was done in whispers rather than in public addresses.

**JDG 9:4 And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.**

Schechem had been a city with special importance in the history of Jehovah's people. But after forty years of holding hands with Baal, it at this time had a treasury devoted to his honor. This treasury would have been filled by sacrifices and offerings to the false gods. Abimelech persuaded the priests of Baal to give him seventy pieces of silver.

It is of interest that this amounted to one piece of silver for each of his father's seventy sons. Abimelech then used the money to hire empty headed men of poor character to support him in a mass murder.

**JDG 9:5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons,**

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**upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.**

The number of men whom Abimelech had hired is not revealed to us. What is revealed is that they were sufficiently strong that they were able to execute all but one of Gideon's sons. These executions were all accomplished on a single stone. This means the action was not a quick surprise in which all of the men were slain at the same time. There was but one stone. The men must have been killed one at a time.

The one son of Gideon who was not killed was Jotham. He succeeded in finding a hiding place and avoid being slaughtered. Does the reader find himself thinking ahead and saying Jotham is being protected by Jehovah that he may become ruler rather than Abimelech? Surprise! This did not take place. Jotham will appear on the scene again, but not as the next judge.

**JDG 9:6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.**

Things were going just as Abimelech had planned. The men of the city of Shechem got together and pronounced him to be their king. The identity of the house of Millo is not known. The impression of the verse is that there was very little opposition, if any,



to the appointment of the new king. The pillar in Shechem was probably a monument to Baal.

**JDG 9:7 And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.**

The news reached the ears of Jotham, the one son of Gideon who had not been killed with the other sixty-nine. Jotham came out of hiding long enough to warn the city of Shechem of the foolish thing they were doing. Shechem was near the foot of Mount Gerizim, the mountain which had been used to pronounce God's blessings upon those who were obedient. Jotham climbed to a point high on the mountain and spoke to the people. He called for them to hear what he had to say. If they would hear what he was about to tell them, the True God would hear their prayers. If they would not hear, they need not expect Jehovah to be with them.

The area of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim is known for its acoustical excellency. A voice can be heard much farther than is the case in most locations. From his vantage point on the mountain, Jotham presented a fable to his listeners.

A fable is an account in which animals or other non human objects may be used to teach lessons of wisdom. The reader is no doubt familiar with Aesop's fables. Jotham's fable is impressive in making the point he wished to convey.

**JDG 9:8 The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.**

The trees represented those with the power to appoint a king. These trees determined they would do just that. They would appoint a king who would rule over them.

They first approached the most useful tree they could find. It was the olive tree. Surely it would make a good king over the trees. They asked if it would accept the responsibility.

**JDG 9:9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?**

The olive tree recognized the importance of the service it rendered. It's fruit and it's oil was used for both food and as an anointing substance which glorified Jehovah and certified the appointment of priests. It would be unwise for it to cease the useful things it was doing to accept to rule over a kingdom.

**JDG 9:10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.**

Since the olive tree would not agree to become king, the other trees went to the fig tree. This also was a tree of great usefulness. It's fruit was extremely sweet and it also provided food for many.



**JDG 9:11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?**

When the fig tree considered the usefulness of its present role, it also decided a kingship would be less desirable than the position of service it already held. The fig tree joined the olive tree in rejecting the offer.

**JDG 9:12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.**

Well, perhaps the vine would accept the position as king over the trees. It certainly did not have the qualifications of the olive tree or the fig tree, but it was highly important to those who wished to make use of it.

**JDG 9:13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?**

The vine followed the same path as the olive tree and the fig tree. Even though it was less useful than either of the others, it still felt that its importance in providing its juice for human consumption and for a part in the sacrifices offered to God was greater than being king of the trees.

There are students of the Bible who see this fable as support for the idea that human government is



sinful. God is over all. No other king is needed. Men need to apply themselves to more useful things than usurping the authority of the Almighty.

Although God did discourage the appointment of a king at the time Saul was named ruler over Israel, it is not likely that this is the point of this fable. The main lesson is the comparison between the character of Abimelech and that of others who were far more qualified to act as leaders.

**JDG 9:14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.**

Since none of the useful plants were willing to become king, the rest of the trees approached the bramble which was not only useless. It caused cuts and bruises, and was fit for nothing but to create fires for burning things up. The bramble, of course, represented Abimelech.

**JDG 9:15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.**

Now the bramble was more than willing to accept the rulership. In fact, it had sought such a position of power for some time. Immediately it began to make promises as to the benefits it could provide after becoming king. If they were ready to rest in it's shadow all would be well. All who decided not to do so would be devoured by the fire the bramble could ignite.

**JDG 9:16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands;**

Jotham's fable is finished. He is ready to draw some conclusions. He is about to declare a series of "ifs." The first "if" has to do with the sincerity of the people's actions in making Abimelech king. The second "if" questions whether or not they have treated Gideon and his sons as if they recognized how much he had done for Israel. Did he deserve the slaughter of his sons? Obviously not!

**JDG 9:17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:**

Gideon had not desired to serve as judge. Still, when God made it clear that Gideon was His choice, the man had risked his own life to drive subdue the Midianites.

**JDG 9:18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;)**

How had the men of Shechem repaid the dedication of Jotham's father? They had killed sixty-nine of his sons, one by one on the same rock. Then they had proceeded to make Abimelech king merely because he was their half brother. Abimelech was not even the son of Gideon's wife. He was the offspring of one of his handmaids.

According to Jotham, Abimelech was the bramble that took the rulership after all the qualified candidates for the role of judge had been eliminated.

**JDG 9:19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:**

The "if" of this verse is sarcastic. Both Jotham and the men of Shechem knew very well that what had been done was outrageous. There was no reason for rejoicing on the part of either Abimelech or the people.

**JDG 9:20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.**

If, as everyone should well know, the family of Gideon (Jerubbaal) had been dealt with treachery,



a curse was pronounced upon the supporters of Abimelech. Fire was to proceed from the bramble and devour both his supporters and himself. If the reader objects that the fire came out from the men of Shechem and devoured Abimelech rather than vice versa, it would be well to remember that Abimelech himself was one of the men of Shechem.

**JDG 9:21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.**

After Jotham had delivered his fable and his curse, he thought it well to leave the premises and hide from his evil brother. The word “Beer” means “well.” This may mean he found an abandoned well and hid in it.

**JDG 9:22 When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,**

Should Abimelech be classed as one of the judges of Israel, or did he reign as a king? This verse implies that he at least thought of himself as a king. His reign was short. It was also very chaotic. God should have been King, not Abimelech.

**JDG 9:23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:**

In what sense did Jehovah send an evil spirit between the men of Shechem and the man they had so deceitfully raised to rule over them? It is the writer's conviction that this was permissive rather than deliberative. God sometimes allows evil consequences to arise as a result of foolish decisions on the part of men. In all of this, however, He is pointing toward the overall welfare of the faithful.

It is not well to accomplish goals through alliance with the wicked. The dishonest who will respond for a call for such actions as were taken by the men of Shechem will also turn against the leader who has enlisted them, if the situation promises to bring selfish gain to them. The men of Shechem turned away from Abimelech because they felt there were other paths more rewarding to themselves.

**JDG 9:24 That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren.**

The outcome of this division between Abimelech and the men of Shechem was to be a repayment of the cruelty which had been visited upon the sons of Gideon. That which goes around, comes around. As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

**JDG 9:25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way**

**by them: and it was told Abimelech.**

The men of Shechem began to plot against the life of Abimelech. They watched for him to move out of the city and into the area where they could waylay him in the mountain passes. They began to produce chaos in the land because of their robbery of those who were on journeys.

Abimelech received word of what was going on. He no doubt realized he had a revolt on his bloody hands.

**JDG 9:26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.**

A new face now enters the picture. His name is Gaal. Having seen the division between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, Gaal entered into the city, along with some supporters and urged the men of Shechem to follow his leadership. The men were persuaded and decided to throw a drinking party.

**JDG 9:27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.**

The first thing they did was to go out into the vineyards and harvested some grapes. Then they went to the place where they worshipped Baal.

They ate, drank and made merry. But, they also cursed the one whom they had once assigned to be their king.

**JDG 9:28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?**

Gaal saw this as a great opportunity to seize power. He mocked Abimelech and showed no respect for Zebul whom Abimelech had appointed as an officer in the city of Shechem. According to Gaal there was no reason to serve a son of Gideon, or the elders of the city of Shechem.

**JDG 9:29 And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.**

Since the men of Shechem despised Abimelech now, Gaal suggested that they could rid themselves of the man. All that was necessary was to place themselves under his own command.

In a rash show of boasting, he challenged Abimelech, who was absent, to gather his troops and fight with him. One cannot help but wonder if this party took place the night after the grapes were harvested, or whether they might have had a few

days to ferment. Gaal sounds like he was drunk.

**JDG 9:30 And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.**

This verse leaves the impression that Zebul was not present at the party. At any rate, when Zebul, the officer of Abimelech, heard of the boasting of Gaal, he became angry. His position as an official in the city was in danger.

**JDG 9:31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee.**

Zebul immediately sent word secretly to Abimelech concerning what Gaal and his supporters were doing. They had gone so far as to fortify the city to prove Abimelech was unable to prevent their revolt.

**JDG 9:32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field:**

Gaal went farther than just informing Abimelech of the revolt. He made a suggestion as to how the revolt could be dealt with. Abimelech and his forces were to gather before sunrise and wait for the people to leave the city and move out into the fields surrounding it.

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**JDG 9:33 And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.**

As soon as the sun arose, Abimelech could then attack the city. When the men of the city came out to meet them, Abimelech's forces would be so strong the men of Shechem would be helpless before them. They could treat them in any manner they pleased.

**JDG 9:34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.**

Abimelech followed the suggestion of Gaal. He also divided his forces into four companies. He could come at the men of Shechem from all directions after they had left the city to meet him.

**JDG 9:35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait.**

Gaal could have still been a bit dizzy from the party during which he had challenged Abimelech.



He stood at the gate of the city in great confidence that he had gained control of the citizens. There was no fear of Abimelech.

Does the present reader find himself more in sympathy with Abimelech, or with Gaal? The reality is that there is no desirable choice. Israel was in the midst of an outpour of God's wrath. They would suffer again and again, until they returned to faith in the King of heaven and earth.

**JDG 9:36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men.**

Zebul, Abimelech's officer, was standing near Gaal when Gaal notice the movement of troops on the sides of the nearby mountain. He thought that Zebul was converted to his side and thus he asked him if those were not men moving down toward them. Zebul saw the opportunity to gain just a bit of time for the forces of Abimelech to attack. He replied that Gaal must be seeing things. All Gaal was seeing was the shadow of the mountain.

**JDG 9:37 And Gaal spake again, and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.**

Gaal then realized that he had been right. These were men, and they were coming at them from

more than one direction. They were going to have to make good on his challenge to Abimelech. This could mean bad trouble.

**JDG 9:38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.**

Zebul then revealed his position. He was on the side of Abimelech. Now where was Gaal's big mouth? He had asked who Abimelech was that they should serve him. He was about to find out! It was time to make good on his challenge.

**JDG 9:39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.**

Gaal was left with no alternative but to send his men into battle with far superior forces. He led them into a battle they could not win.

**JDG 9:40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate.**

Abimelech had not won a complete victory yet. He had caused Gaal to run before him but this was only the first phase. The men of the city were still in a rebellious mood. That would require a further



plan of action. Thus far the events had taken place outside the gate of the city. Many had been wounded but there was still a core of resistance.

**JDG 9:41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.**

The location of Arumah is not certain. It would seem that it was not too far from Shechem. Gaal must have fled through the city gates when he was pursued by Abimelech's men. His power was erased and in short order Zebul managed to force he and his followers out of the city.

**JDG 9:42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.**

Abimelech was told on the following day that the people of the city were venturing out into the fields as usual. They may have felt that the violence was over.

**JDG 9:43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people were come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.**

Abimelech checked the situation out and found the report correct. He then divided his own forces

into three companies and waited for the citizens to come out in numbers. Then he commanded his men to attack them.

**JDG 9:44 And Abimelech, and the company that was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them.**

Abimelech himself was with one of the companies. He and those who were with him cut off the path which would be taken by the ones who had left the city and prevented them from re-entering. The other two companies then set upon the Shechemites and killed them.

**JDG 9:45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.**

There were still a number of people inside the gates. The next step was to break into the city and kill many of them. They followed this by demolishing the city and sowing it with salt. There is a difference of opinion as to the reason for the use of the salt. Since the crops were mostly grown outside the walls of the city, the salt would not ruin the food supply. The salt may have been symbolic of defeat and destruction. Salt was used in this manner on other occasions.



**JDG 9:46 And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith.**

The lords of the city remained aloof from the bloodshed and secured themselves in the place of worship of Baal-berith. This is a plural for a number of Baal gods. They may have felt that respect for Baal would cause Abimelech's men to refrain from insulting the gods by murdering them in that place.

**JDG 9:47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.**

**JDG 9:48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an ax in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done.**

When it was reported to Abimelech that the rest of the men of Shechem had secreted themselves in the tower of Shechem, which must have been associated with the house of the gods, he saw the way to conclude the battle. He went to a nearby mountain and used an ax to cut off a limb from one of the trees. He then told his men to copy his actions. This would provide fuel for a fire which would burn down the entrance to the tower.

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**JDG 9:49** And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

The wood was piled at the entrance. It was set on fire and the tower burned. About one thousand men and women died at the time. The revolt at Shechem was over!

**JDG 9:50** Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

Thebez was obviously a city near Shechem that had sympathized with the revolt. Abimelech moved his men from Shechem to Thebez. He was able to enter the main gate of the city.

**JDG 9:51** But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.

Towers were used as a last line of defense in the cities of Canaan at that time. Large numbers of the citizens of Thebez retreated to the tower to protect themselves. Some of them even moved to the upper levels at the top of the tower.

**JDG 9:52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.**

Abimelech was perfectly confident that he could do the same thing to the tower in Thebez that he had done to the one at Shechem. He came close to the door or entrance of the tower in order to set the wood on fire.

May I remind the reader of the connection Jotham had made between the bramble and Abimelech. He talked of Abimelech as being the bramble which would be connected with the devouring of the people who lifted up Abimelech to reign over them. The curse was being fulfilled.

**JDG 9:53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull.**

Abimelech made a deadly mistake when he came too close to the wall of the tower as he was trying to set the tower ablaze. A woman on the tower threw a piece of millstone down upon his head and fractured his skull. He did not die right away. He had time to realize a woman had wounded him fatally.

**JDG 9:54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his**

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**young man thrust him through, and he died.**

Abimelech called for the young man who carried his armor to come and run him through with a sword. Then no one could say he was slain by a woman. Even at this point this selfish man was only thinking of his own prestige. That which he thought to prevent was instead magnified by his command. Multiplied millions over the centuries and in all the nations of the world have heard or read of his death at the hands of a woman. It was she who had killed him, and not the armor bearer. He rose to power through the power of a woman (his mother.) He closed his reign through the power of a woman.

**JDG 9:55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.**

And so we conclude the record of this infamous son of Gideon. This entire chapter has been given to reminding all students of the Bible that attempting to put one's self in the throne room of the universe will bring on horrors unimaginable. There is but one King. That is Jehovah.

**JDG 9:56 Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:**

**JDG 9:57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads:**

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**and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.**

The bramble king was justly punished for the murder of his seventy brethren and the insult to his father. The men of Shechem who had defied Jehovah and worshipped Baal were burned by the fire fueled by that same bramble king, Abimelech.

Again the reader is reminded that “Vengeance is mine. I will repay saith the Lord.” (Rom. 12:19).

## *Chapter 10*

This tenth chapter deals with a time period which was relatively quiet compared with the days of Gideon and Abimelech. There were forty-five years under two judges about which very little is said. Of most importance is the fact that Israel slipped gradually into deeper and deeper levels of carelessness toward the will of Jehovah, and became fascinated with the idol worship of the nations around them.

**JDG 10:1 And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.**

We are given some scant information about the genealogy of this judge Tola, who followed Abimelech. Personally, the writer would not appreciate having it advertised that his grandfather was named "Dodo." Tola had descended from the tribe of Issachar and lived near Mount Ephraim.

**JDG 10:2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.**

The twenty-three years Tola judged was a lengthy time in comparison with the three years Abimelech ruled. Was this the result of fear upon the part of the nations close by, or was it because of a willingness on the part of Israel to compromise with the religious

practices of their idolatrous neighbors?

One commentator said that the most important thing Tola did was nothing!

**JDG 10:3 And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.**

Adding the twenty-three years of Tola and the twenty-two years of Jair, we arrive at a total of forty-five years of relative rest from oppression by the neighbors to the north, east and south.

**JDG 10:4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead.**

This verse gives us some information about the social conditions at the time of Jair. As was common, he had a number of wives. Those wives had produced thirty sons. He had the material wealth to give each of his thirty sons an ass, or donkey. Horses were used as war animals. Donkeys were a sign of prestige. Kings rode on donkeys. Recall that Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon an ass shortly before his crucifixion. He was a King, though few realized it at the time.

We can conclude that since the thirty cities were named Havothjair, which means towns of Jair, that these sons each had the responsibility of overseeing one town. They rode their asses to the cities which each of them supervised.

Gilead lay on the east side of the Jordan river



where the tribes of Reuben, Gad and part of Manasseh had settled.

**JDG 10:5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.**

We see that very little more is said about Jair than was revealed in the case of Tola. What is happening here is mostly passing time and giving us a way of preparing ourselves for the rule of Jephthah which is upcoming.

**JDG 10:6 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.**

This is a sickening picture. After having gone through the cycle of ignoring Jehovah, oppression by enemies, crying out for help, and being delivered by one hero after another, Israel falls right back into the same pattern. We find them worshipping every god available.

1. Baal
2. Astarte
3. Milcom
4. Chemosh
5. Molech
6. Dagon
7. The gods of Syria

These false gods appealed to the hunger for excitement, and the satisfaction of the sexual appetites. The worship of Jehovah called for restraint and self control. Israel is not the only nation making the fatal mistake of being infatuated with entertainment and sex!

**JDG 10:7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.**

Jehovah is a just God. His anger with His disobedient people is easily understood. What more could He have done for them than he had done? They must find out what the consequences are when men insult their Creator and Sustainer.

The response from God was to allow the Philistines and the Ammonites to take control and make life miserable for them. The Philistines were found along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the southwest. The Ammonites were from the east side of the Jordan river, to the northeast. Israel was caught between them.

**JDG 10:8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.**

After the forty-five years without oppression, we now read of eighteen years of misery suffered by the Israelites on the east of the Jordan in Gilead.

**JDG 10:9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.**

The Ammonites even passed across the Jordan river and invaded the very important tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim. Words such as vexed, distressed and miserable emphasize the mental condition of Israel. They began to see the light.

**JDG 10:10 And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.**

It was time for confession. The only possible help had to come from Jehovah. And so Israel lifted up their eyes and the hands to heaven and admitted they had sinned foolishly in forsaking the Lord and replacing him in their hearts with affection for Baal, etc.

**JDG 10:11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?**



God is usually pleased when those who have turned away from Him make the statement, “We have sinned.” This time His reaction was not quite what they might have desired. He had helped them repeatedly, and they had not respected nor obeyed Him. He gave them an extended list of many times in which he had heard their call and delivered them. This time it would be different.

**JDG 10:12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.**

**JDG 10:13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.**

From the time the nation was born as it left the chains of Egypt, until the present, the Lord had been patient. His patience had reached an end.

