

**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK**

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***STUDIES IN  
JOSHUA  
JUDGES  
RUTH***

by

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## DEDICATION

To the Students of  
The Cincinnati Bible Seminary

Past and present with whom the author has  
spent many pleasant hours drinking deeply  
from the Well of Life, the Word of God.





## CONTENTS

Dedication .....	5
Preface .....	11
Introduction to Joshua .....	13
Outline of Joshua .....	23

### — JOSHUA —

Chapter One .....	29
Chapter Two .....	40
Chapter Three .....	53
Chapter Four .....	67
Chapter Five .....	79
Chapter Six .....	91
Chapter Seven .....	103
Chapter Eight .....	116
Chapter Nine .....	131
Chapter Ten .....	145
Chapter Eleven .....	159
Chapter Twelve .....	171
Chapter Thirteen .....	180
Chapter Fourteen .....	192
Chapter Fifteen .....	201
Chapter Sixteen .....	214
Chapter Seventeen .....	224
Chapter Eighteen .....	233
Chapter Nineteen .....	242
Chapter Twenty .....	258
Chapter Twenty-one .....	265
Chapter Twenty-two .....	277
Chapter Twenty-three .....	289
Chapter Twenty-four .....	300

Introduction to Judges .....	314
Outline of Judges .....	322

## — JUDGES —

Chapter One .....	323
Chapter Two .....	338
Chapter Three .....	351
Chapter Four .....	364
Chapter Five .....	375
Chapter Six .....	387
Chapter Seven .....	402
Chapter Eight .....	413
Chapter Nine .....	425
Chapter Ten .....	441
Chapter Eleven .....	453
Chapter Twelve .....	465
Chapter Thirteen .....	474
Chapter Fourteen .....	483
Chapter Fifteen .....	494
Chapter Sixteen .....	504
Chapter Seventeen .....	518
Chapter Eighteen .....	526
Chapter Nineteen .....	541
Chapter Twenty .....	553
Chapter Twenty-one .....	567
Introduction to Ruth .....	578
Outline of Ruth .....	583

## — RUTH —

Chapter One .....	585
Chapter Two .....	595
Chapter Three .....	607
Chapter Four .....	617
Epilogue .....	629
Bibliography .....	632

## MAPS AND CHARTS

Entry Into Canaan .....	28A
The Northern Conquest .....	158A
The Twelve Tribes .....	179A
The Judges .....	313A
The Earlier Judges .....	337A
The Later Judges .....	386A

## PHOTOGRAPHS OF PLACES IN JOSHUA, JUDGES AND RUTH

Air View of Jericho Plain—Mound of Ancient Jericho in the Foreground—Modern Jericho in Distance ...	28B
Hazor—Chief City of Canaan (Tell el-Kedah) .....	158B
Beth Shemesh—Section of the North Wall—Valley of Sorek on the Left—Judean Hills in Distance .....	179B
Site of Shiloh .....	313B
Ruins of Ancient Jericho—of Joshua's Day .....	337B
General View of Ashkalon .....	386B



## PREFACE

Joshua, Judges, and Ruth form a unit of three books linking the history of the Pentateuch with the history of the monarchy. The period covered by the books was transitional. All the exhilaration of a new adventure pervaded the lives of the people of Israel, and this excitement is reflected in the historical record preserved for modern readers.

In this volume, *Studies in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, acknowledgement is made of the material used by J. W. McGarvey in his *Classnotes in Sacred History*. Many gospel preachers have been blessed by the questions which form the bulk of the syllabus used in his classroom, and many of these notes are reflected in the questions used in this volume to stimulate the study of the reader. As is evident, the number of questions in *Studies in Joshua, Judges and Ruth* is larger than number used by McGarvey in the notes preserved from his classroom lectures.

The King James Version of the Bible has been followed, but notation is made where the American Standard Version provides insight into an understanding of the verses. In each chapter the questions are based on specific verses, and with each question the verses most pertinent are listed. Since the Bible is its own best commentary, constant reference is made to the Bible passages which are most helpful in understanding the text under consideration.

It is the hope of the author that the students will first read the Bible text itself. Next consideration should be given to the general outline of each chapter. The "Lessons for Learning" are provided with the thought of their being used for teaching lessons or preaching sermons from each individual chapter. Specific and detailed points of interest are brought out in the questions and answers. At the close of each chapter ten review questions are provided. Through the use of these various devices as aids for study, it is hoped

that the volume in hand may be used in many different kinds of study groups with profit for all.

May each one who opens the Bible study to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

## INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA

The book of Joshua opens the section of the Bible commonly called the history books. The history books are twelve in number when we divide the Old Testament into sections of law, history, poetry, major prophets, and minor prophets.

Joshua is a part of that section of the Old Testament called the Former Prophets when we distinguish the former prophets from the latter prophets. The history in the book begins the story of Israel as a nation. It is, therefore, quite properly called the first book of the history of Israel.

### NAME

The book of Joshua derives its name from the principal character in the book. His name is a Hebrew name meaning "the Lord saves." The Hebrew word is transliterated into the Greek language to form the name given to Jesus. The similarity between the names can be seen even in the English forms—Joshua and Jesus.

### DATE

The book continues the story of the people of Israel from the point where the Pentateuch leaves it. It begins immediately after the death of Moses. The people of Israel mourned for thirty days after Moses' death. When this period of mourning was over, God gave the command to Joshua to move the people of Israel across the Jordan River from the east side to the west side. This was their entrance into the Promised Land.

The book closes with the death and burial of Joshua and his contemporary, the high priest, Eleazar (Joshua 24:29-33). The book, therefore, covers the lifetime of God's great captain and Moses' successor. The exact span of his life cannot be accurately determined. It is a fair assumption, however, that he was about the same age as

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

Caleb. Joshua and Caleb were the two faithful spies sent out by Moses (Numbers 13). Joshua and Caleb were the only two men over twenty years of age when they left Egypt to arrive in the land flowing with milk and honey. Caleb tells us that he was eighty-five years old when he asked permission of Joshua to go down to Hebron and settle the land there (Joshua 14:10). He said that he was forty years old when he was sent out as a spy.

The Bible also tells us that Joshua was 110 years old when he died (Joshua 24:29).

If Joshua were the same age as Caleb, then the book covers a span of some thirty years. Forty of the forty-five years between the spying out of the land and the settling of it were spent in wandering. Five years were spent in subduing it by such campaigns as the battle with the five kings in the South and the kings under Jabin in the North. There would then be twenty-five years of peaceful administration in Palestine for the man described as Moses' minister (Joshua 1:1).

The date of the exodus can be rather firmly established as 1447. Forty years were spent in wandering, meaning that the people of Israel came to Palestine about 1407. If Joshua died some thirty years later, the book would cover the span between 1407 and 1377.

Josephus says that Joshua was eighty-five when he succeeded Moses (*Antiquities*, V, i, 29). Those who hold to an earlier date for the exodus (for example around 1491 B.C.) would then date the events in Joshua correspondingly earlier and have them conclude sometime around 1425 B.C. Those critics who argue for a later date and place the exodus in the nineteenth dynasty of Egypt under Rameses, would place the events of Joshua somewhere near the close of the thirteenth century or 1200 B.C. It seems impossible to hold to either of these dates in light of the statement of I Kings 6:1 that the Temple was begun 480



## JOSHUA

years after the exodus. We can be fairly sure that Solomon's temple was erected in 967 B.C., thus placing the exodus around 1447. The dates for Joshua would thus best be set between 1407 and 1377 B.C.

### AUTHORSHIP

In the Talmud (*Baba Bathra*, 15 a) the Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship of the book to Joshua. The translators of the Greek version entitled the book with the Greek form of Joshua's name, thus indicating their belief that Joshua was the chief actor and author. Dr. Edward J. Young said that the author of the book in its present form could not be Joshua because it records events that were after him. He cited as examples such events as the conquest of Hebron by Caleb, Debir by Othniel, and Lashem by the Danites.