The Maonites are thought to be the same as the Midianites, since the Midianites were a serious enemy and the Maonites are not mentioned again.

**JDG 10:14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.**

The Lord had a solution for them. They had set their affections on the false gods of the nations who could neither hear nor see. What Israel needed to do



now was to cry out to them. With mockery He told them to find escape from their misery through those impotent and useless objects of their worship.

**JDG 10:15 And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.**

A real change of heart was needed, not just the same vain repetitions as had been offered before. They were now ready to give proof of their repentance. They told the Lord they would rather have Him punish them as He deemed fit than to leave them any longer at the mercy of their oppressors. They needed His help. They needed it NOW!

**JDG 10:16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.**

Repentance is far more than a loose tongue. It involves a change of heart plus a change of action. Israel put away the false gods and began to serve the only True and Living God.

It has been pointed out that the word translated “grieved” in this verse can also be translated as “shortened.” The idea is that when Israel ceased their abominable conduct and turned to Him, He cut off his wrath and showed them mercy and grace. They had changed their ways. He would change



His.

**JDG 10:17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.**

The troubles were not completely dissolved. The Ammonites gathered their forces in Gilead on the east of the Jordan and readied themselves for another invasion. Israel needed a new deliverer to take the lead in opposing the Ammonites.

**JDG 10:18 And the people and princes of Gilead said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.**

One might expect that someone would step forth from among the princes of Israel to launch the fight against this enemy. All the princes did was to look at one another and offer the governing of Israel to the one who was courageous enough to take the lead. Would Jehovah step in and call a new judge, as He had done in the case of Gideon when he was chosen while working at the winepress?



## *Chapter 11*

This chapter discusses the life of Jephthah. It includes his birth by a “strange woman”, his rejection by the Gileadites, his leadership of a group of “vain men”, his call to lead those who rejected him, the victory over the Ammonites and his famous vow.

There are two major lines of thought with regard to the character of Jephthah. One sees him as being power hungry and selfish. The other sees him as a hero of faith. The present writer hopes to present these contrasting views and invite the reader to evaluate the validity of each. A beginning point for this is to present a Bible quotation heavily emphasized by those who envision Jephthah as a rogue, and then another by those who view him as a man of great faith.

Below is the passage emphasized by those who view Jephthah as a hero of the faith.

Heb 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

And, in contrast, we have a passage emphasized by those who view Jephthah as one who used his own daughter to bribe Jehovah into giving him a victory over the Ammonite enemies.

Jdg 11:39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who

did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

We then proceed with our examination of the chapter before us.

**JDG 11:1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.**

First we need to note that there was a man named Gilead. He was the father of Jephthah. However, there was also a land of Gideon. Those who lived there were known as Gileadites. This information could help to avoid confusion on the part of the Bible student.

Jephthah was the son of Gideon, and he was also from the land of Gideon. He was a Gileadite. He had a handicap among his people as a result of his questionable ancestry. His mother was a harlot. Sometimes a harlot was a prostitute, but the word can mean that she was simply a woman who kept an inn for strangers passing through. These women were often prostitutes who offered their bodies for a price.

Whichever is the case, Jephthah's mother was considered a "strange woman." Jewish commentators, such as Josephus believe she was a Gentile. Thus she could have been a strange woman because of her character, or she could have been so because of her race, perhaps both. This caused Jephthah to be despised.

Such an attitude toward suspicious ancestry is

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not justified. The individual has no choice in who the mother and father are. Such a person should be valued for their own character. If the individual can overcome the stigma of being a “bastard” or being of mixed race, that person has reason to be honored rather than hated.

Jepthah had another characteristic which later in life made him attractive to those who had formerly rejected him. He was a mighty man of valor. He had both the courage and the skill to be victorious in combat. This quality could be used in the support of either good or evil.

**JDG 11:2 And Gilead’s wife bare him sons; and his wife’s sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father’s house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.**

In addition to Jepthah, Gideon fathered a number of other sons by his legal wife. These sons saw their half brother as a blot on their family. They disowned him and informed him there was no possibility that he could share in their father’s inheritance. He must leave!

**JDG 11:3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.**

Jepthah did not attempt to defend himself and further antagonize his brothers. Although it is not

mentioned at this point, it seems clear that the people of Gilead agreed with his brothers that he was not wanted in that land. Jephthah thought it best to leave the land and move northward into the land of Tob.

It was apparently not long before Jephthah became the leader of a group of “vain” men who went out with him. He had achieved a reputation for leadership. Those who support the character of Jephthah sometimes say this group of men was defending townspeople against those who attempted to plunder their villages. Those who see Jephthah as being of poor character see him as the leader of a band of thugs. The fact that these were vain or “empty” men does not seem in harmony with defending others against robbers and thieves.

**JDG 11:4 And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.**

The scene is now changed. The reader is taken back to the land of Gilead and the Israelites who lived there. The Ammonites decided to attack the Israelites who lived in that territory which lay east of the Jordan.

**JDG 11:5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:**



The elders of Gilead found themselves without a leader to unify them in the battle with the Ammonites. What were they to do. A disorganized army could not hope to be successful against an enemy that was unified.

The result was that the elders decided to send for Jephthah to return from the land of Tob and lead the Israelites. This could have been done simply because the word had gotten back to them that Jephthah was a courageous and successful military man.

They could also have decided that Jephthah had defended villages from those who would plunder the citizens, and decided this was just the kind of man they needed to lead their defense against the feared Ammonites.

**JDG 11:6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.**

Now the attitude of the Gideadites is very different from that which they demonstrated when they cast him out of their society. One must be careful about mistreating others. It could be that at some later time the mistreated one would be needed.

They called for Jephthah to come back and captain their forces in the fight with the Ammonites.

**JDG 11:7 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come**

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**unto me now when ye are in distress?**

Jephthah saw this as an opportunity to teach the Gileadites a needed lesson. They had made it crystal clear that they neither wanted him or needed him when they supported his half brothers in driving him from his father's house. How strange it was that now they were in trouble they were begging him to come back! Just what answer would they give to him in response to his question?

**JDG 11:8 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.**

The elders of Gilead had no doubt anticipated Jephthah would say just what he did say. They were ready with their own answer. If he would agree to come back and be their captain in the military conflict, they would offer him the head of the people after the battle was finished. This must have been a very humbling experience. The "bastard" was to rise from hatred to honor if he would only consent to lead them.

**JDG 11:9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?**



Jephthah was tempted to heed the call, but he needed to draw a firm promise from the Gileadite elders that if he accepted their proposition, they would keep their promise. He asked them to guarantee their word.

Those who doubt Gideon's character view this attitude here as a play for power. Those who support his character look at it as the type of negotiation which was necessary in dealing with those who had formerly abused him.

**JDG 11:10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.**

The elders were desperate for a military leader. To prove their sincerity they would call upon the Lord to witness their promise and punish them if they failed to keep it.

**JDG 11:11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.**

Jephthah accepted the offer. He went with the elders back to the land of Gilead. The people backed the offer of the elders and agreed that Jephthah was to be their leader in battle and also after the victory.

Some wonder why Jephthah needed to go to Mizpeh to utter his promise to lead Israel. Mizpeh as



not a central location for worship at the time. That is not a problem. He had returned to the people he was about to lead. He was willing to do the same as he had requested the elders to do. He would make a public statement with God as his witness that he would become their captain. It is not necessary to enter a sanctuary to call upon Jehovah as a witness to our promises.

**JDG 11:12 And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?**

Jephthah immediately went to work. He did not first call his forces together. He sent a diplomatic message to the king of the Ammonites to see if the differences could be settled without bloodshed.

This is not the mark of a bloodthirsty and power hungry person. It is the mark of one who realizes Jehovah is a God of peace and one who desires cooperation rather than competition. He would fight is necessary. He would rather not.

**JDG 11:13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably.**

The king of the Ammonites was not about to

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back away from his invasion of the land of Gilead. Jephthah had called it “my land.” The king disputed that claim. It was not Israelite land. It belonged to the Ammonites, even before the Israelites left Egypt. According to the Ammonite king, all that was needed to maintain peace was for Israel to give back the land to the Ammonites. It was theirs!

**JDG 11:14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:**

**JDG 11:15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:**

Jephthah then sent the messengers back to the king of the Ammonites in which he presented a full explanation of why Israel, rather than Ammon, was the true owner of the land of Gidead. Israel had not taken the land from the Ammonites. The children of Ammon were trying to take that which had not ever been their property.

**JDG 11:16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh;**

When Israel left the land of Egypt and the Lord led them to the land He had promised them, they first passed through the Red Sea. Then they came to Kadesh at the south end of the Dead Sea. Since they did not wish to antagonize the Edomites or the Moabites in order to enter their new land from the

south, they decided to circle those two kingdoms and move northward and ask the kings of the Amorites for right to pass through their land and move into Canaan.

**JDG 11:17 Then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, Let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken thereto. And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab: but he would not consent: and Israel abode in Kadesh.**

The king of Edom had refused. The king of Moab had refused.

**JDG 11:18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.**

They had not wished to oppose the will of either the Edomites or the Moabites. They had therefore not set a foot upon those lands.

**JDG 11:19 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray thee, through thy land into my place.**

When they asked Sihon, the king of the Amorites

for permission to pass through his land without disturbing his people, he also refused. He not only refused, he set about to gather his military forces to fight against the Israelites.

**JDG 11:20 But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel.**

It is not interesting that Jephthah knew the history of the Israelite people as well as he did? If he was rejected and cast out by his people and saw it necessary to leave them, it is surprising that he had this much interest in them.

Peaceful settlement of their differences was not possible. The decision had to be made through military action. Sihon set his armies against Israel that they might not pass through Amorite land to enter Canaan.

**JDG 11:21 And the LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.**

It was Jehovah who had led Israel to this point. We can understand why He sided with the Israelites in the conflict. In order to enter the land He had promised them, they must enter it. The request they had made was not unreasonable. They had promised not to take possession of the land of the Amorites,



but only wished to pass through it.

Jehovah, the God of Israel, had seen fit to give victory to His people. It is unwise to fight against the people of God. The victory which Israel won over the Amorites gave them the right to possess the land which had belonged to the Amorites.

**JDG 11:22 And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.**

**JDG 11:23 So now the LORD God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?**

Jephthah's contention was that Jehovah had proven the right of the Israelites to pass through the land, and because the Amorites had resisted the will of God, they had lost the right to the land. That was the means by which Israel had come into possession of the land of Gilead. It had not been taken from the Ammonites.

Right here we should perhaps insure that the reader has distinguished between the Amorites and the Ammonites. These were two distinct groups. The Amorites had inhabited the land before Israel received it from them with the help of Jehovah. The Ammonites had never owned it.

Jephthah wished to know why the king of Ammon was so intent on invading a land which did not belong to him, and never had.

**JDG 11:24 Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.**

Different nations had different primary gods to whom they gave loyalty and from whom they expected divine help. Jephthah called upon the Ammonites to call upon their own god, Chemosh, and leave the property alone which Jehovah, the God of Israel had seen fit to give them. Jephthah was not admitting the reality of Chemosh as a divine deity. He was making the point that Jehovah had given Israel possession of the land of Gilead. The king of Ammon would be best advised to keep his hands off!

**JDG 11:25 And now art thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them,**

Balak was the one who attempted to have a curse placed upon God's people. He had set himself up in opposition to Israel of old and had failed drastically. The answer to Jephthah's question was answered even as he asked it. Balak failed, and the king of the Ammonites was about to follow in his steps.

**JDG 11:26 While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore**

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**did ye not recover them within that time?**

Jephthah then presented one more argument. Why had the Ammonites waited so long to make an attempt to claim the land? For three hundred years Israel had lived in that land without interference from the Ammonites. They should have made their claim long, long ago.

**JDG 11:27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the LORD the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.**

Israel claimed the land belong to them. The Ammonites claimed the land belonged to them. God would be the final Judge.

**JDG 11:28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.**

The king of Ammon had been having success in his spoiling of the land of Gilead. He had no intention of walking off and giving up without resistance. He was unwilling to listen to the arguments of Jephthah. He had decided to fight against Jehovah and Jehovah's people.

**JDG 11:29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and**



**Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon.**

When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon a person, that person is prepared to do God's will with power and wisdom he would not otherwise have available. The Spirit of God had come upon others such as Samson and the prophets. It dwells in the Christians of these latter days in conjunction with the Word of God, to guide and empower them in their service. The perfect law of liberty in Christ has now replaced the law of sin and death. That which is perfect is here. That which was in part has vanished away.

Jephthah was given power and wisdom to lead Israel against an enemy of Jehovah. The outcome was certain. Jephthah and Israel would be victorious.

Jephthah proceeded to pass through the land of Gideon. We are not told why this was done. It does not take genius to conclude that he was assembling an Israelite army to move into battle.

**JDG 11:30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,**

Jephthah made a vow, or a promise, to Jehovah. He used the word "if." That word signifies doubt. He is just said to have received the Spirit of the Lord. The "if" was unnecessary. Yet, it can be looked at in a different light. Sometimes the word "if" can carry



the meaning of “since.” It could be that Jephthah was promising the Lord something to show his gratitude for having received Divine help.

**JDG 11:31 Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.**

Jephthah’s vow has been the center of tremendous controversy. It has been seen by some as utter folly which resulted in the murder of his own daughter. Others see it as a genuine promise to dedicate his most precious possession to God, regardless of the cost.

It should be noted that Jephthah did not say “whosoever.” He said “whatsoever.” This would include both animals and humans.

It has been pointed out that Jephthah did not have the ability to know either what or who would exit to meet him when he arrived at his house. It could have been a pet dog. That would not have been an acceptable object of worship since dogs were unclean. It might have been his neighbor’s wife, who had come to visit with his own wife. Her husband would probably not like that very much. It could also have been either his wife or his daughter.

In the latter case, Jephthah was promising to sacrifice a human as an offering to the Lord. If he made a promise that he would offer his wife or his daughter as a burnt offering, he would have been promising what Jehovah Himself had declare to be

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an abomination in his sight. The children of Molech might sacrifice their children by sending them through the fire to their false god. His own people were not to murder their children in that way.

It has also been pointed out that the Hebrew word which is translated as “and” in this verse was at times translated as “or.” Consider the case of the child who curses his father “or” his mother, as recorded in Exodus 21:17.

Exo 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

The same Hebrew term is used in Exodus 21:17 as is used in this present verse. In that place it was translated as “or” rather than “and.” In that case we might understand the meaning of the verse to be “It shall surely be the Lord’s “or” I will offer it as a burnt offering. If it was a clean animal, it would then be offered as a burnt offering. If it was a human, it would be dedicated to the service of Jehovah. May I suggest that the reader who is interested in pursuing this line of thought further refer to Clarke’s Commentary, Volume 2, page 153.

The other side of the coin says one ought to examine the various English translations to see what the translators did in the matter. When that is done we find the Hebrew word being translated as “and.” If we go back to the non English translations such as the Latin, the Greek and the Chaldee, the word is translated by their meaning “or.” This is a very important point because if the correct translation is “and” Jephthah promised to offer his daughter as a burnt offering, even though it would have been an

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abomination to Jehovah. If the correct translation is “or” he could have dedicated her to lifelong service as a virgin servant.

We are told later in verse thirty-nine that Jephthah did as he vowed. This would mean that if he did truly make the rash vow, he did murder his daughter. If he only dedicated her to service as a virgin, she would not have lost her life.

It was possible to redeem an animal or a human by replacing the animal or person by a specified quantity of money. However, If Jephthah did promise to sacrifice his daughter’s life, the Bible states that he kept his vow.

**JDG 11:32 So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.**

**JDG 11:33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.**

The outcome of the battle was exactly what one might have expected with Jephthah having been given the Spirit of God. The enemy was routed. The map will show that he went to the borders of the land of the Ammonites when he smote the twenty cities. He did not attempt to extend the borders of Israel beyond Gilead.



**JDG 11:34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.**

Jephthah then returned to his house in Mizpeh. What was his shock when he realized it was his precious daughter that came out first to meet him. This was not only his firstborn, she was his only child. She had no brothers or sisters.

She had come out in great joy to greet her father and congratulate him on the victory over the Amorites. Now what was he to do? He had made a solemn vow to God. Was he to kill his daughter by offering her? Was he to give her up to serve as a virgin for the rest of her life. Either way, he would have no posterity to continue his inheritance in future generations!

**JDG 11:35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.**

Those who see Jephthah as being cruel and self serving think the wording of this verse is a show of personal discomfort rather than grief over the fate of his daughter. They see him accusing his daughter of being like his enemies, who troubled him.

The other line of thought declares that it was  
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genuine sorrow that his beloved daughter would never bear children and fill her role as a woman.

Whichever is correct, we must give Jephthah credit for realizing the importance of keeping his vow. He had made a promise to the Lord. He could not fail to keep that promise.

**JDG 11:36 And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.**

His daughter must also be given credit for her willingness to accept the future which had become her lot. If it meant death as a burnt offering she was ready to offer herself. If it was a vow that she would give up any hope of having children and never have a husband, she would also do her part in helping her father keep his promise to the Lord. God had done as her father had asked. Now the two of them must do as the vow had stated.

**JDG 11:37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.**

We come now to another telling point. The reader will observe that the daughter was not mourning



death. She was mourning the fact that she was to be a virgin. This supports the stand that she did not forfeit her life, but that she refrained from marriage and remained celibate throughout the rest of her days.

She wanted two months to be with her companions in the mountains to mourn over her childless future.

**JDG 11:38 And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.**

Jepthah agreed that she would have the two months to be with her friends to grieve over her fate. Then the vow must be kept.

By the way, there was a tremendous difference in a woman of that day giving up the possibility of having children when compared with what would be true at present. The woman who was childless at that time was filled with sorrow and pitied by her friends.

**JDG 11:39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,**

The daughter was true to her word. She returned at the end of the two month period and presented  
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herself to Jephthah. He then did according to the vow he had made. The scripture does not tell us she was burnt. It does not tell us she entered into the tabernacle and became celibate from that time on. It does say that she knew no man. This could have been true if she became a burnt offering. It could also have been true if she lived a long life of dedicated service to the Lord without marrying.

In either case Jephthah was left in heavy sorrow as a result of a vow which he wished later he had not made. He had forfeited his family line.

**JDG 11:40 That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.**

We must ask here what was the purpose of the daughters of Israel going four days ever year to lament the daughter of Jephthah. Were they lamenting her death as a burnt offering, or were they going to see her for a short time each year to comfort her over her having remained childless?

Since both sides of the controversy have been presented in this commentary, the reader may wish to know the convictions of the present writer. It is his belief, along with Adam Clarke, Burton Coffman and E.M. Zerr, that Jephthah was a man of higher character than those who think he offered his daughter as a burnt offering see him. He is listed in the book of Hebrews along with such persons as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others who by

faith declared plainly that they sought a city which God has prepared for the faithful.

This writer feels that Jephthah would not have been included in that group if he had actually offered his daughter as a burnt offering. That would not have been a mark of faith. It would have been an abomination to Jehovah and would have placed Jephthah in the camp of God's enemies.



## Chapter 12

In the following chapter we have a record of unhappy Ephraimites attacking the Gileadites who were fellow Israelites. This results in their defeat and terrible loss of lives. Then the reigns of the three judges of Israel after Jephthah are very briefly presented.

**JDG 12:1 And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire.**

After Jephthah had led the Gileadites to victory over the Ammonites, the tribe of Ephraim was filled with anger, jealousy and false pride. The same tribe had behaved in the same manner when Gideon defeated the Amalekites. In the former case they had found Gideon to be willing to pacify them with a portions of the spoils of the victory he had led. They may have felt that this would result in a similar reward.

They even went so far as to gather themselves and cross over the Jordan and threaten to burn Jephthah's house with him inside. Gideon had suffered much already. This was adding further sorrow to the grief he already felt over the fate of his daughter.

The jealousy between the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, of which the Gileadites were a part, reached back to the time of Jacob's blessings upon his sons. He had placed his right hand upon the head of Ephraim. When he was reminded that Manasseh was his firstborn, Jacob said he knew that was true, but it was Ephraim who would be the greater, and who would be the channel through who's seed a multitude of nations would arise.

Ephraim looked down upon Manasseh throughout the history of the nation, even until the two tribes and the ten tribes divided.

Gen 48:13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

Gen 48:14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

Gen 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

Gen 48:16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Gen 48:17 And when Joseph saw that his father



laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

Gen 48:18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

Gen 48:19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

**JDG 12:2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands.**

Ephraim was dealing with a different man this time. Jephthah was a mighty man of valor. He was not about to be threatened and take it lightly. He replied with a sturdy denial of their accusations and made a counter accusation against the men of Ephraim.

Jephthah and his people had found themselves in war with the Ammonites. He had called upon others to help, Ephraim had not lifted a hand.

**JDG 12:3 And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the LORD delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?**

When Jephthah saw that he was not about to receive help from Ephraim, he and his men had risked their lives in entering battle with the Ammonites. It turned out that with the help of Jehovah, they did not need the added forces the Ephraimites could have provided.

Since they had not responded to Jephthah's call for help, they had no right to be angry and fight against the Gileadites.

We do not have a record of this call Jephthah said he had made to the Ephraimites for help, but that is no proof he had not done it.

**JDG 12:4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites.**

Had the men of Gilead been sent to their homes by this time following the victory over the Ammonites? The verse may only mean that Jephthah readied them for battle against Ephraim.

One of the things that precipitated the battle was the insulting words of the Ephraimites toward the Gileadites. They accused them of being a group which had been cast out by both the tribe of Ephraim and the tribe of Manasseh. Like Jephthah, himself, they were a people whom others, even of their own tribe, despised.



**JDG 12:5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;**

The battle began. It very soon ended. Ephraim was routed. Then when they tried to pass back over the Jordan to the west side from which they had come, they found the fords of the river controlled by Gileadites. Now who were the outcasts?

**JDG 12:6 Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.**

When any man tried to cross the river, the Gileadites asked him if he was an Ephraimite. If he admitted it, he was killed. If he denied it, he was told to pronounce the word **Shibboleth**. Since the Ephraimites could not form the “sh” sound, they could only say **sibboleth**. This stamped their denial as a lie and they were killed. Forty-two thousand of them lost their lives as a result of their jealousy and pride.

With respect to the inability of the Ephraimites to pronounce the “sh” sound, let us see other examples of this same phenomena. We are told that the Germans of our own day find the “th” sound very

difficult, if not impossible to pronounce. This is not due to physical characteristics of the mouth and tongue. It is the result of not hearing the sound from those around them, and never having need to learn the pronunciation. The English also have similar differences between those of the north of England and those of the south.

**JDG 12:7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.**

Though his judgeship was not very long, (only six year), it was very eventful and pointed toward further disintegration of the people of Israel in the centuries to come.

**JDG 12:8 And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.**

We now come to three judges whose office lasted but a very short time, and seem to have been relatively quiet in comparison to Jephthah, who came before them, and Samson who came after them.

The first of the three is Ibzan. He is said to have come from Bethlehem. There is difference of opinion as to whether this was the Bethlehem which was the site of Jesus birth, or another of less known village. Usually, if the Bethlehem where Christ was born is meant, the location of the city is mentioned, as Bethlehem—.



**JDG 12:9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.**

Surely we can conclude that Ibzan had more than one wife. Sixty children are too many for one wife, unless she had the help of the Spirit of God.

Ibzan looks to be an effective politician. By taking wives from outside his own tribe, he could have solidified relations with the citizens of the areas from which these wives had come. The same would be true of his having sent his own daughters outside his own tribe to find husbands.

Seven years in office was not long, but it was a year longer than Jephthah held it.

**JDG 12:10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem.**

Ibzan was buried in the town of Bethlehem from which he had come.

**JDG 12:11 And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.**

The second of the three judges mentioned in the last part of this chapter is Elon. He held office for ten years, which again was longer than Jephthah, or for that matter, longer than any of those mentioned in this chapter.

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**JDG 12:12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.**

Elon was also buried in the territory of the tribe from which he had come. He was born. He served. He died!

**JDG 12:13 And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.**

Only a little more is said about Abdon. He was from Pirathon in the tribe of Ephraim.

We might mention here that there appears to be some effort to inform us that the judges saw themselves as tribal leaders more than national leaders. This is another possible indication of the breakdown of national unity. A lot had happened since Israel moved in under the leadership of Moses.

**JDG 12:14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.**

Abdon had forty sons. We are not told how many daughters. He may not have been as conscious of the need for intermarriage with those outside his own tribe.

He did have thirty nephews in addition to his forty sons, making a total of seventy, the number of completeness. Most of the writers believe these



nephews should have been called grandsons. Each of these sons and nephews rode on an ass colt. Abdon must have been a man of means. Riding on an ass colt in that day was similar to riding in a Cadillac or a Lincoln Continental in our own day. This must have been a most impressive sight to see the seventy, all seated on their beast and riding together.

**JDG 12:15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.**

Abdon's father was Hillel. This is the only place in the scriptures where the name of Hillel is mentioned.

The brevity of the record concerning these last three judges causes one to wonder why they were listed at all. One possible reason is that after Jephthah died, there was a period of some thirty-one years which peaceful. Still, storm warnings were in the sky. The Philistines were gathering strength and would soon give trouble.



## Chapter 13

Our chapter this time discusses the announcement of the coming birth of the judge who receives more attention than any other in the book of Judges. That judge is Samson. The parents are informed of his arrival by the angel of the Lord. He instructs them that both Samson's mother, and Samson himself, are to follow strict regulations. Samson is to be a Nazarite for his entire life.

**JDG 13:1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.**

The cycle seen several times before continues to repeat.

1. Israel falls into evil ways.
2. God brings an oppressor.
3. The people cry for relief.
4. God sends a deliverer.

This time the oppressor is the Philistines. The oppression would last for forty years. Beyond the repeating cycle, there is a general downward movement as Israel moves gradually toward immorality and the worship of false gods. They become more and more like their Philistine neighbors.

The Philistines were descendants of Ham through Mizraim. They moved into Canaan not far from the

time Israel arrived. However, they are mentioned in the Bible as early as Genesis 21:32.

The name “Palestine” is derived from the name they carried. The present day name, “Palestinians” clearly show similarity to the earlier name. They were a people of large size. It is quite possible that some of the “giants” the spies reported seeing when they first ventured into the land of Canaan were Philistines.

The verse informs us that the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years, but this relationship was quite different than the enemies of former years. The Israelites had sunk so low they made an attempt to live in cooperation with the Philistines. This is similar to the situation of many Christians in the present day. The contrast between the thought, speech and actions of these weak Christians is so blurred that it is difficult to tell the difference between them and the faithless among whom they live.

**JDG 13:2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.**

The certain man was the husband of Samson’s mother. His name was Manoah. We do not know the name of Samson’s mother, even though she is a bit more prominent in the record than is her husband.

To be barren in that time was a disgrace to a



woman. Woman's reproductive powers were a chief source of glory for them. It seems that God chose to bring certain leaders into the world through such women. Notice that the lack of children is said to be because Manoah's wife was barren. Could Manoah have been impotent? He must have considered such a possibility.

Dan was a tribe in the southern part of Canaan. This tribe was in closer contact with the Philistines than most of the others. The Philistines lived on the southeast border of the land next to the Mediterranean Sea.

**JDG 13:3 And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.**

When the Bible uses the term "the" angel of the Lord, Bible students begin to sit up and take notice. At least in some cases, this angel may be the second person of the three in the Godhead. In other words, this messenger could have been the Christ before he allowed Himself to be clothed in the flesh.

The angel knew Manoah's wife had been barren and let her know that he was aware of the situation. Then he made a joyful announcement. The woman would conceive and would give birth to a son. This was reason for great happiness. First, she was to have a child. Second, it was to be a son.

We do not know just how long after the angel made the announcement that the woman found it to be true. It does seem logical that the conception



took place shortly after the angel announced it. We do know the conception took place after the announcement in that the angel used the future tense. He said, “Thou shalt conceive.”

**JDG 13:4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:**

The angel spoke with great authority. It made the assumption that this barren woman would try to follow the directions given to her. The instructions were that she was not to drink the fruit of the grapevine, nor was she to eat anything that was unclean. This was to be a special child. It was to be nourished both in the womb, and after it's birth, in a special way.

We are familiar with the New Testament command “Be not drunken with wine.” In this case it was to go farther. Even before his birth, Samson was not to come into contact with grapes or their juice.

**JDG 13:5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.**

Besides the command to the woman that she was not to drink wine or strong drink, she was instructed not to cut his hair. For his entire life he was to be a



Nazarite. We see later that this last command was to become exceedingly important. His extraordinary strength was related to his uncut hair.

The child would be important in the plan of God for His people in that he would be a deliverer. He would deliver them from the power of the Philistines. The interesting thing about this is that where other deliverers had commanded military forces, Samson is known for his own personal efforts. Again, this may be a sign of the fragmenting of the nation of Israel. A united people are much more apt to have an organized military force than a people who are divided.

**JDG 13:6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:**

Manoah's wife had such good news, she had to tell her husband. She apparently did not even consider that he might have a very different reaction than her own. After all, unless he had the greatest confidence in her loyalty to him, he might have flown into a rage of jealousy. His wife had not been able to bear a child through him. Now she came to him with news that another man had visited her and predicted she would have a child. We will watch for her husband's reaction.

The woman's description of her visitor sounded

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like he was from heavenly places. His face was awesome. She was certain he was a man of God. She was very excited over the announcement and did not ask the man's name, nor did he volunteer the information.

**JDG 13:7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.**

She repeated the instructions the angel had given her for the benefit of Manoah. This new son was to keep the Nazarite vows from birth to death.

**JDG 13:8 Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.**

Manoah did not fly into a temper fit. He trusted his wife. He also appreciated the good news that his wife was to become pregnant with a son. He had been waiting!

He went to Jehovah in prayer. Would he please see fit to allow the person who had appeared to his wife return that they might be taught further instructions as to how the child should be raised up?



**JDG 13:9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.**

God heard the prayer of Manoah. He approved of the request and sent the angel back. For some reason, he did not wait until the husband and wife were together. He again appeared to the woman while her husband was absent. Other announcements made to women about the coming birth of very special children also tend to leave the husband in the background.

**JDG 13:10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.**

It does not seem that Manoah had any doubts about the truth of his wife's first report. If he had, the doubts were about to be erased. She came to him and informed him the angel had returned. Manoah would have the opportunity to speak with him

**JDG 13:11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.**

Manoah accepted the invitation to follow his wife



to the place where the angel was. When he arrived, he asked if he was the **man** who had spoken to her previously. We note that he did not say, “Art thou the angel?” His wife had spoken of him as a “man of God.” Manoah used the same word.

The answer was “I am.” These were the words with which Christ described himself when He talked about who had sent Him to earth. He said, “Tell them **I am** hath sent me.” God is everlasting. He is past, present and future. He is the **I am**.

**JDG 13:12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?**

Manoah was convinced this was a very special man to whom he was speaking. He believed what had been promised and wished to cooperate as much as he was able. How are we to train up this child in the way that he should go?

**JDG 13:13 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.**

**JDG 13:14 She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.**

The man of God repeated the instructions that were given to his wife. She was to never eat or drink



any wine, fermented liquor or consume any unclean food. This, of course, was not referring to food soil with dirt. It had reference to those types of food which God had declared to be unclean.

**JDG 13:15 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.**

Eating together has long been a measure of hospitality. Sitting down to a meal with a guest is proof of approval. Manoah wished to show his gratitude for the message which had been delivered to himself and his wife. He would go to the goat flock and bring a tender young kid goat if the visitor would consent to stay a while.

**JDG 13:16 And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD.**

The angel consented to stay long enough for Manoah to select the goat and bring it to where he was. But, surprisingly, he stated that he would not eat any of the food. The word “bread” was applied to food which was not drink.

Although he would not eat of the goat, he suggested that Manoah offer it as a burnt offering

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to the Lord. Angels do not need the food and drink that humans consume. Spiritual beings do not require such food. If Manoah had known the person was not flesh and blood, he might have reacted very differently.

**JDG 13:17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?**

Manoah had a personal question to ask. He wished to know the identity of the one who had made these precious promises. Then, when the son was born, he would know who to praise and share his respect with his friends.

**JDG 13:18 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?**

There are some secret things which belong to God and for His own reasons He does not see fit to reveal to men. This angel was not ready to give Manoah a name such as Michael or Gabriel. Could it be that this is another indication that He was the Word of God, which later dwelt in the flesh and shed his blood that men's sins might be washed away?

**JDG 13:19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.**

Since the person did not desire to eat the meat which had been offered to him, and did say he would like to see the goat offered to the Lord as a burnt offering, Manoah did use it as had been suggested. When he did so, some wondrous things began to happen. Manoah and his wife stood amazed!

**JDG 13:20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.**

Manoah had placed the offering upon a rock. Again we cannot help but recognize the connection with Christ as the “Rock of ages.” The fire rose from the rock toward heaven. The person who had brought the good news then blended in with the flame and ascended with the flame.

Falling on one’s face is a mark of tremendous humility. It is a recognition of the superiority of the one before whom one falls. We are told that in the time of the judgment, “Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess.”

**JDG 13:21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.**

The person had vanished from the sight of the couple. That which Manoah and his wife had been

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viewing as a “man of God” was not a man. He was an angel. In fact, He was THE angel of the Lord. The verse uses the words “an angel”, but over and over, it had called him THE angel even before this.

**JDG 13:22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.**

Manoah was terrified. The Old Testament scriptures had said, no man who looked upon God would continue to live. He felt that both of them were doomed. He felt they had seen God. If he had seen the second person of the Godhead, it was at the will of God, and not because they had broken any commandments. God has the right to make exceptions when He feels it wise.

**JDG 13:23 But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.**

His wife was not as frantic as he was. She pointed out that God had received their burnt offering. If He had been angry with them, He would not have received the offering. Also, she reasoned that if it was God they had seen, He had told them such wonderful things, He could hardly have been ready to kill them. Surely they were not about to die. They



should be happy.

I would like to add a personal note here. In this case the woman was the stronger vessel. She was the one who comforted her husband. Men need to learn that there are times when their wife can bear up under emotional pressure better than they can. Yes, the wife is called the weaker vessel. Yes, she is to respect her husband as the leader in the family. But, God created woman to be a helper to her husband. Manoah's wife acted in that way. We men would do well to learn that our own wives may be precious at such times.

**JDG 13:24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him.**

The promise of the angel was fulfilled. The woman did bear a son. She named him Samson. We are told that the meaning of his name is "little sun." He was to be a bright spot in the lives of his parents and a deliverer of his people.

**JDG 13:25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.**

The reader will recall that in the creation of the heavens and the earth, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep. God's Spirit afforded Samson power which would not have been his if the Spirit of God had not moved him. Samson had very special



physical strength. Men presently have access to the Word of God which affords them spiritual strength which is also special in the production of the fruit of the Spirit.

## *Chapter 14*

This time Jehovah will demonstrate the folly of His people making alliances with those who are not His people. Samson, who is expected to act as a deliverer of Israel from being dominated by the Philistines, decides he wishes to marry a Philistine woman.

Israel has gradually accepted social interaction with this group, to the extent that Samson felt there was nothing wrong with such an intermarriage. God providentially shows just how incompatible the Israelites and the Philistines are.

**JDG 14:1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.**

Timnath was a border town between Israel and the territory where the Philistines dwelt. Samson had reached the age where he was considering marriage. He had been casting his eyes around to see what the possibilities were. He did have an eye for the opposite sex, as can be seen by the events of the near future.

This verse does not tell us he even spoke to the Philistine woman whom he saw in Timnath. He simply “saw” here and decided he must have her. She was “right.”

**JDG 14:2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife.**

This was not the usual way for a young man to obtain a wife in that time and place. Parents played a much greater role in arranging marriages than is true today. Samson informed his parents that they were to get the woman for him as a wife. This was both impulsive and foolish. He did not even bother to find out the feelings of the woman. Disaster can follow that type of attitude.

**JDG 14:3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well.**

As might be expected, his mother and father objected to his demand. Was there not a woman in all of Israel that could please him? He needed to be more cautious. These were unbelievers in Jehovah, the God of Samson's own people. God had strictly forbidden Israelites to enter into mixed marriages. (See Deut. 7:1-4.)

Deu 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring



thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

Deu 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Deu 7:3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Deu 7:4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

Deu 7:5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

The same restriction is spelled out for the Christian age. God's children are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. (See 2 Cor. 6:14.)

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?



**JDG 14:4 But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel.**

Samson's parents had no idea Jehovah was working behind the scenes to providentially bring about a separation between Israel and the Philistines. Samson was to play a major part in bringing this about. The Philistines had control of Israel. Israel had not heeded the warnings mentioned above in Deuteronomy.

**JDG 14:5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him.**

It is clear that Samson persuaded his parents to cooperate in getting the woman for his wife. The parents went with him to Timnath.

Samson apparently wandered away from his parents for a time. The result was that a young lion roared at him. This young lion was neither a mature adult, nor a tiny cub. It could roar, but it was still said to be young. If the reader has ever been in a zoo where lions are caged inside a building, and has had the experience of hearing a lion roar, the fear which would be produced in most humans will be easily recalled.



**JDG 14:6 And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.**

The Spirit of the Lord had already begun to work in Solomon before this time. Now it came upon him in great might and allowed him to tear the young lion in pieces with his bare hands.

The Spirit of God gives different abilities to men at different times. At one time it gives strength to Samson that he can overcome a lion. At another time is enabled the apostles to speak in tongues which they had never been taught. In the Christian age; the same Spirit guides and strengthens men through the words of the Bible. We would advise men of today not to enter into combat with a young lion, or even a German police dog. In contrast, the Spirit makes intercession for Christians before the throne of the Father in heaven in order that all things may work together for good to them that love the Lord.

Samson returned to his parents, but did not tell them about the confrontation with the lion. This seems unusual. Someone like Samson would normally boast of the victory. He did not! This would work into the picture later.

**JDG 14:7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.**

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Well, what do you know! Samson decided to talk with the woman his parents had been told to get for him. He found that conversation with her confirmed his feelings. She was the one he wanted.

**JDG 14:8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.**

“After a time” was long enough that the lion had dried out and a swarm of bees had made a hive in the body of the beast. We would not expect this to happen. Instead of bees, we would expect rotten meat and maggots. Both the odor and the sight would, in that case, have been repulsive.

**JDG 14:9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion.**

Samson did not find this to be true. He turned toward the dead lion and scooped some of the honeycomb out of the lion with his hands. When he came back into contact with his parents, he offered them some of the honey, but he did not reveal that he obtained it from the carcass of the lion. This was his own private secret.

The reader will note that the spelling of the word “carcase” in the King James Version of the Bible



is not spelled as it is in English usage today. It is now “carcass.”