The last chapter records the death of Joshua and also the death of Eleazar. If this last paragraph were penned by a later author, there is really hardly any reason why Joshua could not have written the body of the work. Throughout the book we find statements such as "unto this day," indicating the passage of some time, but two or three decades are a considerable number of years. There is evidence that the book was written by one who had been an eyewitness to the events. Joshua 5:1 carries the statement, "We crossed over."

When Rahab was saved, she took her place in the midst of the Israelites. When the book was written, she was still alive. Joshua 6:25 says: "But Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all that she had did Joshua save alive, and she dwelt in the midst of Israel unto this day."

Since the book was evidently written by one who was contemporary with the events, there is hardly any reason

for denying that Joshua wrote the book. Those events which are also recorded in the book of Judges are evidently "flash-backs." The record in Judges is a recapitulation of some of the things which had happened in the times of Joshua (Judges 2:10; Joshua 15:13-19; and Judges 1:12-15)

## PURPOSE

The book of Joshua is not intended merely as a continuation of the history of Israel from the death of Moses to the death of Joshua. It does fulfill this immediate purpose. Neither should it be called only a description of the acts of Joshua. The real purpose is to show how the faithful covenant-God fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18; cf. Joshua 1:2-6).

This book also presents a typical entrance of God's faithful people into the blessings of His promises. The history of Joshua is used in this fashion by the apostle Paul in Hebrews, chapter 4. The similarity between the entrance of God's people into Canaan and the final triumph of God's people in the new Jerusalem is so striking that the King James Version gives this rendering of Hebrews 4:8: "For if Jesus had given them rest He would not have spoken afterward on another day." Jesus is the Anglicized form of the Greek name given to the only begotten son of God. The Hebrew form would have been translated *Joshua*. The reference of the apostle Paul in Hebrews 4:8 is evidently to the work of Joshua, as he led God's people into a promised rest. If that were the only rest God had prepared for His people, there would have been no mention of it in the Psalms of David (Hebrews 4:3, 4, 7; cf. Psalms 95:7-11).

We can hardly read the story of Joshua without realizing how God's people will one day be led into the glories of Heaven by their Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## JOSHUA

### PLAN

The book is a straightforward historical narrative. Some of the passages are mingled history and exhortation, but the book is divided very neatly into two equal historical parts. The first part describes the conquest of the land; the second part describes the settlement of the land. The history is closed with a record of the great valedictory address by Joshua, Moses' minister and God's man for the hour. His ringing cry: "Choose you this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15), is one of the best-known passages of the Old Testament. It logically concludes a history.

### OUTLINE

Many outlines are given for this first of the twelve books of history. Most of them recognize a division which comes at chapter 13. The first twelve chapters describe the battles which Joshua fought in conquering the land. The last twelve chapters describe his efforts to see God's people comfortably settled in their new homes. The following outline is sufficient to bring the major events quickly to the attention of the reader.

It can be seen readily that the two parts, or halves, of the book correspond exactly to one another both in form and in content. The events described in 1:1—5:12 are preparatory to the conquest of Canaan. The conferences held by Joshua after the distribution of the land by lot (23:1—24:28) had no other object than to establish the covenant people firmly in the inheritance bestowed upon them by God. He exhorted them to be faithful to the Lord.

As chapter 12 rounds off the first part as something of an appendix which completes the history of the conquest of the land, so chapter 22 is obviously an appendix to the distribution of the land among the tribes of Israel.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

God, the ultimate author of the Bible, is a God of order. Those who have been moved by the Holy Spirit have demonstrated an orderliness in the writings which have been preserved for us. This book of history is an outstanding example of this kind of document. It is an essential part of the Word of God.

### AN OUTLINE OF JOSHUA

Introduction: Joshua Commissioned (1:1-9)

I. The Land Conquered (1:10—12:24)

A. Preparation made to cross Jordan (1:10—2:24)

B. The Jordan crossed (3:1—4:24)

C. Israel circumcised at Gilgal (5:1-15)

D. Jericho and Ai taken (6:1—8:29)

1. An altar erected on Mount Ebal (8:30-35)

2. The Gibeonites received (9:1-27)

E. Southern Canaan conquered (10:1-43)

F. Northern Canaan conquered (11:1-15)

G. The conquest summarized (11:16—12:24)

II. The Land Divided (13:1—22:34)

A. Joshua divinely instructed (13:1-7)

B. The eastern tribes assigned (13:8-33)

C. The western tribes assigned (14:1—19:51)

D. Cities of refuge provided (20:1-9)

E. Levitical towns allotted (21:1-45)

F. The eastern tribes sent home (22:1-34)

III. Joshua's Farewell Address (23:1—24:29)

Conclusion: Death of Joshua and Eleazar (24:29-33)

### THE WORK OF JOSHUA

The work of Joshua was of terrible severity. We read of his work throughout the book that bears his name. When he fought against Debir, "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

## JOSHUA

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. 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" (Joshua 10:39, 40).

This campaign of extermination has been criticized through the centuries. Josephus was aware of this criticism against his people and their way of waging war. He gave answer to the critics in his work *Contra Apionem* (1, 34). The early Christian writers also felt compelled to answer the unbelieving critics who found fault with the way in which Joshua and others waged war. In his work *Contra Celsum* (III, V), Origen came to grips with this problem. Cyril also in his *Contra Julian* (VI) dealt with this problem.

Such bloody battles are so much against the nature of some people that they lose their faith when they read about these campaigns. They have gone so far as to say that the God of the Old Testament must have been different from the God of the New Testament. Some have even characterized God as "a dirty bully."

To find fault with the campaigns of Joshua is to find fault with God Himself. Joshua was acting under the orders given to him by God: "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 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" (Deuteronomy 20:10, 11). These instructions were given to the people of Israel as they drew nigh to the Promised Land. The specifications applied to cities which were not in Canaan itself. Such kings as Sihon, king of

the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, were treated in this way.

Israel was not to spare those who lived far away if they were hostile. "If it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: 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" (Deuteronomy 20:12-14).

Different orders were given with regard to the people who lived in Canaan. Of these people God said, "Thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deuteronomy 20:17). His orders were epitomized in this way, "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deuteronomy 20:16). This exact phrase is used to describe the campaigns of Joshua, "he left none remaining" (Joshua 10:39). He destroyed all—all males, all females, all children.

The conquest of Palestine is informally represented throughout the Scripture as an act of righteous judgment against the inhabitants of the land. Their abominations called to high heaven for vengeance. The idolatrous rite which they practiced was intended to defile the people. The pollutions of their society were a disgrace to the human race. Their moral degeneracy reached a point finding no parallel in history. Ewald in his *History of Israel* (Vol. 2, p. 237) says that it is an eternal necessity that a nation such as the majority of the Canaanites then were, sinking deeper and deeper into a slough of discord and moral perversity, must fall before a people roused to a higher life

## JOSHUA

by a newly awakened energy of unanimous trust in divine power. Such people were the people of Israel. God had commanded them not to defile themselves in any of the practices which were common in Canaan. On the other hand, they were to keep His ordinances that they might not commit any of the abominable customs (Leviticus 18:24, 25, 30). The fact that the Israelites had spent an entire generation alone with God in the desert of Sinai after having been delivered out of the pagan society of Egypt before they entered into the defiled society of Canaan made them aware of the strict differences between right and wrong, and good and evil. They hated sin with a passion. They were conducting a holy war at the behest of God.

The flaming vengeance which fell upon Canaan did not come without warning. The history of these people would contain references to the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-24). The presence and example of Melchizedek and Abraham should have warned them against their ungodly practices (Genesis 15:16; cf. Luke 19:44).

The inhabitants of Canaan were granted repeated signs of the approach of the armies of Israel. They had heard of God's vengeance on Egypt (Joshua 2:10, 11). Still nobody repented of sins except Rahab. The people of Canaan were not at all like the people of Nineveh in the days of Jonah.

Not only had the people heard of God's vengeance on Egypt, but the Israelites had entered into an initial skirmish with the Canaanites forty years earlier when they sent spies out from Kadesh-Barnea. The eastern part of the land had been overthrown (Deuteronomy 3:5, 6). They saw the Jordan parted before a single arrow was shot, a spear thrown, or a stone slung. Even after the fall of Jericho, the first city attacked by Israel, there was none

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

save the Gibeonites who sued for peace. Arnold in his book of *Sermons* said that the Israelites' sword in its bloodiest executions wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. Wilberforce in his *Heroes of Hebrew History* put forth the opinion that if the worship of Chemosh had superseded the worship of Jehovah all the grand designs of redemption would have been frustrated in their development.

The people of Canaan were responsible for their sins. They had sinned excessively and they were annihilated completely. It was Joshua's task to serve as God's messenger of judgment. The God of love is also ultimately a God of justice.



## JOSHUA

### OUTLINE OF JOSHUA

- I. The Conquest of the Land 1—12
  - A. Preparation for the conquest 1: 1— 2:24
    - 1. Summons to war 1: 1-18
      - a. God's command to Joshua 1: 1-9
      - b. Joshua's command to the people 1:10-18
    - 2. Mission of the spies 2: 1-24
      - a. The spies sent 2: 1-7
      - b. The spies received 2: 8-21
      - c. The spies returning 2:22-24
  - B. Passage of the Jordan 3: 1— 5:15
    - 1. Divine guidance 3: 1— 4:24
      - a. Preparation of Joshua 3: 1-13
      - b. Jordan turned back 3:14-17
      - c. The passage 4: 1-18
      - d. Memorial at Gilgal 4:19-24
    - 2. Consecration to the war 5: 1-15
      - a. Circumcision renewed 5: 1-9
      - b. The Passover kept 5:10-12
      - c. Angel of Jehovah 5:13-15
  - C. Capture of Jericho 6: 1-27
    - 1. God's instructions 6: 1-5

# STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

2. Preparations of  
the people 6: 6-14
3. Capture of the city 6:15-27
- D. Conquest of Southern  
and Central Canaan 7: 1—10:43
  1. Capture of Ai 7: 1— 8:35
    - a. First advance 7: 1— 7:26
      - (1) Achan's sin 7: 1
      - (2) Israel driven  
back 7: 2-5
      - (3) Joshua's  
prayer 7: 6-15
      - (4) Detection  
and Punish-  
ment of  
Achan 7:16-26
    - b. Second advance 8: 1-35
      - (1) Stratagem  
of Joshua 8: 1-13
      - (2) Capture and  
destruction  
of Ai 8:14-29
      - (3) Renewal  
of the  
covenant  
at Ebal 8:30-35
  2. Battle of Bethhoron 9: 1—10:43
    - a. The Canaanite  
league gainst  
Israel 9: 1, 2
    - b. Fraud of the  
Gibeonites 9: 3-15
    - c. The league  
with Gibeon 9:16-27
    - d. The attack of

## JOSHUA

- Gibeon by the  
five kings 10: 1-5
- e. Relief of the  
city by Joshua 10: 6-15
- f. Flight and  
destruction of  
the five kings 10:16-43
- E. Conquest of  
Northern Canaan 11: 1—12:24
  - 1. The Northern  
League 11: 1-23
    - a. Gathering of  
the kings 11: 1-6
    - b. Battle of the  
waters of  
Merom 11: 7-9
    - c. Defeat of  
Jabin 11:10
    - d. Subjugation of  
the North 11:11-23
  - 2. Review of the  
Conquest 12: 1-24
    - a. Conquest of  
Eastern  
Palestine 12: 1-6
    - b. Conquest of  
Western  
Palestine 12: 7-24
- II. Division of Canaan 13:1—21:45
  - A. Partition of Eastern  
Canaan 13: 1—14:15
    - 1. Mosaic settlement 13: 1-33
      - a. Divine command  
to divide the  
land 13: 1-7

# STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

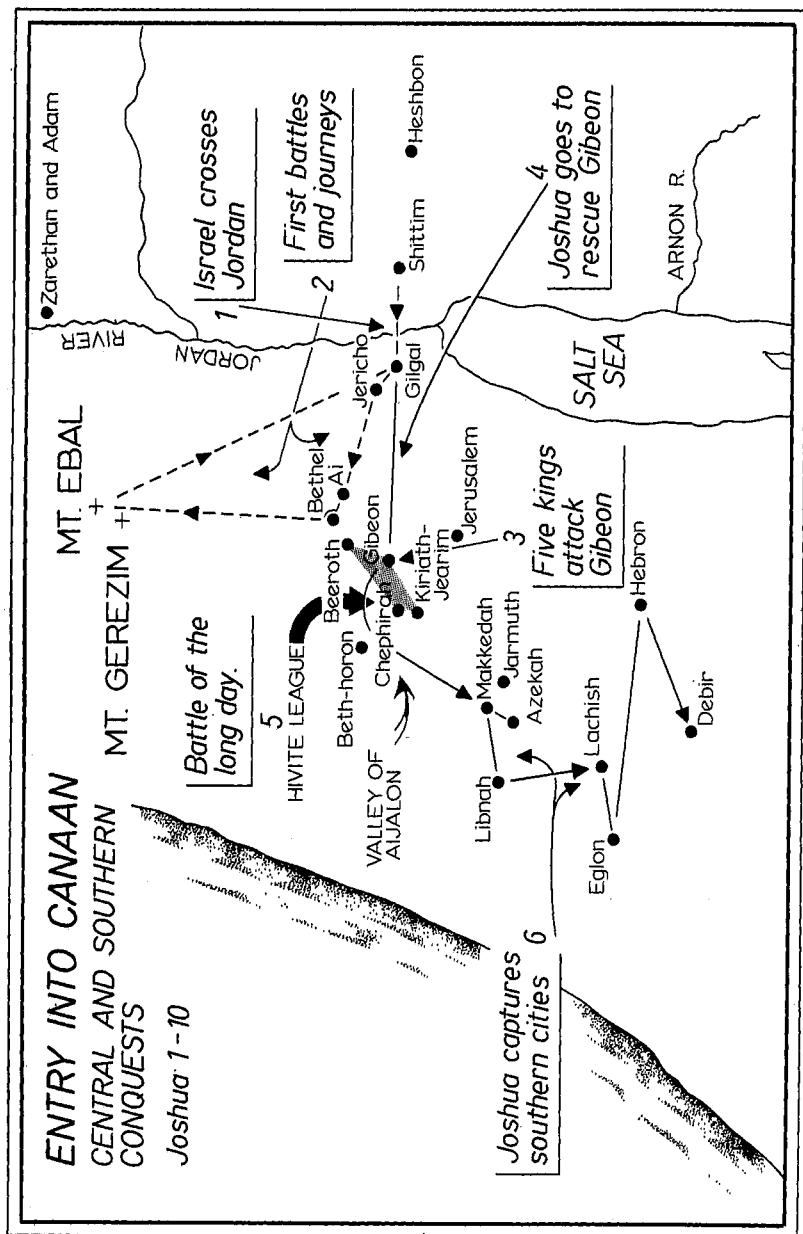
- b. Provision for  
Levi 13: 8-14
- c. Possessions of  
the tribe of  
Reuben 13:15-23
- d. Possessions of  
the tribe of Gad 13:24-28
- e. Possessions of  
the half-tribe  
of Manasseh 13:29-33
2. Commencement of  
the distribution 14: 1-5
3. Possession of Caleb 14: 6-15
- B. Division of Western  
Palestine 15: 1—19:51
  1. Possession of Judah 15: 1-63
  2. Possession of  
Ephraim and Ma-  
nasseh West 16: 1—17:18
  3. Possession of the  
remaining tribes 18: 1—19:51
    - a. The land  
surveyed 18: 1-10
    - b. Possession of  
the tribe of  
Benjamin 18:11-28
    - c. Possession of  
the tribe of  
Simeon 19: 1-9
    - d. Possession of  
the tribe of  
Zebulun 19:10-16
    - e. Possession of  
the tribe of  
Issachar 19:17-23