Samson had committed several sins in what he did here.

1. He touched the carcass of a dead and unclean beast which was not to be done by Israelites.

2. He had taken a Nazarite vow and this was not in harmony with that vow.

3. He also gave his parents some of the honey, involving them in the offense.

**JDG 14:10 So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.**

Samson’s father made the arrangements for the marriage to take place. It was expected that Samson would arrange a wedding feast which would last for seven days. There would be eating, drinking and merrymaking for that period of time.

**JDG 14:11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.**

It was also expected that the groom would have a number of male companions to accompany him and join in the festivities. Since Solomon did not have such a group of companions, the Philistines brought thirty companions to serve that purpose.



**JDG 14:12 And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:**

Games were a part of the activities in these weddings. Among these games was the use of riddles. Samson joined in the fun and offered a riddle. He offered a little bet on the side. If the thirty Philistine companions could guess the answer to his riddle, he would give them thirty changes of clothing. The sheets were large pieces of cloth such as are still thrown about the shoulders in the Arab world to this time. The change of garments were likely clothing worn under the flowing robes. Each of the thirty was to receive a set of these clothes.

If they failed to guess the answer to the riddle, they were to give Samson the same reward. Their answer was to be submitted to Samson sometime before the end of the seven days feast.

**JDG 14:13 But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.**

The Philistine companions agreed to accept the terms of the bet. Samson was invited to present the riddle that they might begin considering the answer and return it to him. Surely one of the thirty would hit upon the answer within the seven day period.



**JDG 14:14 And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.**

Samson's riddle was based upon an event which no one other than himself had witnessed. One does not expect meat to come out of the animal that is a meat eater. One does not expect sweetness to come forth from that which is strong and able to be vicious. It is not difficult to see why there would be great difficulty in solving the mystery. After three days not a one of the thirty companions was able to discover the answer.

**JDG 14:15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson's wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to take that we have? is it not so?**

On the last of the seven days the companions were beginning to get quite serious about the possibility that they would not be able to answer Samson's riddle. They hit upon a plan. They may have noticed Samson's weakness toward his wife. If they could persuade her to wheedle him into telling them the answer, they would have saved the day.

There was still an obstacle. Even she did not know the solution. How could she go about it to cause Samson to tell her, that she might tell them?

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That was her problem. Just to make certain she would comply with their plan, they threatened to burn down her father's home with the family inside. They accused the woman of planning with Samson to make them poor by taking the thirty changes of clothing from them.

**JDG 14:16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?**

Women's methods of obtaining their goals is different than that of men. Tears and weeping, along with accusations that their husband does not truly love them have often worked wonders when muscle power would fall flat.

Samson's new wife pouted because he had not shared the answer to his riddle with her. He replied that if he had not told even his father and mother, why would he have confided in her. This is interesting. Was the man saying he loved her less than he did his parents, or that he trusted her less than mother and father?

**JDG 14:17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.**

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The feast was supposed to be a time of happiness. Here was the bride in the wedding crying for day and after day. Finally, Samson could hold out no longer. He told her the answer to the riddle and immediately she relayed the answer to her Philistine kin. The word got around to those who had been struggling for the solution. Samson's companions had won the battle. They were ready to collect on the bet.

**JDG 14:18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion? and he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.**

The men with whom the bet had been made met with Samson before the sun set on the last day of the time limit. They did not give him the answer. They asked him two questions which allowed him to realize they knew the answer.

He knew perfectly well how they had found the solution. His wife was the only one who had any clue to his secret. She had betrayed him and placed the welfare of her people before the unity of their marriage.

**JDG 14:19 And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he went down to Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle. And his anger**



**was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.**

The fruit of the Spirit of God is normally love, joy, peace and longsuffering. In this case it followed a different route. Samson received strength to honor his side of the bet by killing thirty Philistines and giving their clothing to those who had found the answer to the riddle.

Samson became very angry and decided to return to his parents house. It is not likely that he would have fared any better if he had stayed and attempted to live continuously with a woman who had betrayed him as his new wife had done.

**JDG 14:20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.**

There is reason to believe Samson's best man at the wedding received his wife when he abandoned her. This should not be completely unexpected. This man was a Philistine, as was Samson's wife. Since she had treated Samson as she had in accusing him of not loving her, the thought probably arose in her mind because she did not love him. She had little input into the marriage agreement. She may have had her eye on the best man from the time she saw him!

The reader will find further information with respect to the role of the friend of the groom in the third chapter of the book of John.

Joh 3:29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Jesus was to become the bridegroom of the church. John was the friend of the bridegroom. John was to rejoice in the coming marriage of the Lamb of God.



## Chapter 15

Samson's problems with the Philistines over his Philistine wife become increasingly bitter. If Israel refuses for heed God's commands to drive out the nations in Canaan and have no intersocial relationships with them, God will, through His providential action, see that a division takes place.

**JDG 15:1 But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest, that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.**

It is likely that Samson's marriage to his Philistine wife took place in the spring of the year, which is of course a favorite time for such events. The wheat harvest would be "a while after." Still, it might be wise to consider the possibility that this was a longer space of time. The last verse of this chapter tells us Samson judged Israel for some twenty years.

Samson had gone off in a very angry mood when he found his wife had betrayed him and revealed the answer to his riddle. It seems now that he had mellowed somewhat and desired to see the woman. The kid was a young goat, which was sometimes the price of a visit by a man to a wife to lived with her father while he was away.

The chamber appears to have been the bed chamber. There is some question as to whether the “going in to” his wife was only going into the room where she was, or was a reference to sexual relations. In either case, the woman’s father would not allow Samson to see her. This would not have prevented a man who had slain thirty Philistines from seeing his wife if God had desired that it be so.

**JDG 15:2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: is not her younger sister fairer than she? take her, I pray thee, instead of her.**

We can readily understand the attempt on the part of the woman’s father to justify his actions. He had good reason to think his daughter had been abandoned by Samson. He thought it quite right to give her to another man in marriage. It was a serious enough blight on the family for the daughter to be rejected, to say nothing of remaining childless for the rest of her life.

The father had what he thought would be a satisfactory compromise. He would give Samson the younger sister of the woman he had married. After all, she was more beautiful than her elder sister. Would Samson be satisfied with that arrangement?

Nothing is said about the feelings of the younger sister. Marriage is not like that! Unless there is a true attraction on the part of both the husband and the wife, the marriage is in great danger.



**JDG 15:3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.**

Samson concluded that any retaliation he took toward the Philistines would be less damage than they had done to him. It would not be his fault if he caused them suffering. What Samson did not realize is that by returning evil for evil, evil grows. As long as two parties consider their own violence to be the last word, there will be no last word.

**JDG 15:4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.**

The impression left by this verse is that Samson, by himself, went out in a single day and caught these three hundred foxes. Now foxes are not the easiest animals to locate and catch. Opponents of the Bible feel that it would be an utter impossibility to accomplish such a task.

I remind the reader, however, that when living in a post miracle age we have great difficulty in understanding just how many ways God could have caused Samson to be able to capture the foxes. This present writer has taught high school and university science for many years. The reader may be assured that he has as much difficulty in envisioning supernatural actions as most would. But, the wonders of nature are proof of a divine hand

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in the creation of those wonders. If a divine hand brought them into existence, it could also alter the system at will.

The fastening of two foxes together by their tails would perhaps be as difficult as catching them. Foxes have very sharp teeth! I do not think Samson used their own tails to tie them together. I believe he had some rope or twine which was tied on both tails, and that the firebrand was fastened in the twine between the two foxes.

**JDG 15:5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives.**

This verse is not talking about rows and shocks of corn from which roaster ears are made. The word "corn" was used for a number of grain crops. Wheat was one of them. When Samson had set the fire brands ablaze, he released the foxes in the Philistines grain fields where they could run through the grain, setting it afire in hundreds of places.

If he had only tied a firebrand on the tail of each fox and released it, the fox would have headed for a hole or cave in the rocks and the effect would have been less damaging. By fastening the two foxes together, he caused such progress to almost be brought to a standstill as the two foxes would be pulling in opposite directions and would move haphazardly through the grain.

Those who have visited the area inform us that  
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there are in some cases several miles of continuous wheat fields. Enormous damage could result from Samson's foxy plan.

**JDG 15:6 Then the Philistines said, Who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son in law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.**

The Philistines had little difficulty in finding the culprit. It was that Israelite Samson, whose father in law had given his wife to another man. The Philistines decided to burn the home of the man and his daughter with them inside.

As we pointed out before, there is no last word in continuous retaliation. The one who renders evil for evil multiplies the evil. The one who returns good for evil, reduces the evil. In this present situation, the arithmetic is multiplication.

**JDG 15:7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.**

Neither did Samson have any difficulty in knowing who had burnt his wife and his father-in-law. He made his future plans clear to the Philistines. They had caused him much suffering. He would see that their wicked ways were paid back. Only after he had gotten his revenge would he quit causing them misery.

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**JDG 15:8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.**

What is meant by saying that he smote them “hip and thigh?” Several explanations of this phrase have been given. One writer says he injured them in the genital region to pay them back for the destruction of his wife and reducing his child producing opportunities. Another declares that this was a wrestling term, talking about a type of wrestling hold. Yet another suggests it means cutting them to pieces. No one is certain. The thrust of the verse is that Samson was successful in wreaking vengeance upon these enemies.

We can see God’s permissive hand in all of this. A minor war is developing between Israel and the Philistines. We do not suggest that God is causing the war. He is only permitting certain events to take their course to bring about His own plans for the separation of his people from the Canaanites.

**JDG 15:9 Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.**

The Philistines were not about to take the destruction of their grain fields lightly. They came in force and pitched their tents in the territory of the tribe of Judah. The word “Lehi” means Jawbone. The use of the name here probably indicates this was the name of the area after Samson provided it with that name.



**JDG 15:10 And the men of Judah said, Why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.**

The Israelites in the land of Judah were concerned over the gathering of the Philistines. The question they asked was, "What are you doing here?"

There was no misunderstanding the answer they received. They had only one purpose. That was to capture Samson and pay him back for the damage to their grain fields. How would the men of Judah react to this goal of the Philistines? Would they allow Samson to be taken? Or, would they resist and bring on a conflict?

**JDG 15:11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? what is this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.**

The decision of the men of Judah was to go to Samson where he had retired after burning the grain fields and ask him if he did not know what kind of trouble he had brought on. The Philistines were in control. Why had he not realized what type of trouble he had brought on?

Samson's reply was that he had done no more to the Philistines than they had done to him. His



attitude was not quite that of Christ's principle that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us, and not as they have done unto us.

**JDG 15:12 And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.**

The men of Judah were somewhat foolish to think they could bind Samson this easily if he chose to defend himself. But that was not a problem. He did not intend to fight back if they would make a sure agreement with him. He was concerned that they might wish to injure him themselves in that they felt he had brought the Philistines in upon them. He wanted a solemn promise that his own people would not do that.

**JDG 15:13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.**

They promised that on their part they would not do him damage. What they did intend to do was tie him up and deliver him to the Philistines. He agreed to allow such and so he was bound with new ropes and led from the rock to which he had gone after burning the wheat fields.



**JDG 15:14 And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.**

When he came into sight of the Philistines they began to shout at him and threaten him. At that point in time the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him again, as it had previously done. When that took place, the cords which bound him were no more resistance to him than if they had been ashes from flax which had been burned. The original Hebrew speaks as if the ropes had “melted” from off his hands.

**JDG 15:15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.**

A new jawbone would have been one which had not yet dried out. It would be a formidable weapon in the hands of this man who was drawing strength from the divine Spirit.

It may be that Samson did kill exactly one thousand of the Philistines, but there are numerous places in the Bible where numbers appear to be rounded off. The impression we get here is that the number he slew was extremely large.

**JDG 15:16 And Samson said, With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.**

These statements are in the form of poetry, as if Samson was singing a song of victory. He had inflicted enough damage to the Philistines as was needed to pay them back for the agony they had caused him.

**JDG 15:17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi.**

The word “Ramath” is found in the Holy Scriptures at several different places. It means “hill.” The word “Lehi” means “jawbone.” Samson named the place where he had slain the Philistines “the hill of the jawbone”, or “Jawbone hill.”

**JDG 15:18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the LORD, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?**

After his heavy exertion, he had become thirsty. He prayed to God and thanked Him for allowing him to deliver his people from the Philistines through his hands. Now he had a request. He was about to die from lack of water. He was fearful that he might fall into a state of unconsciousness and be taken captive by the Philistines, who were an uncircumcised people. He had not been concerned about that when he told his parents to “get her for

me” when he saw one down in Timnath.

**JDG 15:19 But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.**

God heard his prayer and answered but causing an opening in the hill where he had won the victory. Many believe the verse declares that the water which came out came from the jawbone of the ass. This is questionable. The word “lehi”, which is translated as “jaw”, could have just as well referred to the hill which he had named as to the bone of the ass.

**JDG 15:20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.**

The twenty years which Samson judge Israel aid us in calculating the dates at which numerous events took place in the Bible. Assuming the Bible to have it’s source in the mind of God, we feel that the billions of years suggested by the archeologists cannot be true. Figures such as the one here, when added together point to a period of approximately six thousand years for the time since creation of the heavens and earth.

Samson was a different type of judge than the others we have viewed. Other judges led armies in delivering Israel from their oppressors. Samson worked on an individual basis. Nevertheless, God



used this man to bring about a separation between Israel and the Philistines. Israel had not driven them from the land. God allowed Samson to rip a seam between the two groups. He did not end the battle with the Philistines. He only began to end it. (See Judges 13:5.)

Jdg 13:5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

The fact is that the Palestinians and the Israelis are still confronting one another in the twenty-first century as I write these words. The word “Palestinian” is taken from the word Philistine.

## *Chapter 16*

Samson's womanizing continues. This chapter tells of his relationship with Delilah and concludes with the death of Samson as he brings down the house of Dagon, killing himself and a multitude of Philistines, including the five lords of the major cities of that people.

**JDG 16:1 Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.**

Samson had gotten into severe trouble when he previously went to Timnath in territory held by the Philistines. He had not learned his lesson. He repeated his blunder by going to the city of Gaza, which was even deeper into the Philistine holdings.

This man seems to have been an example of "all muscle and no brain." When he went to Timnath, he saw a Philistine woman; then came home and told his parents to "get her for me." This was done in direct rebellion against Jehovah's command not to marry with the people of the land of Canaan. Not having suffered enough already, he marches right back into the midst of these people again and begins to look around. His eyes light upon a harlot and he "went in unto her." He found great pleasure in this strange woman. She was strange in not being among the Israelites. She was also strange in being one of those women who are willing to sell their body.

**JDG 16:2 And it was told the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him.**

Samson had built a bad reputation among the Philistines when he slaughtered thirty of them at the time his wife betrayed him and revealed the answer to his riddle. When they heard he had entered their city, they began to plan what method could be used to kill him.

This time Samson had apparently spent the first half of the night with the his harlot companion. His enemies knew he would have to leave through the gate of the city. They surrounded the location in which they knew Samson was playing with the harlot. Some of them waited for him to attempt an exit gate, where they plotted to murder him. They expected this to happen in the morning.

**JDG 16:3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron.**

Samson did not wait until morning. At midnight he had concluded his bedroom activities with the harlot and went to the city gate. When he found



it was locked he pulled up the doorposts which supported the doors of the gate. He put the entire combination on his shoulders and took them to the top of a hill near the city of Hebron.

Estimates of the distance from Gaza to Hebron vary from about ten miles to about forty miles. Either way, this was an awesome feat. Samson was using the strength afforded him through the Spirit of God in a very questionable way. He was, however, widening the gap between the Philistines and the Israelites. While associating with them, he had actually deepened their hatred of Israel.

**JDG 16:4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.**

Here we come to another in the line of women who captured the lustful eye of Samson. This one was the infamous Delilah. At least she has a name this time, even if it is one of the most despicable names ever placed upon a woman. There was just something about Philistine women that drew Samson like a magnet.

**JDG 16:5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.**

There were five important cities controlled by Philistine lords. Samson's reputation had reached all of them. They knew of his great physical strength. They also knew of his lack of self control in the presence of their women. They now had a way by which they could defeat the strong man. They would do it by persuading Delilah to pry the secret of his strength from him. This was not normal strength. There must be some charm or spell which allowed him to perform his mighty deeds. It would be worth a high price to discover it.

The approached Delilah and offered her a very large sum of money to find out the source of his strength. This would be more than a woman of her type could resist. She loved money more than she did Samson.

Since there were five of the Philistine lords, and each of them offered her eleven hundred pieces of silver, Delilah was in position to become rich. If the reader will consider what a much smaller number of silver shekels purchased in other places in the Bible, it will become clear that five thousand, five hundred pieces of silver were more than enough to purchase the cooperation of an unethical woman.

**JDG 16:6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.**

Delilah agreed. She asked Samson, probably

during one of their lovefests, about the source of his amazing strength. Was it really possible that his strength could be bound? If so, how?

**JDG 16:7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.**

The man lied to her. If he was bound with seven green pieces of bark, which were still moist with the sap and were therefore tough, he would be no stronger than the average man. We do not know the details of the withs. We simply accept the fact that they must have been recognized for their toughness. At the same time, the number seven was often symbolic of completeness. The Philistines would have very likely seen this as an indication of supernatural intervention in controlling what seemed to be a supernatural strength.

**JDG 16:8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.**

The Philistine lords were quick to comply with the information Delilah turned over to them. They would let her do the dirty work and bind Samson in order that he might be rendered helpless.

**JDG 16:9 Now there were men lying in wait,**

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**abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.**

The Philistines had arranged for some of their group to hide in the house and rush upon Samson as soon as it was clear he had lost his power. It was but a few seconds after he was bound that Delilah cried out to Samson that the Philistines were ready to take him. He arose and broke the withs from him as if they had already been burned to ashes in the fire. It seems that they did not think it wise to take him prisoner. They left the premises without finding what caused his power.

**JDG 16:10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound.**

Delilah was disturbed. She could see over five thousand pieces of silver flying out the window. She scolded Samson for making a fool of her. He had lied to her and she had asked him a serious question. Now he must truly tell her how he might be reduced to normal physical ability and be bound.

Delilah's name is said to mean "flirt." Can we not see her pouting and winking at Samson as she speaks? We realize he does not have the intellectual strength to resist her pleas.

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**JDG 16:11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.**

One lie just leads to another. He is still bent on playing games with her. This time he informs her that new ropes which have never been used held the answer to her question. If he were to be bound fast with such ropes, he would be quite helpless.

At this point the reader should think about the confrontation between the man or woman of God and the wiles of the devil. One does not defeat Satan by deceiving him. He is the master liar. When he is defeated once, he comes back again, then again and again. The victory in Jesus is not won in one encounter with Satan. Samson was playing his game with a foe far more formidable than Delilah.

**JDG 16:12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.**

Samson could have been sleeping on the lap of Delilah, or he could have been wide awake and allowing her to do a little experimentation to see if this was really the secret. It seems more likely that he was asleep, since she thought to surprise



him by telling him the Philistines were about to take him.

When he heard Delilah tell him the Philistines were upon him, he broke the new ropes just as easily as he had broken the seven green withs. He might as well have been tied with sewing thread. This was not the secret!

**JDG 16:13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.**

Delilah's bag of tricks was not emptied. She told Samson he had both lied to her and made a fool of her. Would he continue to hold his secret to himself, or would he finally tell her what it was?