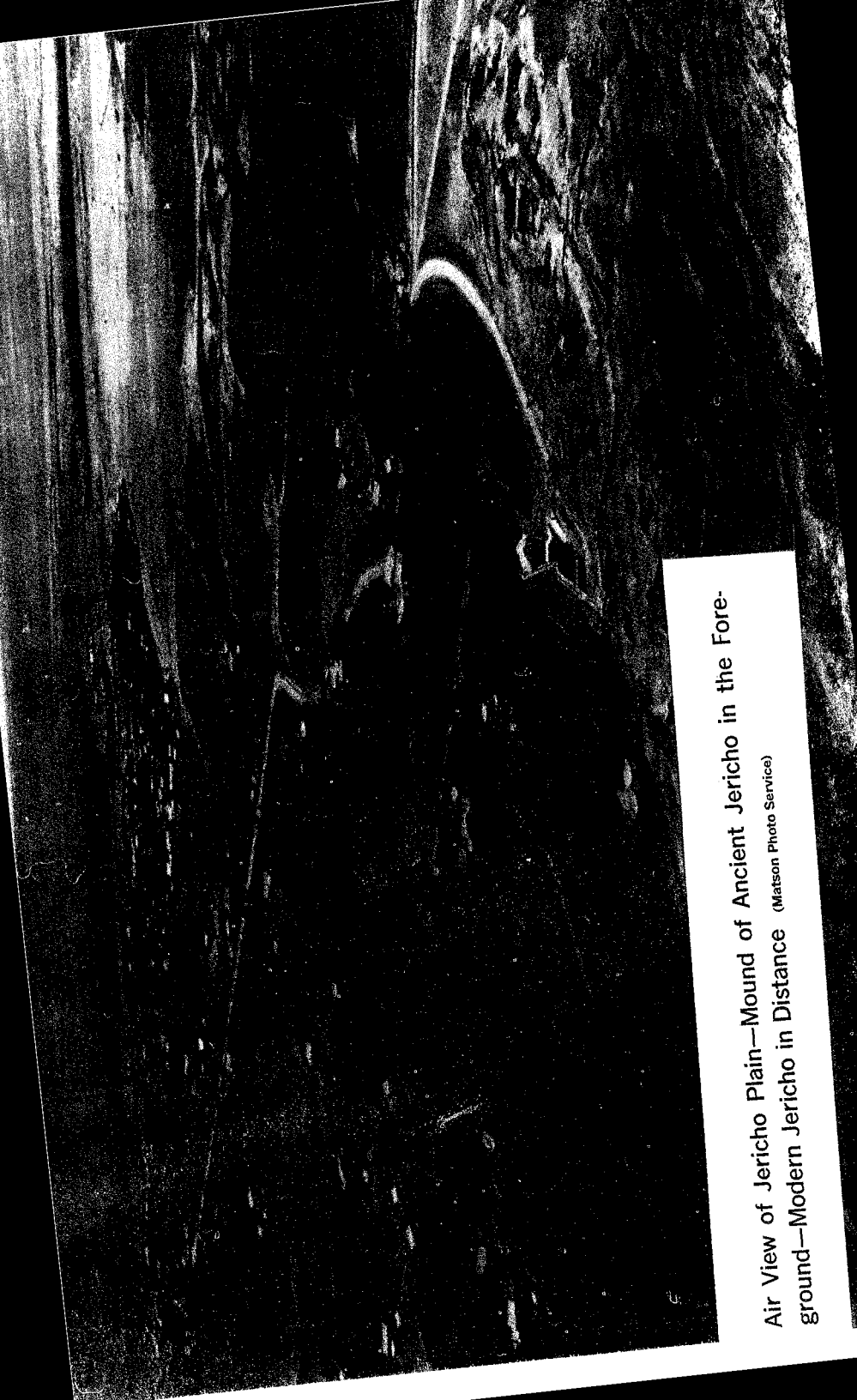
## JOSHUA

- f. Possession of the tribe of Asher 19:24-31
    - g. Possession of the tribe of Naphtali 19:32-39
    - h. Possession of the tribe of Dan 19:40-48
    - i. Possession of
  - 4. Possession of Joshua 19:49-51
- C. Cities of Refuge 20: 1-9
  - 1. Instructions concerning the cities of refuge 20: 1-6
  - 2. The appointment of the cities 20: 7-9
- D. Priestly and Levitical Cities 21: 1-45
  - 1. Directions concerning the Levitical cities 21: 1-3
  - 2. Cities assigned to the Kohathites 21: 4-12
  - 3. Cities given to the descendants of Aaron 21:13-19
  - 4. Cities given to the rest of the Kohathites 21:20-26
  - 5. Cities given to the Gershonites 21:27-33
  - 6. Cities given to the Merarites 21:34-42

# STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

7. Summary of the assignment of the land 21:43-45
- III. Joshua's Farewell 22:1—24:33
- A. The Eastern Tribes Sent Home 22: 1-34
1. Joshua's exhortation to the eastern tribes 22: 1-9
  2. An altar erected by the eastern tribes 22:10-12
  3. The eastern tribes challenged by the rest of Israel 22:13-20
  4. The reply of the eastern tribes to the rest of Israel 22:21-29
  5. The eastern tribes dismissed by the rest of Israel 22:30-34
- B. Joshua's Farewell at Shiloh 23: 1-16
1. Joshua's charge to Israel 23: 1-13
  2. Joshua's final words to Israel at Shiloh 23:14-16
- C. Joshua's Farewell at Shechem 24: 1-28
1. Joshua's review of the conquest 24: 1-13
  2. Joshua's challenge for Israel to make a decision 24:14-28
- D. Joshua's Last Days and Death 24:29-33





Air View of Jericho Plain—Mound of Ancient Jericho in the Fore-  
ground—Modern Jericho in Distance (Matson Photo Service)



## JOSHUA

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 1

- Vv. 1- 9 *God's promise to Joshua.* After the death of Moses, God renewed His promise to be with Joshua and exhorted Joshua to make a fearless attack on the nations of Canaan. Joshua was especially instructed to follow the commandments written in the Law of Moses. This is a substantiation of the fact that the Law was written by Moses and was available for Joshua's study.
- Vv. 10-18 *Joshua's instruction to the people.* Joshua immediately gave directions to the people to prepare them for crossing the Jordan River. He reminded the eastern tribes of the conditions under which they were to take possession of the land east of the Jordan. The tribes then renewed their pledges of loyalty to Moses' successor.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Great dangers call for great courage.* The land of Canaan had presented great challenges to the people of Israel. Ten of the spies who had gone through it were afraid to attack the people. Only Joshua and Caleb thought that God would see them through to victory. The death of Moses was a sad event for the people, and the faint of heart may have been afraid to launch the attack. God encouraged Joshua, and he courageously led the people.
2. *A light for the path.* The Psalmist said: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). God told Joshua to do everything according to the Law, which Moses, His servant, had commanded

him. He said, "Turn not to the right hand or to the left" (verse 7). He also declared, "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 all that is written therein" (verse 8). The instructions which God gave to Joshua are good for Christian soldiers to follow today.

3. *God's leaders command respect.* God has never left His people without proper leadership. After Moses died, He raised up Joshua to be their captain. After the days of Joshua, He raised up judges until the time of the kings. In these last days He has turned our eyes toward His Son, and He has provided leaders in the church—elders and deacons. God's people prosper when they have good leadership and when they give the proper respect to their duly appointed leaders.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *God's Promise to Joshua 1:1-9*

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,

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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 herein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

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.

*1. How long after Moses' death did God wait to instruct Joshua? 1:1*

God gave specific instructions to Joshua after the death of Moses. When Moses died, no man knew where he was buried. The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days (Deuteronomy 34:8). A thirty-day period of mourning was customary among people of Joshua's time. When Jacob died in Egypt, Joseph commanded that his father be embalmed according to all the arts of the physicians of Egypt. This process took forty days. The people then mourned for an additional thirty days so that the entire period of mourning was "threescore ten days" (Genesis 50:3). When Joseph died, he was also embalmed. We would expect that a similar period of mourning would follow for Joseph (Genesis 50:26). When Aaron died, the children of Israel mourned for thirty days for him (Numbers 20:29). It is reasonable to expect that the people of Israel would have done very

little in the way of preparing to enter Canaan until after the period of mourning for Moses was ended. At the time God began to give specific instructions to Joshua. Joshua turned to the people to give them directions concerning their crossing the Jordan and entering the Promised Land.

2. *What is the difference between the titles of Moses and Joshua? 1:1*

Moses is called the "... servant of Jehovah." Joshua is called "... Moses' minister." Moses' title is a standing epithet applied to Moses as an honorable title (cf. Numbers 12:7, 8; Deuteronomy 34:6; I Kings 8:56; II Kings 18:12, etc.). Joshua's title is also used in Exodus 17:9 and Numbers 13:16. The Hebrew root, *sharath*, is a verb meaning to *minister, serve*. Joshua was not Moses' minister in the sense in which this word is used in modern church circles. He must have enjoyed a position similar to the one occupied by John Mark, who was called a "minister" of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:5). Joshua was an assistant or aide to Moses. As all Christians are servants of God, so was Moses. In a special way, however, Moses did God's bidding.

3. *Did this command come by the use of the Urim and Thummim? 1:2*

When Joshua was first called to his work, he was told that the high priest would bring him God's messages through the medium of the Urim and Thummim. On this occasion, the thing required was not merely that the will of God should be made known to him, but that he should be given the courage and the strength that he would need to carry out the will of God. Actually, this was something of a second calling (cf. Numbers 27:21; see Joshua 5:13). The kind of strength which Joshua needed to begin his conquest of Canaan could hardly come from knowledge which would be gained through the medium of the Urim and the

Thummim. The situation called for God's speaking directly to him.

4. *Why was this second address necessary?* 1:3-9

Even the bravest men hesitate when they come face to face with the great challenges of their lives. They may even step aside and shun to perform their duty for a moment. Joshua was a brave man, and God's assuring him of His abiding presence would give him additional courage. Moreover, the people needed to know that Joshua did not take action until God had given him complete instructions. This would make them much more inclined to follow him. For all these reasons the second address of God to Joshua was not at all superfluous. It only enhances the charge which Moses gave to Joshua as the Lord commanded (Numbers 27:18-23).

5. *How could they understand "this Lebanon"?* 1:4

Even from the place of encampment the mountain would be visible as it towered above the surrounding land. If reference were not made to the peak itself, the range would be visible. With a wave of the hand, a speaker could address the congregation and point to the horizon where the mountains met the sky and formed the northern boundary. The Lebanon range reached to the headwaters of the river Euphrates, which was also mentioned in the setting of the boundaries of the Promised Land. The Great Sea was the Mediterranean Sea and would be the western boundary "toward the going down of the sun."

6. *What promise did God make to Joshua?* 1:5

Especially significant is this promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." This compares very favorably with the promise made in Deuteronomy 31:8. At that time Moses was giving his final address to the people of Israel. He had reminded them of the way in which God had given them victory over their enemies. He pled with them to be strong and of good courage. He especially

gave a parting exhortation to Joshua as he told him to be courageous inasmuch as he had the responsibility of going with the people into the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give them. Moses knew that Joshua would have the privilege of causing them to inherit it. The greatest encouragement given to Joshua came through knowing God would be with him and not fail him nor forsake him. For this reason, Moses could tell Joshua not to fear nor to be dismayed. God Himself repeats this promise to Joshua.

7. *Was this an unconditional promise?* 1:6

Joshua had something to do. The following list of duties was his:

- a. To be firm and strong (Deuteronomy 31:6)
- b. To rely on God, as Moses had said (Deuteronomy 31:7, 23)
- c. To divide the land for an inheritance (Deuteronomy 1:38; 3:28)
- d. To observe carefully the Law (Deuteronomy 5:29; 28:14)

If Joshua did these things, then God would be with him. If Joshua failed to do these things, he had no promise of God's abiding presence.

8. *What is meant by the expression ". . . not to depart from thy mouth"?* 1:8

This was not to be a theoretical speculation, but a practical study on the part of Joshua. God's Word was to be hidden in his heart. He was to be thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures so that his speech would be flavored by the Word of God. He was to be conversant in the Scriptures so that he would feel at home when speaking to the priests, the prophets, and the elders of the people. Although he was primarily a military man and had the responsibility of government, his campaigns were to be waged in the light of God's instructions. His government

was to be the kind of government which could be blessed by God.

9. *Why did God ask the question, "Have I not commanded thee"?* 1:9

This is what is known as a rhetorical question. It was just another way of saying, "I have commanded thee." It is an assertion on the part of God which could be met only with obedience on the part of Joshua. It was an assurance given by God on Joshua's behalf, and Joshua would naturally be inclined to respond with ready action in the name of God. When Joshua would ask himself this question, the answer would be apparent to him. He knew what God had commanded him. If God had commanded him, he need have no fear of doing what he was expected to do. The question would also remind Joshua that he had no other alternative. If God had commanded him, he could not shun his responsibility. He was not serving man. He was God's servant.

10. *In what other circumstances had God said, "Be not afraid?"* 1:9b

The believer's mind turns reflectively to many such occasions. Adam and Eve had been afraid in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:10). Their fear came from their disobedience. The shepherds were afraid when the angelic host appeared to them. The angel said unto them, "Fear not" (Luke 2:9, 10). The disciples were afraid when Jesus came unto them walking on the sea. At that time He said, "It is I, be not afraid" (John 6:20). Mortal man is naturally afraid when he stands in the presence of immortal God. He feels his weakness and sinfulness; but when he is willing to yield his will to the will of God, the Heavenly Father speaks peace to the troubled heart. Joshua was not only made fearful by the message from God, but he was naturally afraid of the enemies whom he would face in the Promised Land. Moses had earlier en-

couraged him not to be afraid (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8), and now God speaks directly to encourage Joshua in his work.

*Joshua's Instructions to the People 1:10-18*

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

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.

12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,

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.

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 valor, and help them;

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 possessions, and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

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

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.

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.

11. *Who are the "officers"?* 1:10

These men were called in Hebrew the *shoterim*. Their duties were varied. At times they seemed to work first at one task and then at another. Their duties may be listed as follows:

- a. To keep family registers (providing for the levying of men at times of war, etc.)
- b. To circulate the commands of the leader
- c. To issue orders to the people

As Israel prepared to cross the Jordan River, these officers were to marshal the hosts of men, women, and children and direct them in the last leg of the march to Canaan.

12. *What were the "victuals (vittles)"?* 1:11

The people were fed by manna through the days of the wilderness wanderings, and this bountiful provision did not cease until after they had renewed the rite of circumcision in the camp at Gilgal (see Joshua 5:12). No doubt the "victuals" included the daily supply of manna, but it would include more than this. It included all the equipment which was necessary for making the journey (see Genesis 24:25).

13. *What action took place after three days?* 1:11

The people expected to move to a vantage point on the Jordan River from which they could cross over after this first three-day period. During this time the spies were to be on their way to Jericho and returning, a time which was lengthened by the necessity of their hiding for three days. The camp of the Israelites had been at Abel-shittim while they were in the plains of Moab. They planned to move from this point down to the Jordan River

during these three days; but when the spies were forced to extend their expedition, the Israelites probably remained in their camp all this time.

14. *How long was it before they crossed the Jordan?* 1:11

Since the spies were absent for three days, it was not until the morning after their return that the Israelites left Shittim and proceeded to the Jordan. At the bank of the Jordan they halted again. After this second pause for three days (see 3:1, 2) they went across the river.

Three days before leaving Shittim	3
(spies in hiding)	
A day going to the edge of Jordan	1
Three days before starting across	3
A day in crossing	1
	<hr/>
	8 days

Joshua, no doubt, intended to proceed to the Jordan and cross it within the three days. He probably sent spies to Jericho on the same day he issued the orders to the people. As the spies were forced to hide in the mountains for three days, Joshua could not remove with the people until after their return.