Samson was beginning to bend. He had not yet broken, but he was getting near to it. The secret was related to his long hair. He went so far as to mention his hair in the reply this time. If Delilah would take seven locks of his hair and weave them into the warp and woof of the weaver's loom, he would lose his might. Here again, we find the number seven mentioned, as if that special number had special significance in supernatural happenings.

**JDG 16:14 And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.**

One would have to be familiar with the construction of the weaving machinery to understand the meaning of the pin, the web and the beam. We know Samson was asleep this time. It is said that he awoke. This further supports the thought that he was also sleeping on the other occasions.

Suffice it to say that this also was a disappointment to Delilah and her Philistine lords. How long would Delilah continue to try earning the silver pieces? How long would Samson hold out in holding his secret?

**JDG 16:15 And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.**

Samson played his love game with his tongue as well as his eyes and his body. He had told Delilah he loved her. Did the man know the meaning of real love? It is doubtful. If He did, he certainly found it a trivial thing to talk about love when he only wished to satisfy his lust.

Delilah now got down to business. She let Samson know she was most unhappy with the way he had treated her. He had belittled her while telling her he loved her. He had been unwilling to share the contents of his heart. One who loves should be willing to share the most innermost secrets.



**JDG 16:16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death;**

The woman did not give up. Day by day she allowed him no rest. If he had had any wisdom at all, he would have walked off. There had been plenty of evidence that she was in partnership with the Philistines. One should have easily seen that her desire to know how Samson could be bound, she wished to deliver him helpless to his enemy.

Her persistence annoyed him to the point that he was unable to resist any longer. He folded under the pressure.

**JDG 16:17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.**

Delilah won the game! Samson poured out the secret of his strength. He had been a Nazarite from the time he was born. That promise to dedicate himself to God for his entire lifetime had been rewarded by a very special allotment of the Spirit of God. He had never had a haircut. That was one of the regulations of the Nazarite vow. The cutting of his hair would break the covenant with Jehovah and he would lose his extra powers.



**JDG 16:18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.**

Delilah's warnings before this that the Philistines were about to attack him were only a means of testing Samson to see if he really was helpless. This time she knew very well that Samson had told her the truth. She sent for the Philistines to come. She would make it possible for them to take the Nazarite.

The money was Delilah's motive all the time. She was on the verge of becoming wealthy. She felt she had little time to wait. The Philistine lords came with the money in their hand. The plan seemed to be working.

**JDG 16:19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.**

Some commentators have suggested that Samson might have imbibed some of the fermented fruit of the grape on these visits to Delilah. He slept on her knees entirely too often. This time would be the last.



While he slept Delilah called for another man to cut off his hair. We wonder how this could happen without Samson waking, until we realize that if he was willing to break his Nazarite vow in one way, he might well be willing to partake of the fruit of the grape, which the Nazarite was not to do.

**JDG 16:20 And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.**

When the Philistines arrived, Delilah called out to Samson that they were ready to take him captive. He woke from his little nap and set out to shake himself and be ready for another defeat of his enemies. Much to his surprise, his strength was gone. The Spirit of Jehovah had left him. He was unable to resist.

There is some difference of opinion on the manner in which the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson. Did he have this phenomenal strength at all times, or was it only after the Spirit had come upon him in a time of emergency? The present writer does not know the answer.

A remark or two are in order. In the life of the apostle of Christ in the first century, special abilities came upon them on the day of Pentecost. In the present day, The Holy Spirit is said to be given and abide with the Christian as long as that Christian is obedient and faithful. It allows him to resist sin and hold tight to God if he chooses to do that. If the

Christian fails to maintain his heart as a fit place for the Holy Spirit to abide, the Spirit can depart.

**JDG 16:21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.**

What a fitting consequence of Samson's spiritual failure. His eyes were forever seeking out forbidden objects of lust. Now they would do so no longer. The man would be blind and have to be led from place to place. The Philistines found it easy to bind him and force him to grind flour in the prison. This was work for the meanest of slaves. Samson had dropped from the peaks of power to the depths of degradation.

**JDG 16:22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.**

It is not impossible that Samson began to realize just how sinful he had been. If he had become penitent and renewed his vow to the Lord, it could be that God responded by allowing the Spirit to return as his hair grew back. The power, of course, was not in the hair. It was in an attitude of faithful obedience to the will of Jehovah.

**JDG 16:23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.**

**JDG 16:24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.**

This was a time of great triumph for the Philistines. Each people in that time worshipped a god to whom they gave the credit when they were successful, and to whom they called out when they were in need. Dagon was represented by an idol which was half man and half fish. The Philistines believed Dagon had defeated the God of the Israelites and made it possible for Samson to be overcome. They celebrated by setting up a great festival.

**JDG 16:25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.**

A major feature of this feast was to call Samson from the prison house so they could laugh at him and mock him. They would show the strong man just how weak he could be. What fun!

The fun was to be short lived. They made a fatal mistake when they put Samson between two major pillars which supported the building. This does not mean these were the only pillars. It does mean they were critical.

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**JDG 16:26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.**

Having been blinded, Samson could not see precisely where the pillars were. A young lad was leading him by the hand. He asked the lad to place his hands on the two pillars in order that he might lean upon them and rest. That was not the real reason for his request. He had much greater plans in mind.

**JDG 16:27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.**

There were two floors in the building. One was the main floor. The other was the roof. Festivities were going on in both places. Even the lords of the Philistines, who had offered Delilah the silver pieces, were watching as Samson was made to entertain them. Three thousand persons were upon the roof, while others were below them. We are not talking about a two room cottage. A building that can hold three thousand persons on its roof is a sizable structure.

**JDG 16:28 And Samson called unto the**

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**LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.**

Samson prayed! That appears to have been a rare occasion in the life of this man who was supposed to be dedicated to Jehovah for a lifetime. But now he saw the dire need to turn his heart toward the Lord and asked just this once for help.

This time it seems that he wished for his strength back for dealing with just this one critical time. Note the backbone of his prayer. He does not pray that God's people may prevail over the Philistines and that God may be glorified and His people blessed. He still thinks in selfish terms. He wants vengeance for the eyes which had been taken from him.

**JDG 16:29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.**

These were not the only pillars. They were the two "middle" pillars. They were close enough together that Samson could place his right hand on one and his left hand on the other. Samson was about to begin his deliverance of the Israelites from the Philistines, as mentioned in Judges 13:5.

**JDG 16:30 And Samson said, Let me die with**



**the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.**

Samson requested that he be allowed to die along with those who were tormenting him.. His life was most miserable when he had to be led like a little child. God gave him back a portion of the former strength. He was able to push the main pillars and cause the entire temple of Dagon to collapse. Was Delilah in the host who were killed? It is most likely that she was celebrating with the rest over her new treasure. We do not have to guess about the lords of the Philistines. The building fell upon them and killed them.

Though Samson had failed to keep himself pure as a Nazarite was expected to do, he accomplished the further separation of the people of God from the Philistine worshipper of Dagon. In the end, God's will does prevail. It is best to work with Him rather than to suffer from faithlessness as Samson did.

**JDG 16:31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.**

Samson had little respect for his father and

mother through his lifetime. When he died, he was united with them in the graveyard. He had judged Israel for twenty years, but we know practically nothing of most of those twenty years. The Lord has seen fit only to show how a disobedient man can be used in divine service, even when he does not realize God's word does not return unto Him void.

## *Chapter 17*

These chapters from seventeen through twenty-one are a fairly sharp break in thought. In fact, the change is so evident that some feel they were a later addition to the first sixteen chapters. This is very doubtful. Although the death of Samson closes out the period of the judges when the cycles of deliverance are repeated again and again, there is a logical reason for placing these last five chapters between the deliverance cycles and the selection of Saul, the first of the kings.

The book of judges is intended to point out the religious and moral chaos which had developed among the Israelites as a result of their loss of respect for authority and leadership. Rather than having driven out the idolatrous nations before them, they had mingled with them and adopted many of their immoral character and religious idolatry. They reached the point where they disregarded both God and man. Every man did that which was “right in his own eyes.”

**JDG 17:1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.**

The tribes of Ephraim and Dan were in the heart of Israel. We will see that the compromises Israel was making with the people of the land had made themselves felt throughout the twelve tribes.

The name Micah means “who is better than  
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Jehovah”, or “the incomparable Jehovah.” This name was surely given to Micah by his parents in honor of the True God. Yet, the following events show both Micah’s mother and himself to be suspiciously lacking in the faith one would expect to be shown to Jehovah.

**JDG 17:2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.**

Micah’s mother had been saving silver pieces. She had accumulated eleven hundred shekels, which was the amount that each of the lords had agreed to pay Samson’s girl friend to pry from him the secret of his strength. It was a sizable sum.

The silver had been stolen and the mother was extremely angry at the thief; so angry that she had spoken a curse upon the person. Micah was the one who had stolen his mother’s treasure. When he heard the horrible curse which his mother had uttered, he decided to confess his guilt to her. A curse could not be lifted, but it could be cancelled by a blessing. He was hoping that his mother would pronounce such a blessing to make up for the curse.

Micah’s hope was fulfilled. His mother was relieved that her son had repented and confessed his crime. She was willing to forgive him and move forward.



**JDG 17:3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.**

Micah's mother then explained the reason for having saved up the eleven hundred shekels of silver. She had dedicated them to the Lord, intending to make it possible for her son to make a graven image and a molten image to aid in his worship. Since he had the silver, it was only reasonable that he keep it and use it as she had intended.

Remember, dear reader, that God had strictly forbidden not only the worship of false gods, but also the use of graven images in His own worship. (See Deut. 27:15.)

Deu 27:15 Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

Jehovah is not like unto graven or molten images made by the hands of men. Any image of this kind subtracts from His glory. Almost without fail, the one who employs such images in worship begins to worship the image rather than the God whose glory fills both earth and heavens.



**JDG 17:4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.**

Micah did not keep the silver. He gave it back to his mother. She then took two hundred of the eleven hundred shekels and gave them to a founder who had the skill to carve and mold the silver into the images she desired. The images were then placed in the house of Micah.

Question! What happened to the other nine hundred shekels which she had dedicated to the Lord? Did she use them to pay the founder? Did she keep them for her personal use? We do not know.

Some believe there were two images. Other contend that there was but one, which was carved from wood and then overlaid with the silver. The text speaks of two, and also uses the plural “gods” in verse five.

**JDG 17:5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.**

Here we have another break between Micah and the will of Jehovah. Jehovah had commanded that the people worship only that the place He specified. At this time it would have been at Shiloh. Micah was setting up his own pattern for the worship of



God. He even went so far as to appoint his own son as his priest. This son was not a Levite. God had said only the Levites were to act as priests. Micah and his mother followed their own will, not that of Jehovah.

Micah had also made both an ephod, which was a garment worn by priests, and teraphim which were similar to the cherubim on the ark. He had his own little tabernacle, his own priest, his own garments for the priest and his own teraphim.

**JDG 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.**

The type of behavior demonstrated by Micah and his mother was not limited to their household. It was common practice in all the land of Israel.

**JDG 17:7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.**

Micah must have had sharp reservations about appoint his own son as his priest. He soon saw a method for solving the problem. A young Levite from Bethlehem-Judah had come into the area where Micah had built his house of worship.

**JDG 17:8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.**

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The young man had come from Bethlehem, but he was a Levite by birth. He was journeying with a purpose in mind.

One wonders why this young Levite came to the house of Micah. Did he recognize it as an opportunity to fill the role of priest in Micah's house of gods?

**JDG 17:9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.**

Micah was curious as to his identity. He asked him from where he had come. What was he doing there near his house of gods?

The answer fitted in with Micah's anxieties over having a non-Levite serving as his priest. The Levite said he was searching for a place. It seems clear to the present writer that the Levite was looking for a place where he could serve as a priest.

**JDG 17:10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.**

Micah did not hesitate when he heard the Levite state the purpose of his journeying. The Levite was in search of a place to serve. Micah needed a Levite to take the place of his own son. Things were



working out fine. He made an offer to the Levite. The Levite would serve in his house of gods as a priest and as a spiritual advisor. He would pay the Levite ten shekels of silver each year and would also provide food and appropriate clothing. The Levite was pleased to do as Micah had suggested.

**JDG 17:11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.**

Who acted as “father” to whom? Micah had offered to let the Levite be a father and a priest. Then we are told the young man was treated as Micah’s son. It has always been somewhat amusing to the present writer that some religious groups encourage men and women of seventy and eighty years of age to refer to others who are a generation younger as “father.” We have but two fathers. One is our earthly father. The other is our heavenly father.

**JDG 17:12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.**

One does not consecrate that to God which God has not asked to be consecrated. Micah knew deep down in his heart that all of his actions in setting up his own house of worship were outside the pattern of Jehovah. He needed to make a complete turnaround. Correcting one aspect of his sin would not erase the guilt of the several others.

**JDG 17:13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.**

How many of we mortals believe we can please God by following a portion of His will rather than all of it. Of course, all of us sin. None are perfect without the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. Yet, like Micah, all too many either do not study the Bible, or do not feel it necessary to honor it. We cannot alter the commandments of Jehovah to suit our own convenience and expect Him to congratulate us because we have respected a few of them!

## *Chapter 18*

These last few chapters of the book of Judges picture the need for reversing the trend toward disrespect for authority, especially the authority of Jehovah. Idolatry and immorality were increasing by leaps and bounds. In the last chapter we saw the corruption of the house of Micah, as he made an idol of silver and set up his own place of worship.

In this present chapter, we see the problem expanding to the tribe of Dan.

**JDG 18:1 In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.**

To say there was no king in Israel is more than to say there was no individual sitting upon a throne and ruling the entire nation. It tells us everyone was making his own rules. Neither government nor God was being respected. Every man was doing that which seemed right in his own eyes. The Bible warns that this can lead to chaos. (See Jer. 10:23.)

Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

The tribe of Dan had experienced strong resistance from the Philistines when they tried to take the part of Canaan which had been given to them for an inheritance. They failed to depend upon Jehovah as they should have done. Because they failed to take the assigned inheritance, they began seeking out land which would be more easily conquered.

**JDG 18:2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.**

Five men of the tribe of Dan were sent to see if they could find a more suitable territory which they could take with less resistance. Their original assignment was located near the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. These men who sought out a more desirable area went northward. On their way, the five men arrived at Mount Ephraim. There, they found lodging at the house of Micah.

**JDG 18:3 When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here?**

While at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite who had agreed to serve as a priest for Micah. This could have been due to a difference in pronunciation. The “sh” sound was pronounced as “s” by some.

The five men questioned the young Levite as to why he had come to the house of Micah and what he was doing there.

**JDG 18:4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.**

The Levite replied by telling them how he and Micah had met, how Micah had treated him, and informed them that he had been hired by Micah to serve as his priest.

**JDG 18:5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.**

The general picture drawn for them should have caused the five men to be suspicious of the worship pattern Micah had set up for his household. It did not cause such suspicion. The men asked that the Levite ask God if they would be successful in finding a place to set up new territory for the tribe of Dan.

**JDG 18:6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go.**

The so-called priest pretended to have obtained an answer from Jehovah. He told them God had assured them He was with them and they would be successful.

**JDG 18:7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man.**

Laish was far to the north of the land of Canaan. When the Bible speaks of “Dan to Beersheba” it means from the far north to the far south.

The five men found that the citizens of Laish were comfortable and secure. They were not concerned about anyone invading and they did not have leadership which would organize resistance to those who moved there from the tribe of Dan.

**JDG 18:8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?**

**JDG 18:9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land,**



**and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land.**

When the five men returned to the rest of the tribe at Zorah and Eshtaol, the rest of the tribe wanted to know whether they had been successful.

They answered that they had found what they were seeking. Anyone who wished to go to the land they had found should act immediately. It was a good land. There was no reason they could not enter it and take possession. It would be pure laziness to remain where they were when such a prize was waiting for them.

**JDG 18:10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.**

When they arrived at the land they would find the people unarmed, quite different from the situation with the Philistines. There was an abundance of that land, and God had made it possible for them to take it and enjoy every need.

**JDG 18:11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.**

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Not all of the tribe of Dan decided to move. There were six hundred men who took the lead, armed for armed conflict. This may mean there were about two thousand persons when the families of these men are considered.

**JDG 18:12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjathjearim.**

As the six hundred armed men moved northward, they passed through Mahanehdan and Kirjathjearim. This would place them about eight miles west of Jerusalem.

**JDG 18:13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.**

They then moved to Mount Ephraim where the house of Micah was located. This was where the five men had questioned the Levite about whether they would be successful in their search for a new land.

**JDG 18:14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now**

**therefore consider what ye have to do.**

The five men who had stopped at Micah's house before told the rest about the worship arrangements Micah had set up. He had a graven image, a molten image, an ephod and teraphim. The rest were invited to consider what action they should take when they arrived. Possibly the five thought the rest would wish to make use of Micah's arrangements to receive divine advice.

**JDG 18:15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.**

The entire group decided to stop at the house of Micah. They had no real intention of using Micah's shrine as a means of getting advice from God.

**JDG 18:16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.**

The six hundred armed men stationed themselves at the gate of Micah's house to insure what was about to take place did not meet interference.

**JDG 18:17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the**

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**priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war.**

While the Levite who was acting as Micah's priest stood at the gate with the armed men, the five who had passed through before this went into the house and removed the images, the teraphim and the ephod.

**JDG 18:18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?**

When the Levite saw what the men were doing, he asked them what they were doing. Obviously, this was about to break up his little scheme.

**JDG 18:19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?**

The reply was very blunt. The Levite was to cease all interference. He was to shut his mouth and listen to their advice. Which did he think was best, to be a priest for one man, or for an entire tribe?



We cannot help but be amazed at such a brazen suggestion. Both the Levite and the men who asked the question should have known God had given strict instructions that the tabernacle was the place He accepted as a center of worship. That tabernacle rested in Shiloh at the time.

**JDG 18:20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.**

The Levite was overjoyed. He now had some two thousand persons supporting him rather than a single family. He was quite happy to make the change and go along with the Danites.

**JDG 18:21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.**

The group moved northward. They placed the women and children, plus the livestock in the front of the rest and put the armed men in the rear to protect them from any forces Micah might bring against them.

**JDG 18:22 And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.**

Micah acted as they suspected he would act. He gathered a number of those who lived near his house and pursued those of Dan. Since the Danites were slowed by the women, children and livestock, it did not take long for Micah and his men to overtake them.

**JDG 18:23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?**

Micah and his men scolded the Danites for what they had done. In reply, the Danites asked them what was wrong with them. Why were they chasing them?

There is a slight possibility that the majority of the Danites did not know of the taking of the images, etc. The five men were the ones who have taken them. They may have kept their actions secret. It is not likely, but it may be possible.

**JDG 18:24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?**

Micah let them know very quickly just why he was concerned. They had stolen his worship items



and his Levite had left him and joined them. Micah wished to know how they could possibly ask what was ailing him.

**JDG 18:25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.**

The Danites answer was that it was time for Micah to close his mouth. If he did not, he would find he had put his own life and the lives of his household in danger.

**JDG 18:26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.**

Micah saw that he was up against forces much stronger than his own. He turned back and went to his house. He should have realized that if God was with him, there would have been no way the items and the Levite could have been taken from him. He was in the wrong when he established his miniature tabernacle.

**JDG 18:27 And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with**

**the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.**

As mentioned before Laish was in the far north of the land of Canaan. These six hundred men and their families had traveled a long distance from their previously assigned territory.