15. *Did all the eastern tribes go over Jordan?* 1:12

Only forty thousand men of war from the eastern tribes went over the Jordan River. There were 43,730 men of the tribe of Reuben who were twenty years of age and older. Gad had 40,500 men of this age. If the tribe of Manasseh were evenly divided, there would have been 26,350 men in the half tribe of Manasseh, since the total was 52,700 in this tribe. The total of this would be 110,580 men in the two and one-half tribes who wanted to live east of the Jordan. When Moses gave these people permission to settle east of the Jordan, they promised to arm themselves and to pass over the Jordan with the other

warriors of Israel. After the conquest was finished, they were to be allowed to return to their homes. The historian says about forty thousand of these men prepared for war passed over before the Lord unto the battle to the plains of Jericho (4:13). This would leave some seventy thousand men behind to care for the women and children who would not pass over to the western side of the river.

16. *Why had Moses instructed these tribes?* 1:13

When the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh first approached Moses about settling east of the Jordan, he thought they were like the ten spies who had been afraid to enter into the conquest of the land. The men of the two and one-half tribes assured Moses they were not afraid. They made request for this land because it was suited to their occupations. They found it to be a good land, and they desired to have this for their inheritance. At the time they assured Moses they would go over and fight. They promised they would not return to their houses until all of the children of Israel had inherited their place in the Promised Land. When Moses received this assurance, he granted their request and told them they might build cities for their little ones and folds for their sheep (Numbers 32:24). The land which they inherited was the territory which had formerly been the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 32:33).

17. *Why did the eastern tribes reassure Joshua?* 1:16

After Moses had settled the question about inheriting the land with these eastern tribes, he gave express commandment to Eleazar, the priest, and to Joshua, the son of Nun, as well as to the chief fathers of the tribes of Israel. He made it clear to them that if the children of Gad, the children of Reuben, and the children of Manasseh kept their part of the agreement then they were to inherit Gilead. The pledge of allegiance of these three eastern

tribes had been made to Moses. Since Moses was dead, it was proper for the men of these tribes to give their pledge of allegiance to Joshua. They were willing to go over the Jordan and fight before they received their inheritance. They assured Joshua they would put to death any man among them who proved to be disloyal to Joshua. Their only prayer was for the Lord God to be with Joshua as He had been with Moses (1:17).

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 1

1. What was the normal period of mourning for a deceased person?
2. What was Moses' title in Scripture?
3. What was Joshua's title in Scripture?
4. Was Joshua given an unconditional promise of God's blessings?
5. Did Joshua have any of the written Word of God to guide him?
6. Did Joshua have any subordinate officers to help him?
7. Were the people still receiving manna from heaven when Joshua became their leader?
8. Who were the "eastern" tribes?
9. What kings had formerly dominated the land east of Jordan?
10. Who was Israel's high priest when Joshua was made leader of the people?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1-7 *Rahab hides the spies.* The two spies sent out by Joshua found the house of Rahab to be a place where they could learn about the activities of the community. Although they must have taken every precaution to conceal their true identity, the king of the city learned of

their presence in his city and questioned Rahab about them. At the risk of her life, she hid the men on the flat roof of her house.

Vv. 8-21 *A covenant made with Rahab.* Rahab showed a remarkable insight into the signs of the times. She also made a noble confession of faith in the nature of God. The spies, therefore, hearkened to her request for protection. A sign by which she could identify her house was arranged, and the spies were let down over the city wall and sent on their way back to the camp of Israel.

Vv. 22-24 *The spies return to Joshua.* After hiding three days in the mountains around Jericho, the men made their way safely back east across the Jordan River to the spot where the waiting armies of Israel were poised under Joshua's command anticipating the first battle in the Promised Land. These two spies brought back an encouraging report, in contrast to the report brought back by ten of the twelve spies sent out by Moses forty years earlier.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The Lord, He is God.* Such was the confession of faith made by Rahab, the Canaanite harlot. One would hardly expect to find such faith in the heart of such a person. She recited how the inhabitants of the land had heard about the miracle at the Red Sea. They had also heard about the victories won by the armies of Israel as they fought against Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites who ruled on the east side of the Jordan. Surely sinners today can see the hand of God in the

affairs of men everywhere, and they should be willing to make this same good confession. Even more, they should accept Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior.

2. *Our life for yours.* The spies had been saved by Rahab. As a result, they were willing to enter into an agreement whereby she could identify her house and spare the destruction of herself and her family when the battle was fought against Jericho. At the same time, they could not jeopardize the lives of their fellow soldiers. If Rahab betrayed them, they would not be bound by their agreement. Surely they were in a situation which was fraught with peril. It was a life-and-death matter. Christian workers are engaged in similar important activities every day. They have given their lives in the service of Christ as they seek to save the souls of those with whom they come in contact. No more important business can ever be conducted.
3. *God keeps His promises.* When the two spies returned to Joshua, they said, "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land" (v. 24). More than forty years before this time, six hundred thousand men of Israel had started on the journey to the Promised Land. Some lost faith along the way and died in the wilderness, but God never wavered. He brought the faithful into the land flowing with milk and honey. He will always be as steadfast to all who trust Him.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Rahab Hides the Spies 2:1-7*

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 a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

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

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.

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:

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.

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.

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, they shut the gate.

*1. Why were the spies sent out secretly? 2:1*

This was naturally done to prevent the Canaanites from hearing about it. Partly it was done for the sake of Israel. If the reports should prove unfavorable, the people of Israel might have been thrown into despair as they had been before in the time of Moses. When Moses sent the twelve spies out from Kadesh-Barnea, the people had come to him with the suggestion that they send spies. Moses had inquired of the Lord concerning the advisability of this procedure, and with the Lord's blessings he had sent one man from each tribe to spy out Canaan (Deuteronomy 1:22 and Numbers 13:1 ff.). Since the people knew Moses had sent the spies out they were expecting to get a

report when they returned. Joshua's action would prevent this kind of anxious anticipation on the part of the people.

2. *What kind of city was ancient Jericho?* 2:1b

Jericho was a city within the borders of Canaan, lying something more than an hour's journey to the west of the Jordan. Its location was seven miles north of the Dead Sea, and about ten miles northwest of the mouth of the Jordan where it enters the Dead Sea. It was situated in the plain which was formerly very fertile and celebrated for its palm trees and balsam shrubs. It is now quite desolate and barren. The town lay eight hundred feet below sea level, making it some two thousand feet below the summit of Mount Olivet to the west. The Dead Sea, however, is twelve hundred and ninety feet below sea level, making Jericho to be situated on a hill that stood out above the plains surrounding the site. The town controlled the trade routes from the east as well as the road stretching up to the west to Jerusalem. Another road through the ancient site of Bethel and Shechem lay nearby, and a road to the south led down to Hebron. Its overthrow would naturally greatly alarm the Canaanites, and Joshua singled the town out of all the Canaanite tribes when he recounted Israel's victories (24:11).

3. *Who was Rahab?* 2:1c

Rahab is called a *zonah*, that is, a harlot, not an inn-keeper, as Josephus, the Chaldee version, and the Rabbins interpret the word. The spies' entering the house of such a person would not excite suspicion. Moreover, the situation of her house against or upon the town wall was one which facilitated escape. The Lord so guided the course of the spies that they found in this sinner the very person who was the most suitable for their purpose. The tidings of the miracles wrought by the living God on behalf of Israel had made a deep impression on her. She informed the spies of the despondency of the Canaanites. With



believing trust in the power of the God of Israel, she concealed the spies from all the inquiries of her countrymen, though at great risk to herself.

4. *Who was the king of Jericho?* 2:2

Many of the principal cities of the Canaanites were governed by a king who would also take responsibility for some of the surrounding territory. Five of these kings formed a coalition against the Israelites and fought Joshua after the Gibeonites made peace with Israel. Another group of kings in the northern part of Palestine also banded together to oppose the conquest of the men under Joshua. There were at least five leading kings in this northern group as well. A summary of the kings who were overthrown by Joshua is given in chapter 12, where thirty-one different kings are named. Their principalities would be comparable to the city-states of ancient Greece. Their office would make them equal to the lords of the Philistines, who are mentioned frequently in the days of the judges. This important and powerful man sent to the home of Rahab demanding information about the spies who had come into her house.

5. *How had the king learned of the spies' mission?* 2:3

A report had been given to the king, but Joshua does not tell us who made the report. Although the coming of two strange men to the house of Rahab would not be sufficient grounds to arouse a lot of suspicion, the strange conduct of the men might have been the reason for someone's surmising that they were Israelite spies. They evidently did not enter Rahab's house for any immoral purpose. Even though she is called a harlot, she may have also provided a place of lodging for strangers. In modern society it is not unusual for women of immoral nature to ply their nefarious business in or about a perfectly legitimate lodging place. Such may have been Rahab's

arrangement. If the men of Israel were distinct by their speech, their dress, and their conduct, they may have aroused enough suspicion to cause someone to go to the king with the report that spies were in Rahab's house.

6. *Was she justified in lying?* 2:4

Rahab sought not only to divert all suspicion from herself, but to prevent any further search for them in her house. She wanted to frustrate the attempt to arrest them. Her deceit is not to be justified as a lie of necessity told for a good purpose. Neither can we avoid the problem by saying that before the preaching of the gospel a salutary lie was not regarded as a fault even by good men. Such cannot be shown to be "allowable," or even "praiseworthy," simply because the writer mentions the fact without expressing any subjective opinion. Even though Rahab was convinced of the truth of the miracles which God had wrought for His people and acted in firm faith that the true God would give the land of Canaan to the Israelites, she still is culpable in affirming an untruth, for a lie is always a sin.

7. *Why did she have flax on the roof?* 2:6

Flax is a herb-like plant which has been cultivated from the beginning of history. It is a herbaceous plant and grows to a height of some three feet, having blue flowers and very fibrous stalks. The tough fibers of the stalk after the decay and removal of the softer woody and gummy material made the crude flax. From the flax linen was made, and linen was in the earliest historic times a favorite material for clothes. The Jewish priestly garments were made of pure linen. The Egyptian mummies were wrapped in linen. Linseed oil, and oil cake were also useful products from the same plant. Since the roofs of the Palestinian houses were flat, the area was used for many different purposes. Roof tops made excellent places to spread out farm products for drying, and this was evidently

the reason why there were stalks of flax on the roof of Rahab's house.

8. *What gates were shut?* 2:7

Some have called Jericho the oldest city in the world. Numerous archaeological excavations have been made in and around the city. These have revealed an area covering some four or five acres surrounded by a double wall. Some of the walls even in the ruins are twenty-eight feet high. The walls themselves are at places in three sections with a base of clay, gravel, and small stones. Above this is a rubble wall and finally on top is a brick wall sometimes between six and eight feet in thickness. Not even Meggido, a famous military center of the ancient world, reveals workmanship of this kind. Those who built Jericho must have been masters in stonework and masonry. It is taken as a triumph of engineering skill which modern builders under the same circumstances could scarcely improve. Since the city was excellently fortified it would be necessary to have gates which could be opened and closed. Their practice evidently called for the closing of the gates at sundown in order for the city to be safe from attacks by night.

*The Covenant Made With Rahab* 2:8-21

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

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.

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.

11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did here 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.

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

9. *What was Rahab's view of God?* 2:9

Her confession of faith remained far behind the faith which Moses at that time demanded of Israel. She discerned in Jehovah a deity in heaven and upon earth. Although she had not yet thrown off her polytheism altogether, she had come close to a true and full confession of the Lord. She knew that all evidence pointed towards the victorious conquest of the land on the part of the Israelites. Although she could hardly have known of the promise given to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), she had witnessed how terror had fallen upon the members of her community as reports reached them of Israel's exodus from Egypt. The people of Canaan had fallen into great fear.

10. *How much of Israel's history was known to Rahab?*

2:10

Jacob and his descendants had gone out of Canaan four hundred years before the time of Joshua. Rahab demonstrates very little knowledge of the early history of Israel when she specifically mentioned how the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry land. She also knew of the victorious campaigns they had waged against the kings east of the Jordan. She called Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, by name. These were kings whom the Israelites had conquered just shortly before the time of the death of Moses.

11. *How did Rahab describe God?* 2:11

Rahab said, "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." Rahab's confession of faith is very close to the cry made by the people of Israel on

Mount Carmel after God had sent fire from heaven to devour Elijah's sacrifice and altar. At that time the people of Israel cried out, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God" (I Kings 18:39). Even without the benefit of a great heritage among God-fearing people, Rahab came to the conclusion that the God of Israel was the God of the whole earth.

12. *What request did Rahab make of the spies?* 2:12, 13

Rahab was pleading for her life. She asked that the people of Israel save alive her father and mother, her brothers, her sisters, all that they had, and herself. When she asked them to give her "a true token," she was asking them to appoint some kind of sign which would assure her that they were favorably inclined towards her, or that she be allowed to give them some pledge of her allegiance.

13. *What kind of men were the spies?* 2:14

The men whom Joshua had sent to spy out Canaan were courageous, God-fearing, and appreciative men of war. They were honest and dependable. They were not sinful, covetous, or treacherous. They knew Rahab had spared their lives, and they were willing to make an agreement. They had a knowledge of God which led them to believe this God-fearing woman, though a sinner, would be accepted into the household of Israel if she believed on the Lord. They had not entered Rahab's house for any evil reason; and when they saw an opportunity to help a pagan to have faith in the true God, they were ready to act.

14. *What further actions did Rahab take?* 2:14-16

The covenant into which Rahab entered with the spies was a matter of life and death. Since she had spared their lives, they were willing to spare her life. If she tricked them later and caused them to be harmed, then they would harm her. If she failed to meet the conditions which they laid down to her, they were not to be bound

in any way to spare her or her family. When the covenant was completed, she let the men down over the city wall by a cord dropped out of the window of her house. Her house was on the town wall. She also instructed the men to hide in the mountain rather than to make an attempt to get back across the fords of the Jordan and to reach Joshua's camp immediately. In some way, she believed three days would be sufficient time for them to remain in hiding, evidently knowing the habits of expeditionary forces which went out from the city on such missions.

15. *What conditions did Rahab agree to meet?* 2:18-21

She was to do the following things:

- (1) When the town was taken, Rahab was to make her house known to the Israelites by binding the "cord of this crimson thread"
- (2) When the town was taken, Rahab was to collect together her parents, her brothers, and her sisters into her own house
- (3) She was to agree to all the propositions made to her, especially not to disclose the mission of Israel

The rope by which the spies had escaped out of Rahab's house was made of crimson threads. It was this kind of cord which she was to hang from her window. There could be no mistaking the unusual and significant sign. The Israelites were furthermore disavowing any responsibilities for any of her family who might be scattered throughout the town. This would prevent someone from falsely identifying himself as a member of Rahab's house. Naturally, she was not to make any mention of the spies' visit or in any way jeopardize their safe return. Rahab readily agreed to all of these propositions and was thus spared.

*The Spies Return to Joshua 2:22-24*

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.

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:

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.

16. *What kind of report did the spies make to Joshua?*  
2:22-24

The report of the two spies to Joshua was quite different from the report which the ten spies had made to Moses forty years earlier. At the earlier time the ten spies said the land was one which ate up its inhabitants. They described themselves as being like grasshoppers in the sight of the men who lived on the land. They also affirmed they felt insignificant in the presence of the people who populated the territory. Joshua's two spies, however, came back with a glowing account of how they had entered into the city of Jericho and had been spared by the kindness of Rahab. Much of what they said was a report of what Rahab told them. They used the same expression in describing how the inhabitants of the country were fainting because of fear of them. All of this convinced the spies that the Lord would surely deliver all the land into the hands of the Israelites. Such a report must have given great courage to Joshua and the warriors of Israel. Although they had been forced to wait an extra three days for the return of the spies, they would certainly be enthusiastic about their mission as they made



final preparations to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. How many men did Joshua send to spy out the land?
2. What was the name of the harlot into whose house they entered?
3. What kind of a ruler was over Jericho?
4. In the midst of what kind of farm produce did the spies hide?
5. What was the name of the king of the Amorites whom the Israelites had conquered?
6. What was the name of the king of Bashan whom Israel had conquered?
7. By what means did the spies escape from the harlot's house?
8. How long did the spies hide in the mountains?
9. By what sign was the harlot to identify her house?
10. What was the harlot's statement of faith in God?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

Vv. 1- 8 *God's instructions to Joshua.* Joshua and the people of Israel moved from their camp at Shittim to the banks of the Jordan. Just before they crossed over into Canaan, God spoke again to Joshua and gave him final instructions about the passage. A thrill of excitement must have run through the entire camp as they came to this thrilling moment.