We are not told whether or not God was with them when they attacked the people of Laish. Their actions may seem out of place to us. However, we must remember idolatry was rampant in the whole of Canaan. Whether it was justified or not, they smote that quiet and secure people with their swords and burnt the city of Laish with fire.

**JDG 18:28 And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.**

The people of Laish had no reinforcements. They were too far from Zidon (Sidon) and those of Laish had kept to themselves to the extent that they had no one to call for help.

**JDG 18:29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.**

Since the former city had been burnt, the Danites



built another to replace it. The decided to rename the city after their ancestor, Dan. Thus we find the city of Dan in the far north of Canaan in a very small territory also called Dan.

**JDG 18:30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.**

Now we have another unlawful tabernacle. This time also we have an image and the family of the Levite served as priests for the tribe of Dan. Idolatry was becoming more and more widespread.

**JDG 18:31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.**

Shiloh was God's divinely approved location for centralized worship. It was acceptable for people to offer individual prayers, but it was not acceptable to honor the feast days at any other place. Men were attempting to direct their own steps. This leads to serious confusion!





## *Chapter 19*

This is one of the most revolting chapters in the entire Bible. Israel had not driven the idolatrous and immoral people out of the land of Canaan as God had commanded them. As a result, they had sunk to the level of the Canaanites. There comes a time in the lives of men that God “gives them up” to the ways of their own hearts. The chapter before us is a perfect example of that which can befall God’s people when they disregard both divine and civil government.

**JDG 19:1 And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah.**

Kings are expected to lead men and women to respect and obedience to laws which protect the well being of society. When there is no king, every man does that which is right in his own eyes. Since many men do not discern between that which is right and that which is wrong, chaos reigns.

The Levites were the tribe which had no inheritance. They were expected to provide religious leadership for Israel, and in turn they were to be supported by the people. Here we have a levite who had taken a concubine, or secondary wife. We are not told if he had other wives in addition to this

concubine. The Levite was wandering on the side of mount Ephraim and had his concubine by his side.

Mount Ephraim was not a single mountain. It was a range of mountains in the central portion of Canaan.

**JDG 19:2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehemjudah, and was there four whole months.**

Commentators are not in agreement with respect to the meaning of the first part of this verse. A reading of the King James Version leaves the impression that the concubine had entered into sexual relationships with men other than the Levite who had claimed her. Some students of the Bible believe the original Hebrew means only that she became disgusted with him and left him to return to her father's house.

The Levite waited for a period of six months. When she did not return to him, he decided action must be taken.

**JDG 19:3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.**

This would be a strange reunion for a man and



woman after the man's wife had committed adultery against him. Most men would have at least scolded the woman sharply rather than speaking friendly to her. The Levite had even brought donkeys with him that she would have a ride home if she would return to him. The general tone of what is happening here seems to indicate a sharp disagreement rather than a sexual relationship with another man. The Levite had also brought a servant along with him.

Another reason for holding that the separation had been disagreement rather than whoredom on the part of the concubine, is that her father rejoiced to meet the Levite when he came after his daughter.

**JDG 19:4 And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.**

For a period of three days all went well. The father of the concubine treated the Levite in quite a different manner than we would expect if the cause of the separation had been sexual infidelity. They ate and drank together as warm friends.

**JDG 19:5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.**

The morning of the fourth day, the Levite rose up



early and prepared to leave with his concubine. Her father was not ready to bid farewell to the Levite, the concubine and the servant. He suggested that they have a last meal together and then the three of them could depart.

**JDG 19:6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.**

The departure did not take place on the fourth day. Everyone was in a jovial mood and the group decided to stay another night. All seemed well.

**JDG 19:7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.**

**JDG 19:8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart; and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.**

The morning of the fifth day the group made preparations to depart. When the father of the concubine pleaded with them to stay longer they dallied for most of the day. In the afternoon, when they had eaten, the three were ready to leave.

This was a very unwise decision. They would have to find someplace to stay through night. They



would be put up by strangers about which they knew nothing. They should have left in the morning and arrived at their destination before dark.

**JDG 19:9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.**

The concubine's father again begged them to stay for another night. He was quite determined to keep them as long as was possible.

**JDG 19:10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him.**

This time the pleading did not succeed. The Levite, his servant and his concubine left to return home. On the way they passed through Jebus (another name for Jerusalem.)

**JDG 19:11 And when they were by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let**

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**us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.**

As the day drew to a close and darkness began to cover the land, we find a serious problem arising. The servant reminded his Levite master that since they were near Jebus, it was convenient that they stop and spend the night at that place.

**JDG 19:12 And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.**

The Levite objected. He pointed out that Jebus was a city populated by strangers who were not of the children of Israel. It would be best if they bypassed Jebus and moved on to Gibeah. That city was populated by Israelites. They might be in some danger if they dwelt among strangers. If they went on to Gibeah the citizens would recognize them as “home folks.”

**JDG 19:13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.**

There were two possibilities for spending the night. They could bed down in either Gibeah or Ramah. Surely these two places would be better choices than Jebus.



**JDG 19:14 And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.**

They did not have time to reach Ramah before dark. Thus the decision was made to lodge in Gibeah. This was a city within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. All should be well there.

Such was not to be the case. There would be as much danger in Gibeah as they would have been at Jebus.

**JDG 19:15 And they turned aside thither, to go in and to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for there was no man that took them into his house to lodging.**

The entertaining of strangers is emphasized as being important in the Holy Bible. (See Hebrews 13:9).

Heb 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Unexpectedly, when the group entered the city, no one invited them to lodge with them. The Levite decided to just sit down in the street and spend the night in that way.

**JDG 19:16 And, behold, there came an old**

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**man from his work out of the field at even, which was also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites.**

Finally, when all others had passed by, an old man returned from his work in the fields. The aged man was from the region of mount Ephraim, as was the Levite. He was not a native of Gibeah. He was not of the tribe of Benjamin as most of the citizens of that city were.

**JDG 19:17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?**

The old man paused and asked the Levite where he had come from and where he was going. He was quite a contrast to those who had passed by previously. He cared about the three who were without a place to spend the night.

**JDG 19:18 And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehemjudah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Bethlehemjudah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.**

The Levite explained that the group had come



from Bethlehem and now they were returning to mount Ephraim which was their home. The Levite spoke of going to the house of the Lord. That house was in Shiloh. Ephraim and Shiloh were different locations. What is the explanation?

It has been suggested that a better translation would have been that the Levite “worked at the house of the Lord” and that when the Jebusites found this was the case, they wanted nothing to do with him.

**JDG 19:19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing.**

The Levite explained that it would not be a serious burden on anyone who lodged them for the night. They already had provisions for both the three of them and also for the donkeys. They only needed to get off the street.

**JDG 19:20 And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.**

The old man was touched with their needs. He insisted that they worry about it no longer and allow him to provide lodging for the night. They must not spend the night in the street. It turns out that this was a mark of wisdom on his part. The streets



of Gibeah were a dangerous place for strangers to spend the night.

**JDG 19:21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.**

The old man was true to his word. He welcomed them into his house and generously offered them food and drink. The roads of that land were dusty and dirty in that age. He provided them water to wash their feet and all seemed well.

**JDG 19:22 Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.**

As the old man and his guests were relaxing and in a happy mood, there came a knock at the door. It was not just a gentle knock. Those who were outside were beating on the door. They meant business! They called out to the old man who had invited the three into his home. They demanded that the Levite be thrust out of the house, where they could “know him.”

This knowledge was not just a matter of shaking hands and exchanging names. The men of Gibeah had seen the Levite and decided to have sexual



relations with him, whether or not he was willing. It was clear that they were no more than wild beasts who had no respect for strangers in their midst. They were bent on diabolic filthy actions.

**JDG 19:23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.**

The old man went out and pleaded with them not to use the Levite as a sexual plaything. The Levite was his guest. This was wicked folly which was inexcusable. Those who were knocking must not continue the path they were taking.

The reader should take the time to compare the events described in this chapter with those recorded in Sodom and presented to Bible students in the 19th chapter of Genesis. The present writer will not pursue this any farther. He is already nauseated beyond words!

**JDG 19:24 Behold, here is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.**

Now the old man made a drastic mistake. He offered a solution which was no better than the actions he was trying to halt. He offered to bring



out his own daughter and the Levite's concubine for their satisfaction. Was it really true that he cared more for the safety of his guests than he did for the purity of his daughter? Was it less vile for the men to abuse his daughter than to use his male guest?

This demonstrates just how low the minds of evil men can go. We have the choice between two evils, both of which are hideously rotted. Yes, it would be a vile thing for the men outside the door to abuse the Levite. It would be equally bad for them to take advantage of his virgin daughter.

**JDG 19:25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.**

The language is difficult here. Who is the "man" that brought the concubine forth to the human beasts in the street? It seems that it may have been the Levite rather than the old man who owned the house. It is possible that the old man offered the concubine to the mob, but that seems less likely.

There is no way of knowing what foul actions were visited upon this woman. The God of heaven saw fit not to give us all the details of what took place. The next few verses do, however, prove the treatment of the woman was beyond description. Finally, as day broke, they released her.

**JDG 19:26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door**



**of the man's house where her lord was, till it was light.**

The woman just barely managed to reach the threshold of the door where her Levite master was staying. She lay there until night had been turned into day.

**JDG 19:27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold.**

How could the Levite sleep when he no doubt knew what sort of actions were being taken against a woman who was considered to be a secondary wife? When a society reaches such a low ebb that women can be used as this woman was, all consciences must be seared to the point where rape and murder are no more serious than butchering a lamb.

When the Levite opened the door of the house and prepared to resume his journey, he found his concubine lying with her hands upon the threshold of the door. Note that he was apparently ready to depart and leave her at the mercy of those who had made her a toy.

**JDG 19:28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.**

When he told her to get up and go with him, she made no reply. We are not told that she was dead at this point. She may have been. Let us hope she was dead, since he took her to his house and prepared to make the situation even more ghastly.

**JDG 19:29 And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.**

When the Levite arrived at his home, he cut the concubine's body into twelve pieces and sent one piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He expected a reaction from these tribes. The next two chapters will tell of a minor civil war which came about as a result of this sinful abuse of womanhood.

**JDG 19:30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.**

Let me assure the reader that this has been one of the most difficult chapters of a most difficult book with respect to writing commentary. It is one thing to read such material and pass over it quickly. It is quite another to concentrate upon it to the extent necessary to extract the depth of the truths



presented. I have read the entire Bible many times. The writing of the commentary on this chapter has taught me just how hastily one reads over such horribly sinful matters to avoid concentrating upon them.

## Chapter 20

This chapter of the Bible describes the hideous conditions which arise when authority is ignored. Israel had failed to obey the command of Jehovah to drive the Canaanites from the land and to avoid intermarriage with them. This was not cruelty on the part of Jehovah. It was His reaction to the idolatry and immorality with which the Canaanites were saturated.

Israel had reached the point where God's authority meant little to them. They had also decided to go their own way with regard to civil authority. There was no king in Israel. Every man was doing that which was right in his own eyes. Dear reader, where there is lack of authority, there is chaos.

**JDG 20:1 Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beersheba, with the land of Gilead, unto the LORD in Mizpeh.**

When the Levite found his wife lying on the porch either dead, or at the brink of death, he cut up her body in twelve pieces and sent one of the pieces to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Even with the disrespect Israel had shown for morality, the horror of this situation called up anger in their hearts. This lack of concern for human dignity called for punishment. Those who had committed this abominable crime must be called to account for their actions.

**JDG 20:2 And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.**

Critics of the Bible point out that the unity shown here is in sharp contrast to the rest of the picture which had been drawn of deliberate independence. However, there comes a point when even a murderer may be revolted at the results of brutality in others. Israel was ready to come together to see that the Benjaminites who had abandoned all human decency were punished for their cruelty.

Four hundred thousand men offered their services and their swords to see justice done.

**JDG 20:3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell us, how was this wickedness?**

Just for the moment, the record turns to the thoughts of those in the tribe of Benjamin where the horror had taken place. Gibeah was in the territory of that tribe. The people of the tribe of Benjamin received word that an army was coming together at Mizpeh, and that the rest of the tribes were bent on finding out the details of the death of the concubine.

Then the story returns immediately to what was happening to the thoughts of the assembled footmen from the rest of the tribes. They received

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a report from the Levite who had sent the pieces of his concubine to each of the tribes.

**JDG 20:4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge.**

A concubine was considered to be a wife of lesser stature than a primary wife. The Levite is called the husband of the concubine only in that sense. God permitted such multiple wives only because of the hardness of men's hearts. He did not approve of it.

The Levite explained that he had arrived at Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin and expected to find lodging for the night. He had bypassed Jebus, or Jerusalem because it was occupied by non Israelites. He had thought Gibeah would be safer.

**JDG 20:5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.**

It turned out that he could not have been more wrong. The men of Gibeah had cried out for the Levite that they could rape him repeatedly until he died. He had escaped without losing his own life, but the men had turned their attentions to his concubine and had left her at the point of death on the doorstep of the place where he was lodged.

**JDG 20:6 And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.**

One wonders whether the things done by the men of Israel were any more hideous than that which the Levite did in allowing his concubine to be taken by the man of Gibeah, and then cutting her body into pieces and sending a piece to each of the tribes.

Lewdness and folly are correct terms for describing what had been done. Men who act as the Gibeonites had done think only of the moment, without considering the eternal consequences of their behavior. A few minutes of pleasure at the expense of another human being which results in eternal punishment is most certainly folly!

**JDG 20:7 Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.**

The Levite challenges the assembled men of the other eleven tribes to decide what should be done to punish the criminals. It is noticeable that he does not mention the actions as being sin against the Lord of heaven. He only appeals to their regard for human dignity.

**JDG 20:8 And all the people arose as one man, saying, We will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house.**

Ah! At last we see some sign of cooperation among the people of God. The men of Israel agreed that none of them would return to his house until the punishment of the criminals had been seen to.

**JDG 20:9 But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it;**

**JDG 20:10 And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.**

They decided the entire four hundred thousand men were more than would be needed. They would pick one tenth of the men of Israel by lot. Those would serve as carriers of food for the rest. The rest would approach Gibeah to punish those who deserved it.

**JDG 20:11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.**

The other ninety percent of the men moved on to Gibeah and united in their opposition to the murderous actions of the men of Gibeah. This unity was highly unusual at this point in the history of Israel.



**JDG 20:12 And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you?**

Men were sent throughout the tribe of Benjamin to hear any possible justification for the treatment of the concubine. Just what had they done, and why?

**JDG 20:13 Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel.**

The men of Israel demanded that those of Gibeah who had perpetrated the sins against the concubine be brought to them that they might be called to account by loss of their own lives. Old testament justice fell more in line with the “tooth for a tooth” type of justice than the softer tone of the New Testament. The one who took a life was to pay for that life with his own.

**JDG 20:14 But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.**

The Gibeonites could have saved much tragedy to all twelve of the tribes of Israel if they had reacted

positively to the demand. That was not to happen. They hardened their hearts and supported the murderers. They gathered their own forces to meet those of the other eleven tribes.

**JDG 20:15 And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.**

This appears to be a very lop sided battle. There are twenty-six thousand men of Gibeah. There were some fifteen times that many from the other eleven tribes. One would think the battle would be over almost before it began. Such was not the case.

**JDG 20:16 Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.**

There is disagreement among Bible students over the meaning of these seven hundred chosen men of Benjamin who were lefthanded. Some of the oldest copies of the scriptures indicate these men were able to use both hands equally well.

They were amazingly accurate. It has been said that men armed with such slings could send a one pound projectile from the sling at a velocity of 90 miles per hour.



**JDG 20:17 And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war.**

Seven hundred men armed with slings hardly seems the equal of four hundred thousand armed with swords. Surely the other eleven tribes would make swift work of the seven hundred.

**JDG 20:18 And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first.**

Rather than sending the entire four hundred thousand men of Israel against the seven hundred of Benjamin, the people of Israel asked which one of the tribes should go out to meet the men of Gibeah. Jehovah replied that the tribe of Judah should be first. The territory of the tribe of Judah was located near that of the tribe of Benjamin.

**JDG 20:19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.**

At daylight the men of the tribe of Judah readied themselves for an attack upon the men of Benjamin. The battle should be concluded before nightfall!

**JDG 20:20** And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

**JDG 20:21** And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

The men with the slings defeated the men with the swords. Twenty-two thousand of the tribe of Judah lost their lives. How could that be when the Lord had indicated He was ready to give advice.

The difficulty seems to be that the Israelites failed to realize the importance of doing all they were able to do in working along with God. We can not expect the help of Jehovah if we are unwilling to do all we are able.

**JDG 20:22** And the people the men of Israel encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

The men of Israel regrouped and prepared on another day to accomplish that which had failed before. This time they had a last minute thought. They realized they needed to pray to Jehovah for His advice and power.

**JDG 20:23** (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until even, and

**asked counsel of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the LORD said, Go up against him.)**

The Israelites approached God with sorrow in their hearts over the failure of their previous plan. They wished to know if He truly desired that they meet the men of Benjamin again. God answered their question in the affirmative. They were to go up and meet the men of Benjamin.

**JDG 20:24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.**

**JDG 20:25 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.**

The Israelites went up against the men of Benjamin a second time. The second day does not necessarily mean the next day. They may have devoted one day to the weeping and prayers before God told them to return to battle.

The time they were defeated again. The loss was not as heavy as before. This time only eighteen thousand lost their lives. There was now a total of forty thousand dead.

**JDG 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the**

**house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.**

Something was terribly wrong. Israel decided to go back again and humble themselves before the Lord of heaven and earth. This time we have weeping, fasting and prayer. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were also added to their pleas for help.

The careful Bible student will perhaps see some similarities between this series of events and that which has taken place in his or her own life. God sometimes allows suffering to overtake us in order that we may come to recognize our dependence upon Him. Israel was being taught a spiritual lesson. They had neglected respect for Jehovah. Now they were beginning to recognize the need for God and man to work together. Much of the world, as I write these notes today, needs to learn the same lesson. Must we learn it the hard way!?

**JDG 20:27 And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days,**

At this time the children of Israel were actually beginning to realize just how dependent they were upon the wisdom and power of Jehovah.

**JDG 20:28 And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days.)**

**saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.**

This verse argues pretty strongly that the events of this chapter did not occur at a late date. Phinehas was the priest who was officiating and he was but the grandson of Aaron.

He inquired as to the will of God concerning treatment of the rebellious tribe of Benjamin. The other eleven tribes had suffered great losses in the conflicts up to this point. Did Jehovah desire that they enter into further battles, or was this opposed to God's will?

The answer from the ark of the covenant was that the eleven tribes were to continue their efforts. This time the tribe of Benjamin would meet severe punishment. God would deliver that tribe into the hands of the other eleven tribes.

**JDG 20:29 And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.**

**JDG 20:30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times.**

This time the eleven tribes spread. Some waited in back of Gibeah while others moved forward from the front, as had been done before.

**JDG 20:31** And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the people, and kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

When the citizens of Gibeah saw the forces of the other tribes moving toward them from the front, they left the city and made ready to meet the attackers head on. They were tasting the first fruits of success as they killed thirty of the men of the other tribes.

**JDG 20:32** And the children of Benjamin said, They are smitten down before us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways.

The children of Benjamin had no idea they were being outmaneuvered. They decided they were again posting a victory. They followed the men of the eleven tribes and the result was that the city of Gibeah was unguarded.

**JDG 20:33** And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baaltamar: and the liars in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah.



When the men of Gibeah had separated themselves from the city, the Israelites whom they had been pursuing abruptly changed tactics. In place of fleeing before the pursuers, they turned to meet them in battle. At the same time, those who had been hidden on both sides came in upon the forces of Gibeah. This was quite a turnaround.

**JDG 20:34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil was near them.**

The slaughter of the men of the eleven tribes had been terrifying in the former battles. However, the forty thousand who had been killed were now replaced by ten thousand of the best fighting men of the Israelites. The men of Gibeah did not realize until it was too late that they were in mortal danger.

**JDG 20:35 And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.**

The tables had turned. The men of Benjamin were the ones to suffer horrible losses this time. Twenty-five thousand were killed. These were not men carrying slings. They were armed with metal



swords. The fact is that when the Lord God is on one's side, the weapons of the enemy are not enough to overcome the odds.

**JDG 20:36** So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.

**JDG 20:37** And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge of the sword.

The Israelites who had been hiding, waiting for the men of Gibeah to leave the city, moved in and demolished the city.

**JDG 20:38** Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city.

An agreement had been reached ahead of time, that those who entered the city would set it on fire. One would be able to see the blazing city from miles away.

**JDG 20:39** And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they said, Surely they are smitten



**down before us, as in the first battle.**

Since the men of Gibeah had already killed thirty of the Israelites, they were convinced there would be almost no resistance to overcome. The men of the eleven tribes must have fled in confusion as they had done before.

**JDG 20:40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven.**

When the Benjamanites looked back toward the city, they saw the column of smoke rising up into the sky. They must have been suspicious that they had been deceived.

**JDG 20:41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.**

It would not have taken long for their fears to have turned into horror as they realized their position. The men of the eleven tribes had turned around and were attacking them. They were surrounded and their homes which they had left behind were being destroyed.

**JDG 20:42 Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them;**

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**and them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.**

The only hope the men of Benjamin had was to flee into the wilderness where it would be difficult to find them. This was a far different result than that of the previous battles. Evil men may seem to win in the short run. In the end, God's way will give ultimate victory. If this is not true on earth, it will be true in eternity.

**JDG 20:43 Thus they inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising.**

**JDG 20:44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valour.**

Eighteen thousand men was a catastrophic loss for the men of Gibeah. There was no chance of successful resistance on their part. Defeat was certain.

**JDG 20:45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.**

The rock of Rimmon is said to have had high ceilings and numerous openings back into the cliffs.

While they were fleeing, five thousand more of them were killed. This made total of twenty-three thousand. Two thousand more were lost before the battle was over.

**JDG 20:46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valour.**

Very nearly all of the men of Gibeah had now lost their lives as a result of their support of the murderers of the concubine. There could be no more serious thought of fighting back.

**JDG 20:47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.**

When the remaining six hundred men of Gibeah fled and hid in the rock of Rimmon, they were no longer a threat to those who were God fearing. They were so fearful that they remained secluded for a period of four months. It is surprising the rest of the group did not die from starvation.

**JDG 20:48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.**

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The men of the eleven tribes did not call a halt after the defeat of those of Gibeah. They turned their attention to the rest of the citizens of the tribe of Benjamin. They destroyed man and beast in city after city. Then they set fire to the homes of that sinful tribe.

If the reader feels that the men of the eleven tribes went too far in their destruction of the people of the tribe of Benjamin, it would be well to remember God had proven Himself to be in sympathy with their efforts.



## *Chapter 21*

Usually one begins commentary on a chapter of the Bible by considering the first verse of the chapter. We shall reverse this procedure this time. The book of Judges speaks of a time in the history of Israel when His people have descended so low in their patterns of thought that it is difficult to distinguish them from those who make no claim to be His children.

This chapter shows just how confused men can become when they ignore both civil authority and also that of Jehovah. The attempts to work their way out of the crises in which they find themselves are a comedy of errors, if they were not so filled with anguish and tragedy. When there is no king in Israel, everyone does that which is right in his own eyes.

**JDG 21:1 Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.**

After the Levite cut his dead concubine into twelve pieces and sent the pieces to each of the twelve tribes, there was an almost unanimous reaction of horror. The other eleven tribes decided the murderers of the concubine must be punished for their hideous behavior.

When the entire tribe of Benjamin stood behind the murderers in their midst, the other eleven tribes

attack them and destroyed all but six hundred men who had hidden themselves in the caves of the rock of Rimmon. They had also sworn that none would give their daughters in marriage to any man of Benjamin.

Since no women of Benjamin were left alive, and they had been forbidden by Jehovah to take wives from among the Gentile population, the Benjamites who were left alive had no hope of continuing the tribe. It was unthinkable that one of the twelve tribes would be eliminated from existence. What were they to do?

**JDG 21:2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;**

After their impetuous choices in killing all but six hundred of the Benjamites, they had finally come to the realization that they had acted in too much haste. They spent hours weeping over the situation and pleading with God for an answer.

**JDG 21:3 And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?**

They knew very well why this chaos had come to pass. They had lost almost all sense of moral and spiritual responsibility. When a Levite offers his concubine to a horde of sexual perverts to protect his own life, it provides seed for an entire crop of wickedness. The result was that one tribe was on



the verge of extinction, and the other eleven were not far behind.

**JDG 21:4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.**

Why was it necessary to build an altar at the house of God. Surely there was an altar built before this time. Could it be that one altar was not sufficient to receive all the burnt offerings and peace offerings that were brought forth? The sense of sinfulness was certainly running high.

**JDG 21:5 And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.**

A possible solution to the problem of the disappearance of the entire tribe of Benjamin was beginning to crystallize in their minds. An oath had been taken that any who had not come to join in the battle against the tribe of Benjamin would be considered a “draft dodger” and deserved to be killed.

**JDG 21:6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.**

**JDG 21:7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?**

Men would have great difficulty in bearing children without wives. Somehow, somewhere, wives must be found for the remaining six hundred men of Benjamin if the tribe was to continue.

**JDG 21:8 And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabeshgilead to the assembly.**

**JDG 21:9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there.**

If they could find an area which had failed to support the battle against Benjamin, they could kill the men of that area and the women could become wives for the six hundred. The tribe would then continue. Upon investigation, it was found that no one had come from the area of Jabeshgilead.

**JDG 21:10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.**

If the men of Jabeshgilead who failed to join the

forces against Benjamin, the oath could be honored and there would be an excess of women for the six hundred.

**JDG 21:11 And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.**

The decision was made that all males of Jabeshgilead would be killed, as well as all the women who had had sexual relationships with a man. This would leave only those women who were virgins.

**JDG 21:12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.**

Four hundred virgins were found. We are not told what type of investigation was made to determine the virgins from the non virgins. Was it a physical examination? Was it a verbal statement from each woman? This information is not revealed.

**JDG 21:13 And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.**

A delegation was sent to the remaining six hundred men of the tribe of Benjamin. They informed the men that peace was offered to them. They would not be killed.

**JDG 21:14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.**

The men of Benjamin agreed to return to their inheritance. The other eleven tribes offered them the four hundred virgins from Jabeshgilead who had not been killed. This seemed to be working out alright, except for the fact that there were six hundred men and only four hundred women. Where were the other two hundred men to find wives?

**JDG 21:15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.**

**JDG 21:16 Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?**

**JDG 21:17 And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.**

The elders were agreed that some solution must be found. The tribe of Benjamin must not be allowed



to be discontinued. There were twelve precious stones in the breastplate of the High Priest. There were twelve sons of Jacob. The tribe of Benjamin must be saved!

**JDG 21:18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.**

According to their oath that the other ten tribes would not give their daughters to men of the tribe of Benjamin, to do so would bring a curse upon them. Was there a way around the oath?

**JDG 21:19 Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.**

Now we come to a demonstration of the depths men can reach when they attempt to compromise with their consciences and with the Word of God Almighty. They are about to drown in the mud which arose from their muddled logic.

**JDG 21:20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;**

The two hundred men of Benjamin who still did not have wives were directed to hide in the thick  
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vineyards of Shiloh. A major feast of the Lord was to be celebrated.

**JDG 21:21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.**

On such feast occasions dancing was sometimes a part of the celebration. When the maidens came out to dance, the men of Benjamin could pounce upon them and carry them off to their homes in the territory inherited by that tribe.

It is apparent that these dances were not males and females dancing in partners. The young women could be taken without serious resistance.

**JDG 21:22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty.**

A serious complication could be predicted. What would be the reaction from the fathers and brothers of the captured maidens found out what had happened? After all, this could bring a curse upon those who were related to the maidens because of the oath. They were not to give their daughters to

the men of Benjamin.

The reply was to be that they had not truly given their daughters and sisters. The women had been taken, but not given! Yes the water was becoming very, very muddy.

**JDG 21:23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.**

May this commentator ask the male readers of these notes if they would relish a marriage with a woman who had been kidnapped? There is no indication that the desires of the young women were considered. The prospects for a happy marriage were dim to say the least. And what about the man who was left with the last choice among the maidens? Can we suppose he was overjoyed/

**JDG 21:24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.**

About the only hope some of these Benjamite men had was that the woman they took was a gold digger. There had been some twenty-six thousand men in the tribe of Benjamin when the land was allotted. All but six hundred had perished. The remainder



of the property would be distributed among the six hundred. This would leave a sizable estate for each of the families.

**JDG 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.**

The confusion described in the latter part of the book of Judges shows just how bewildered society can become when both civil and religious laws are belittled. Rape, murder, lying and thievery can be expected under such circumstances. A nation which loses respect for religious law will follow this with disrespect for civil law.

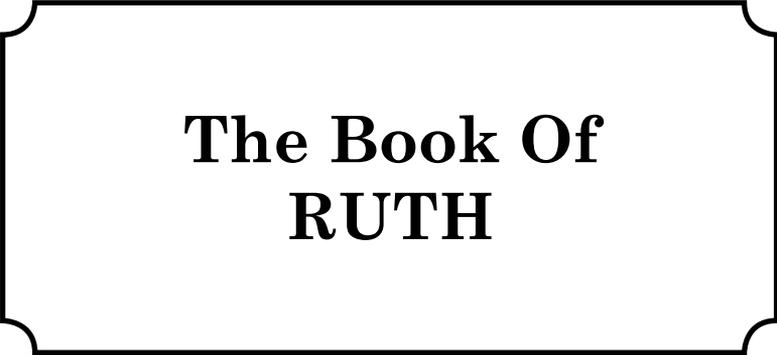
The student of the Bible asks himself whether the tide will turn. Will this absence of moral and spiritual strength be later replaced by righteous thinking and action? The period of the kings did not eliminate the corruption. Will the Christian age do better? It is well for the man or woman of God to turn the pages of the Bible to the twentieth through the twenty-second chapters of the book of Revelation for an answer to that question. The empty feeling in the pit of the stomach may be at least partially removed by a careful reading of those three chapters.



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**The Book Of  
RUTH**

# Introduction To Ruth

## **The Author:**

The author of the book of Ruth is not positively known. Possibilities which have been suggested are Samuel, Hezekiah and Ezra. More of the commentators seem to favor Samuel than any other. One writer who included over eighty pages in his introduction to the book concluded that the identity of the author is uncertain.

Before the reader panics, be assured that this introduction will not be longer than the text itself!

## **The Date:**

The first verse of chapter one tells us that it records events that took place after the judges ruled. The contents indicate that the events took place between the time of the book of Judges and the days of Samuel. This is obviously the reason it was placed between Judges and I Samuel in the list of Old Testament books.

There is a sizable amount of discussion over the vocabulary used in the book. Some present day writers would like to date Ruth much later than others because words are included that they believe were not in use at the time suggested above. We shall not delve into the matter more deeply. The content of the book is far more rewarding than the

precise establishment of the date on which it was written.

**The Purpose:**

There is little doubt that one of the purposes of the book of Ruth is to provide a link in the genealogical chain from Abraham to David, and then to Christ. If the present reader will refer to Ruth 4:17-22, and compare it with Matthew 1:1-17, it will be found that Ruth came from the line of Abraham through David, and that among her descendants was Jesus Christ.

Ruth was a Gentile. Jesus Christ came as a Saviour of all who will embrace everyone who is willing to follow Him as a faithful child of Jehovah. It is true that Jesus was of the seed of Abraham. It is also true that He had at least one Gentile ancestor. The apostles were told to preach the gospel to men and women of every nation.

**A Brief Outline:**

- Chapter 1: Ruth makes a difficult decision.
- Chapter 2: Ruth gleanes in the fields of Boaz.
- Chapter 3: Boaz becomes seriously interested.
- Chapter 4: Boaz makes arrangements to wed.



## *Chapter 1*

**RTH 1:1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.**

The fact that this verse speaks of “the days when the judges ruled” is fairly solid proof that it was written after that period of time.

The certain man of Bethlehem-Judah was Elimelech. His wife was Naomi. A famine had become so serious in Israel that Elimelech decided to leave and travel to Moabite territory. There were times in the history of Israel that this would have been extremely dangerous. The Moabites were one of the tribes which God had said were to be driven out of the promised land. This could have been a dangerous venture.

Just yesterday this writer had a conversation with a man who was discussing advice he gave to his two young daughters. He had told them that if you expect to catch fish you need to go to the place where the fish are the kind you are looking for. He added that the type of bait you use will also play a part. You must use bait which is acceptable to both the one doing the fishing and the one doing the biting. Elimelech was going into Moabite territory. He might have expected that his two sons would catch Moabite fish.

**RTH 1:2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.**

**RTH 1:3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.**

**RTH 1:4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years.**

The two sons, Mahlon and Chilion are mentioned by name. Then they quietly exit the scene, as the heroine of the account is to be Ruth.

Ten years was enough time for the two daughters to reach the age of marriage. Just as we might have anticipated, the fishing began and the bait was taken. Both of the sons married Moabite women.

**RTH 1:5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left without either her two sons or her husband.**

Some believe statements such as this indicate fiction rather than fact. They point out that a number of incidents hint of creative imagination in the development of a dramatic build up. This is an attempt on the part of the critics to enhance their belief in human interference with divine literature.

Three women without husbands in that day was a situation requiring a solution. These two daughters

in law must marry and have families. Naomi decided to return to the area of Bethlehem in Judah.

**RTH 1:6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.**

The famine had been broken and there was food in Judah. Naomi also had relatives there who might be willing to aid her. In her mind, there was no doubt about what needed to be done. She must go home. The situation in Moab was now as bad as the famine had been in Judah. She would not have realized she was playing an important part in the development of God's scheme of redemption for all who would receive it.

**RTH 1:7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.**

All three of the widows started toward Judah. However, Naomi became concerned over the welfare of her two daughters in law. They could have difficulty finding husbands among the Jewish population.

**RTH 1:8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with**



**you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.**

Naomi did not wish to part company with her two daughters in law, but she did not wish to place them in jeopardy either. She suggested it might be better for them to return to the land where they had been raised. They had treated their husbands as good wives should. Now they needed to stay with their people and she would continue alone. What a tremendous relationship this woman had with the two younger women. Would it not be wonderful if every mother in law and daughter in law could establish such harmony?

**RTH 1:9 The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.**

It was a common practice for the relatives of the husband who died to see that the widow was cared for.

The suggestion was considered and rejected. Both of the younger women were grief stricken to think about parting. There was much weeping.

**RTH 1:10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.**

Neither of the daughters in law was comfortable with the proposal. They both wished to go to

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Judah.

**RTH 1:11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?**

**RTH 1:12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;**

**RTH 1:13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.**

Naomi was not happy either. Yet she saw no better solution. She was past the age of child bearing. Even if she were to marry and conceive a son that night, the age difference would be much to great for marriage. Naomi felt that God had dealt cruelly with her.

In actuality, the Lord had dealt very kindly with her. She would be an ancestor of the Saviour of mankind. One wonders if Naomi were alive today what she would think about her part in the plans of God.

**RTH 1:14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.**

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**RTH 1:15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.**

The two younger women made opposite decisions. Orpah returned to Moab, but Ruth found it impossible to part with Naomi.

Naomi's advice at this point was not best. She advised Ruth to go back to the false gods of the Moabites. It was far better for Ruth to go with Naomi to the very locality where the Saviour would be born.

**RTH 1:16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:**

**RTH 1:17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.**

There is much agreement that these two verses are among the most beautiful and touching passages of the Holy Scriptures, and also of the entire literature of mankind.

I feel completely inadequate to plumb the depths of meaning in the words of Ruth. There is but one remark I would like to make. If all newly married couples would cherish their spouse as Ruth clung to Naomi, the divorce courts would have little



business.

**RTH 1:18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.**

Now Naomi realized Ruth was determined to accompany her to the land of Judah. There was no way Naomi could know the importance of Ruth's decision to the plans of the God of heaven.

**RTH 1:19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?**

It was "homecoming." Bethlehem was not a large city. It is still the same village today. It is called a city here, but the word village more accurately describes it. The people in Bethlehem knew one another. They were quite surprised to find Naomi had come back home.

Of course Naomi had aged and her appearance had changed. They were not absolutely certain of who she was. They asked if she really was Naomi.

**RTH 1:20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.**

She had a quick answer. She ought not to be

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known by the name Naomi any more. In her opinion, God had treated her in a most painful manner. She should be called “Mara.” Mara means bitter and God had dealt very bitterly with her in the death of her husband and her two sons.

**RTH 1:21 I went out full and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?**

Perhaps Naomi had forgotten that when she left the area of Bethlehem in Judah, she had done so because she was afraid of starving. All she could think about was the tragedy of losing her husband and her two sons.

Oh how many have the same feeling today! When things appear to be going wrong for us we tend to blame God for our sorrows. We overlook the eternal nature of the Lord as He is able to look all the way from the beginning of creation to the end of this heaven and earth. Things were not as tragic as Naomi thought. But, unlike God, she could not see the end.

**RTH 1:22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.**



The two left the land of Moab and their entrance into Judah was in the fall, at the time of the harvest. This would be helpful. They could appeal to the relatives of Naomi that they might allow them to glean after the men had finished with the reaping.



## *Chapter 2*

**RTH 2:1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.**

Ten years before this Naomi had left the Bethlehem area with her husband Elimelech and her two sons. She had left her friends and relatives behind. Now she was returning under far different circumstances. Her husband and both of her sons had died during those ten years. One of the two daughters-in-law that the sons had married had decided to stay in the land of Moab. Only Ruth, the other daughter-in-law was with her.

One of the kinfolk she had left behind when she left for Moab was a cousin of her husband. His name was Boaz. He was the owner of a sizable portion of land. He will play a very important part in the plan of God for the redemption of mankind. His description as a “mighty” man could well have applied to both his possessions and his military power.

**RTH 2:2 And Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.**

Ruth was a generation younger than Naomi. She was aware that Naomi would have physical difficulty in going out into the barley and wheat fields to glean after the reapers. She approached Naomi about the

wisdom of going out into the fields.

This would have been difficult for Naomi. She had been living a comfortable life before the family was forced to leave as a result of the famine ten years before. Now her beloved daughter-in-law, Ruth, was about to face the dangers involved in following the men who were reaping the barley. Yet, there seemed to be no other solution for survival. She agreed that Ruth must go.

**RTH 2:3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.**

With Naomi's approval, Ruth departed to go to the fields. We are told it was her "hap" to light on the part of the field belonging to Boaz. The word "hap" is the root from which our present day word "happenstance" has come. At the time, Ruth was quite unaware of the importance of what appeared to be no more than a happenstance. It was to be far more critical than Ruth could possibly imagine.

**RTH 2:4 And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.**

As Ruth was busy gleaning, Boaz, the owner of the portion of land, arrived. The friendliness with which Boaz greeted the reapers indicates a humility which

others might well imitate. He blessed the reapers by praying that God would be with them. The workers responded with similar warmth when they called for God's blessing upon Boaz.

We can appreciate this harmony between capital and labor. We live in a day when owners and laborers see one another as foes. Boaz did not view his laborers in that light, nor did they have see him as a cruel taskmaster. This cooperative attitude should be characteristic of every time and place.

We should take note that this spirit of harmony was a result of both Boaz and his reapers possessing a respect for the Lord of heaven and earth.

**RTH 2:5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?**

As soon as Boaz set his eyes upon Ruth, he realized she was a new face among the gleaners. He wanted to know more about her. Just who was she and why had he not seen her before?

Here is another indication that Boaz was one who cared about those who were dependent upon him. Some would not even have noticed Ruth was a stranger.

**RTH 2:6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:**

Boaz' servant who was supervising the laborers explained that this was a young woman who had  
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come back from the land of Moab with Ruth. God had commanded in the law of Moses that such persons as Ruth were to be allowed to glean. He had even commanded that the corners of the fields not be harvested. That which was dropped was not to be picked up. This was God's way of providing for the poor. This was an unusual circumstance. This young woman was clearly not of a lower class. Boaz took note!

**RTH 2:7 And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.**

Ruth had requested that she have permission to follow the reapers. The overseer had granted that permission and Ruth had worked diligently through the first part of the day. She had taken a short break to rest.

**RTH 2:8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:**

Boaz was pleased. The word "daughter" shows a concern for her welfare. She should feel free to remain with the other gleaners who had previously been active there.

**RTH 2:9 Let thine eyes be on the field that**



**they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.**

Boaz relieved some of the pressure on Ruth when he told the young men who were doing the reaping not to abuse her. It could have been most dangerous for an attractive young woman in this situation. Boaz had scruples, and he did not intend for his young men to act like animals.

**RTH 2:10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?**

Ruth was both amazed and grateful. She could hardly have anticipated this kind of behavior from a complete stranger. What was it that prompted Boaz to be so gracious? Obviously he could have passed her by without even recognizing she was a newcomer to his gleaners.

**RTH 2:11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people**



**which thou knewest not heretofore.**

Ruth was not as complete a stranger as she had thought. Although he had not talked directly to her, he had found out much information about her. He knew she had loved and cared for her mother in law after the death of Elimelech. He knew she had left her parents back in Moab and accompanied Naomi to the Bethlehem area where she knew no one. All of this was very commendable.

**RTH 2:12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.**

Ruth had left the false gods behind her and had come to trust in the True and Living God, Jehovah. God would most certainly see that she was amply rewarded for her dedication and her strong character.

**RTH 2:13 Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.**

Ruth expressed her appreciation for Boaz kind remarks. She acknowledged Boaz' position as a benefactor and comforter. She also wanted him to know she was grateful for his concern in that



she was not like the others with whom she was working.

Is this an indication that there were differences in the physical features of the Moabites and of the Jews, or was it a reference to customs and background? Whatever the differences were, Ruth was thankful that Boaz had not rejected her permission to glean with the rest.

**RTH 2:14 And Boaz said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.**

The plot is thickening. Boaz is doing more than recognizing a new gleaner in the fields. He is inviting her to eat lunch with him. Up to this point he has apparently lived as a bachelor. This status is close to an end.

Vinegar was some type of sauce which rendered the bread a little more tasty. Boaz share the meal with Ruth and made certain she had plenty to eat. Then she rejoined the other gleaners.

**RTH 2:15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:**

Here is another step forward. Not only is Ruth given



permission to continue her gleaning, Boaz is now instructing the young men to let her glean in the sheaves rather than to wait until most of the grain had been taken up.

**RTH 2:16 And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.**

The young men are to intentionally let some of the barley heads fall where they will be easy for her to collect them. These handfuls were to be purposely allowed to drop where she could easily pick them up.

**RTH 2:17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.**

Throughout the day Ruth gleaned in the field. Then in the evening she beat the heads of grain until the kernels were separated from the stalks and chaff. When this was all completed she had about an ephah of barley. An ephah was not as strict a unit of measure as our bushel or peck. It is probable that she had somewhere between three fourths of a bushel, and a bushel and a quarter.

**RTH 2:18 And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.**



Ruth was pleased with the results of her labor. She took the barley to Naomi and showed her the grain. She explained that this was what was left over after she had eaten all she needed.

**RTH 2:19 And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz.**

Naomi was pleasantly surprised. This was more than she had expected. She questioned Ruth as to what had taken place. Where had she gleaned that she was able to bring home as much barley as she had. Someone must have been very kind to her. Ruth explained that she had gleaned in the property of a man named Boaz. Ruth did not know that Boaz was related to her mother in law and thus to her former husband.

**RTH 2:20 And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.**

Naomi reacted by pronouncing the blessing of Jehovah upon the head of Boaz for his kind actions. She went on to explain that Boaz was closely related



to Naomi and to Ruth's late husband Mahlon. This kinship was to be of major importance in the unrolling of the events which follow. Boaz will become a type of Jesus Christ Himself as he plays the part of a redeemer.

**RTH 2:21 And Ruth the Moabites said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.**

Ruth explained to Naomi that Boaz had invited her to continue with the young men who reaped his fields until all of the harvest had been taken.

I venture to say that Boaz had found this young maiden from Moab to be very attractive, in both her appearance and her manners. He would be able to easily forget her.

I take the liberty to reveal some of my own feelings upon meeting my wife fifty some years ago. She had dated several young men. I had dated three or four different girls. Nothing had worked out for either of us. We were both wondering what the future held from a romantic standpoint. We met while both of us were in a group singing at a tuberculosis hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. We shared a song book that first night.

We both knew after that first meeting there was something different in the wind. I think I know quite well what was taking place in the minds of both Ruth and Boaz. Things were right! He owned the land. She was only a gleaner. That was no barrier whatsoever. Things were right!



**RTH 2:22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.**

Naomi had been around long enough to sense the nature of things. She advised Ruth to do just what Boaz had said. She must join his gleaners and be careful not to let him see her in the fields of anyone else.

**RTH 2:23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.**

Ruth took Naomi's advice. She went out day by day into the fields of Boaz. This lasted throughout the barley harvest and then on until the end of the wheat harvest. In the meanwhile she made her home with Naomi.

I personally think we have a case of love at first sight. It was to be some time before the decision to marry was made, but it was nearly inevitable. Boaz only had to make certain this was the right path for all concerned, including Jehovah.





## *Chapter 3*

**RTH 3:1 Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?**

The rest of which Naomi spoke was the security of marriage. It was not good that a woman the age of Ruth find it necessary to glean in the fields side by side with young men. Naomi had information which was still unknown to Ruth. This was the proper time to make it known to the younger woman. Ruth needed the security marriage would produce for her.

**RTH 3:2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.**

Boaz was one of their kinsmen. Ruth had been working in Boaz' field and did not know there was opportunity here which could bring about a drastic change in her status. Ruth must take action that very night.

The barley had been cut and brought to the threshing floor. It was now time to separate the grain from the chaff. Naomi knew Boaz would be involved in that activity in the evening.

In understanding the upcoming events, the present day Christian is at a disadvantage. Customs have radically changed from that day to ours. That

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which Naomi is about to put into action seems like the plans of prostitutes or other women of ill repute. It would not have been viewed as such in their day and time.

**RTH 3:3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.**

First, Ruth was to wash and put on perfume. She was then to put on much nicer clothes than she had been wearing while gleaning in the fields. She was to go to the threshing floor, but was not to let herself be seen by Boaz until after he was through eating and drinking his evening meal.

**RTH 3:4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.**

Ruth was to carefully observe where Boaz lay down to sleep for the night. Later she was to go to the place where he lay, lift up the covers and lay down under the same covers. From that point onward Boaz would tell her what he wished for her to do.

A mother who gave her daughter such instructions in our own day would be sending her



own daughter into almost certain immorality. In the day of Ruth it seems that this was an approved way for a woman to act when she knew the man she loved was interested in marriage but had not put any plans into action. Today the young woman might well just tell her boyfriend, "Let's get married." Ruth was not acting as a prostitute. The society of her day would have understood that she was offering herself in marriage to the man involved.

**RTH 3:5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.**

**RTH 3:6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.**

Ruth agreed to do just as Naomi had suggested. She trusted her mother in law completely. Naomi was much wiser in the ways of the men of Judah than was Ruth.

Ruth was a Moabitess. She was at a distinct disadvantage in finding a husband in the land of the Jews. At the same time, it had become evident that Boaz was attracted to her. Perhaps the plan would be successful and Ruth would find rest in marriage to a very eligible man.

It is possible that Boaz was quite a bit older than Ruth. If so, this did not deter Ruth from the proposed plan.

**RTH 3:7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down**



**at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.**

There word “drunk” is used. It is used in close connection with the word “merry.” This does not mean that Boaz had consumed an alcoholic beverage to the point of becoming inebriated. The man had finished his meal after a hard day’s work and his heart was light as he considered the plentiful harvest which they were taking in.

Ruth must have waited until Boaz had gone to sleep before slipping under the covers with him. The next verse implies that he did not know she was there until he changed his position at midnight and realized a woman was lying at his feet.

Some commentators believe Ruth only lifted the covers up from Boaz’ feet and slipped her own in beside his while her body was either crosswise or her head was pointed in the opposite direction as his was.

**RTH 3:8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.**

When Boaz turned over in the middle of the night, he bumped her and realized there was a woman lying near him. To say the least, he must have been extremely puzzled. What was going on?

**RTH 3:9 And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread**



**therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.**

Being startled, and not being able to determine the woman's identity, Boaz asked, "Who are you?" He could just as well added, "What are you doing here?"

Ruth then proceeded to explain her actions. She was a near relative and she was claiming her right to marry and bear children by the nearest kinsman to her dead husband. We need to look at the passage to which Ruth referred.

Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

Deu 25:6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

Deu 25:7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.

Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her;

Deu 25:9 Then shall his brother's wife come unto



him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

Deu 25:10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

God was interested in keeping certain things intact through the years until the time of Christ. The entire nation of Israel was assigned certain boundaries. He assigned each of the tribes of Israel to a certain territory. Portions of these territories were then assigned to certain families. Every fifty years when the Jubilee was celebrated, the land was to be returned to the original possessors. The part of the law of Moses dealing with the kinsman-redeemer was a means by which God perpetuated this arrangement.

Ruth explained to Boaz that she expected him to marry her that she might raise up children to the name of her dead husband.

**RTH 3:10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.**

Boaz understood. Ruth could have made herself available to just about any of the young men who appealed to her if she was only interested in



sexual satisfaction. She had not done that. She was a virtuous woman. She had sought to obey the law of Moses and raise up seed to the name of her dead spouse. Boaz credited Ruth with loyalty to the will of God in offering herself to his nearest kinsman.

**RTH 3:11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.**

Boaz made a solemn promise that he would do everything Ruth had asked. He recognized her as a woman of virtue, and added that the entire city was well aware of her character.

**RTH 3:12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.**

Boaz admitted that he was a near relative and would have been obligated to marry Ruth if no closer relative existed. However, there was a nearer kinsman. He must be consulted before any plans for marriage between Boaz and Ruth were to be considered.

Does the reader gain the impression Boaz hoped with his whole heart that the nearer kinsman would refuse to marry Ruth. I believe Boaz was deeply in love with this charming young woman, and was praying that the nearer kinsman would pass on his obligation.



**RTH 3:13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.**

In the mind of Boaz there was to be no deliberate twisting of the Word of God in order that he and Ruth could marry. It must be done God's way. They would contact the nearer kinsman and see if he desired to marry Ruth. If he was not willing, Boaz would be more than happy to marry her. He solemnized his promise by saying the words "as the Lord liveth."

Ruth was to lie where she was until morning drew near.

**RTH 3:14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.**

Ruth did as Boaz instructed her and waited until the first rays of the sun began to lighten the sky. Then, before one could even recognize the identity of another person, she made preparations to depart.

**RTH 3:15 Also he said, Bring the vail that thou**



**hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.**

In the semi darkness Boaz asked that she bring the covering which she was wearing and hold it out where he could pour threshed barley into it. He poured six measures of the grain into the vail. We do not know the size of the measure which was used. Six of some units of measure would have been more than a woman could carry. Six ephahs would have been too much. It is more likely that the amount was six seahs which would amount to about seventy-five pounds. This would still have been a fairly heavy load. Boaz was being as generous as possible.

**RTH 3:16 And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.**

When Ruth returned to Naomi she was again asked about her actions. Again the question does not seem to be about who she is, but about what she has been doing. Ruth then related just what had taken place. Naomi was probably startled to find there was a closer kinsman than Boaz.

**RTH 3:17 And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.**

Ruth relayed Boaz reasons for loading her up with six measures of barley. He knew she was making an attempt to support both herself and her mother. Boaz had not wanted them to run short of food.

**RTH 3:18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.**

Naomi advised Ruth to wait patiently. When Naomi saw the large quantity of grain that Ruth had carried in as a gift from Boaz, she had enough woman's intuition to see where things were headed. Boaz would observe the law of Moses and see if the nearer kinsman would marry Ruth. At the same time, Naomi knew that Boaz affections had been awakened and he would most certainly not push the nearer kinsman to marry her daughter in law.



## *Chapter 4*

**RTH 4:1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.**

We do not know the size of the city spoken of here. Many larger cities had thick walls with a limited number of gates. These walls protected the population from enemy attacks. Sometimes there was but a single gate through which everyone who entered or left the city must pass.

Boaz wished to make contact with the kinsman who was more closely related to Elimelech than he was. By sitting at the gate of the city he would soon catch sight of the individual as the man entered or departed. When he saw the man he called to him to come and sit with him. The man must have wondered just what was on Boaz' mind. He did as Boaz requested.

**RTH 4:2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.**

The gate of the city served the same purpose in that day as the county courthouse has served in villages in the United States. Local business affairs and court decisions were made there. Boaz called ten of the respected men of the city and asked them

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to witness what was about to take place.

**RTH 4:3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's:**

By this time it was well known that Naomi had returned after having left at the time of the famine. She had come from the land of Moab where she had lost her husband and her two daughters in law had come back with her.

Naomi was desperately poor and was in need of selling a piece of land which her former husband had owned in order to live. Boaz referred to the kinsman as “brother” because they were blood relatives, not because they had the same fleshly father.

**RTH 4:4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.**

Boaz explained that he had an interest in the property, but that since the kinsman was more closely related than he, it was necessary to find out whether the kinsman wished to redeem it. If the other man wished to redeem the land, Boaz



would accept the decision. If the man did not wish to redeem it, Boaz intended to do so.

Boaz then heard words which must have been disturbing to him. He loved Ruth and he knew that she went along with the transaction. The kinsman said he was willing to redeem the land.

**RTH 4:5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabites, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.**

Boaz was not ready to give up the ship. He had prepared himself for this answer. He informed the kinsman that the one who redeemed the land must also marry the wife of the son of Elimelech and raise children who would then be considered the descendants of Elimelech.

Boaz made quite certain that the kinsman knew Ruth was a Moabites.

**RTH 4:6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.**

The kinsman quickly reversed his decision. He was not about to redeem the land if it necessitated marrying Ruth and raising up children to another man.

The kinsman spoke of marring his inheritance.



That may have been one reason for his change of mind, but it was probably not the whole of his considerations. God had warned very clearly that His people were not to intermarry with the Moabites. See Deut. 23:3.

Deu 23:3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:

When Israel desired to pass through the land of Moab as they concluded their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Moabites refused to allow them to cross their territory. God had not been pleased with that. The kinsman was no doubt very much aware of God's attitude in this matter.

**RTH 4:7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.**

Today we would be far more apt to sign a document than to take off our shoe and hand it to the one with whom we were making an agreement. Such was not the case here. One does not ordinarily take off his shoe and give it to another person in public. With at least ten witnesses this action was a binding testimony to the facts.



The reader should be careful not to confuse what happened here with a somewhat similar action. An unmarried man who was a close relative of another who had died and left his wife childless was expected to marry his brother's wife and bear children up for his brother. If he refused to marry the dead brother's wife, she was to remove her shoe and spit in his face.

In the present situation it was not the woman who took off the shoe. It was the kinsman. Nor did anyone spit in another's face.

**RTH 4:8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.**

**RTH 4:9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.**

The kinsman took off his shoe as an indication that he was in agreement with Boaz. Boaz had the right to redeem and land and marry Ruth. Boaz reminded all of those present that he had purchased the property of Elimelech and his two sons.

**RTH 4:10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.**

Boaz immediately added that he not only laid claim to the property of Elimelech and his two sons, he had also purchased Ruth and he was willing to raise up children who would carry on the name of the dead in future generations. We today are witnesses of the fact that Boaz did just as he had promised.

**RTH 4:11 And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:**

It is interesting that the people who witnessed the transaction had no hesitation in accepting the Moabitess into their community. It appears that the prestige of Boaz and the memories they had of Elimelech and Naomi caused them to overcome any suspicions they might have had.

Not only did they accept Ruth into their midst, they pronounced God's blessing upon her by asking God to allow her to build the house of Israel and to become famous in Bethlehem. God answered their prayer and from that time to the present, the name of Ruth has been respected. Ladies Bible classes have cherished the story of Ruth for many centuries.

**RTH 4:12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman.**



**RTH 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.**

Some would criticize the words of Boaz that he “purchased” Ruth. I have the feeling that Boaz would have resented any accusation of treating Ruth as his “property.” He loved her dearly. He treated her with the greatest of respect when she was found at his feet at the threshing floor. Did he not feel that she was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone? I believe he did.

**RTH 4:14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.**

The women of the city rejoiced with Naomi. God had blessed her with descendants who would carry on the name of her husband and her sons among the people of God. Naomi’s days in Moab had been hard, but they had not been completely fruitless. Could it be that the future held a few less tears?

**RTH 4:15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.**

The women of the city felt that through her marriage to Boaz Ruth would give birth to a kinsman who would nourish her in her old age. This is not referring to Boaz, nor is it referring to Jesus Christ. It is a reference to Obed who became a link in the genealogy from Adam to the Christ. Obed connects the earlier line with King David, and from David came Christ.

Seven is a complete number in the scriptures. The women were saying that Ruth was just as precious to Naomi as a perfect son would have been.

**RTH 4:16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.**

No doubt some of the sadness which had saturated the life of Naomi in previous days had now been replaced by the joy of help raise up her son Obed.

One commentator, whose name I shall not mention, said this would have been a handicap to the child since the aged person would absorb energy from the young babe. Even very learned men can make questionable statements!

**RTH 4:17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.**

Why did the women of the city choose a name for the child rather than his own mother and father



doing so? Surely Ruth and Boaz were in agreement with the choice of the neighbor women. They could have overruled if they had chosen to do so. Ruth and Boaz were delighted to share the joy of their new babe by allowing their neighbors to assist in naming it.

There is a similar case of friends offering a name for an infant. See Luke 1:59.

Luk 1:59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

**RTH 4:18 Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,**

**RTH 4:19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,**

**RTH 4:20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,**

**RTH 4:21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,**

**RTH 4:22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.**

From this genealogical table it is not difficult to see the major purpose of this four chapter book of Ruth. It makes the connection between the period of the judges and David the famous ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. The reader should compare the list of names given here with that in the first chapter of the book of Matthew. There are slight differences in the spelling of some of the names,



but it is obvious that God's plan was unrolling in a deliberate fashion.



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