Vv. 9-13 *Joshua's instructions to the people.* Joshua ordered the Levites which carried the Ark of the Covenant to go before the people but to stop at the edge of the river. Joshua also

commanded the people to take twelve men from among them, one man from every tribe. These men were to select stones to carry out of the Jordan and use in the construction of a memorial.

- Vv. 14-17 *The parting of the Jordan.* Although the river was in flood stage at the time, God wrought a mighty miracle as He caused the waters which ran down from the north to stop, and also prevented the waters from the south from flowing back into the river bed. Dry land was exposed, and the people of Israel were allowed to march across on dry ground. The priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant stood firm on dry ground where the water had been until all the people of Israel had passed over into Canaan.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God makes known His will to man.* God does not leave man alone in darkness to grope in an effort to find out the will of God. God had made known His will in an unmistakably clear way. He gave explicit instructions to Joshua as the people of Israel prepared to cross over into the Promised Land. He has given all mankind His will as they seek to know what is expected of them in their effort to reach an upper and better kingdom.
2. *God's people march in faith.* The people of Israel must have been sorely tried as Joshua ordered them to march forward toward the banks of the swollen Jordan River. The priests themselves led the way, and their faith must have been sorely tried as they were ordered to step down into the water and march forward as if they were to

attempt to walk across the flooded stream. Such is often the case of the believer as he is asked to do something for which he cannot see a reason. It is at this point where the Christian walks by faith.

3. *Obedience to God brings victory.* God does not always work in the same way. When the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses held up his staff over the water. The people of Israel may have been expecting Joshua to do something similar, but Joshua himself was in the background as they crossed the Jordan River. The priests took the lead. As they obeyed, God parted the waters of the Jordan. The people who had come to this point in faith and obedience were then enabled to cross the raging river on dry ground. In the spiritual realm such experiences are repeated day by day by those who trust and obey. They march forward to victory as they obey God.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *God's Instructions to Joshua 3:1-8*

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.

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

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.

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.

5 And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

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.

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.

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.

1. *Where was Shittim?* 3:1

Shittim was Israel's last camping place east of Jordan before entering Palestine. The camp is described as being in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan by Jericho (Numbers 22:1). Here Israel stayed, and the people were ensnared. They began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. As they called to them to sacrifice to their gods, the people ate of the abominable sacrifices and bowed down to their gods (Numbers 25:1, 2). The camp itself must have been quite extensive, for it is described as being by the Jordan from Beth-jesimoth even to Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab (Numbers 33:49). The word Shittim is an abbreviation of Abel-shittim. It has been identified as Tell el-shamman in the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Trees still fringe the upper terraces of the Jordan with a green border. It was near Mount Peor, and the heathen god which was worshiped here was known as Baal-peor (Numbers 25:3). As soon as the spies who had been sent out from Shittim returned to the camp, Joshua lost no time in making the final preparations to cross Jordan. He rose early on the next morning and commanded the

Israelites to move to the banks of the Jordan. At this point they paused before they passed over into Canaan.

*2. Why did the Israelites stay three days at the side of Jordan? 3:2*

In the first place, Israel was preparing to pass into an enemy's country. They not only had an army to prepare, but there were all the people (including wives and children) and all their possessions to move. The river had first of all to be crossed. Hence, it must have been necessary to make many preparations. This would easily occupy two or three days. Moreover, at this time Jordan was high and was seen to overflow its banks, so it was impossible to cross the fords. They were obliged to wait until this obstruction was removed. These three days were in addition to the three days which they had spent in waiting for the return of the spies.

*3. Who were the priests, the Levites? 3:3*

We are not to understand these as ordinary Levites, but the Levitical priests who were entrusted with the Ark. According to Numbers 4:4, the Kohathites were appointed to carry the holy vessels, which included the Ark of the Covenant, on the journey through the desert. It was the priests, however, and not the Levites who were the true bearers and guardians of the holy things. We may see this from the fact that the priests had first of all to wrap up these holy things in a careful manner before they handed them over to the Kohathites. Thus, they might not touch the holy things and die. On solemn occasions, when the Ark was to be brought out in all its full significance and glory, it was not the Levites but the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Priests were the direct descendants of Aaron. Aaron was the son of Kohath, who was one of three sons of Levi. The Levites were descendants of Levi and might have been from the

family of Gershon or Merari as well as the family of Kohath. To identify these Levites as being full priests would be a mistake. We might call them priestly Levites inasmuch as they had the responsibility to carry the holy vessels which were under the direct care of the priests. The distance between the people and the Ark was set at two thousand cubits. Two thousand cubits would be equivalent to three thousand feet, making the distance something like three-fifths of a mile. During the wilderness wandering it was customary for the standard of the tribe of Judah to be carried at the forefront of the band. Those who marched with him were in this first group and then followed along the sons of Gershon and Merari who carried the curtains, boards, and other parts of the Tabernacle itself. Behind these Levites came the standard of Reuben and with him were those who marched in his contingent. It was only at this point that the Kohathites moved forward bearing the vessels of the sanctuary. They in turn were followed by the standard of the camp of Ephraim and those with him. In the final group in the normal order of march were those associated with the camp of Dan. This crossing of the Jordan was an unusual march, and the Ark was set far in the forefront.

*4. Why did the Ark go before the people? 3:4*

The Ark was carried at a distance before the people not so much to show them the road as to make a road for them. In dividing the Jordan, God was leading them to Canaan by a way which they had never traversed before, i.e. by a miraculous way. The Ark was kept in the sanctuary, the Tabernacle, their holy meeting place. The chamber housing the Ark was called the Holy of Holies. The Ark itself was the holiest of all the holy furniture in the holy place. As such, it signified the very focal point of God's meeting place with the people of Israel. When

it led them in crossing Jordan, it was thought God Himself was going before them.

5. *Of what did the people's sanctification consist?* 3:5

This sanctification did not consist in their washing their clothing, for there was not time for this. Neither did it consist in merely changing their clothes, which might be a substitute for washing (Genesis 35:2). This consecration was more than the abstinence from connubial intercourse (Exodus 19:15), for this was only the outward side of sanctification. It consisted in spiritual purification also. This was turning the heart to God, in faith and trust in His promise, and in willing obedience to His commandments. Only in such a frame of heart and mind would Israel be prepared for God's leading them into the land of promise.

6. *How was God to magnify Joshua?* 3:7

Joshua was to be glorified before Israel. The miraculous guidance of the people through the Jordan was only the beginning of the whole series of miracles by which the Lord put His people in possession of the Promised Land and glorified Joshua in the sight of Israel in the fulfillment of his office as He had glorified Moses before. Moses was accredited in the sight of the people as the servant of the Lord in whom they could trust by the miraculous division of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:31). Joshua was accredited as the leader of Israel, whom the Almighty God acknowledged as He had His servant Moses, by the similar miracle, the division of the waters of Jordan.

7. *What was the Ark?* 3:8

The Ark of the Covenant is described by several different titles. Some of these are listed here as follows:

1. "Ark of God" (I Samuel 3:3)
2. "Ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 25:22)
3. "Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah your God" (3:3)

It was something like a chest. The dimensions were given as follows in Exodus 25:10:

1.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cubits long
2.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cubits high
3.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cubits broad

Converting the cubit into feet and inches, we would find the Ark was three feet and nine inches long, two feet and three inches high, and two feet and three inches wide. The chest was constructed of acacia wood which was a fine grained, light and wear-resistant wood found in the Sinaitic area. All of it was overlaid with gold, and it was provided with rings at the four corners through which staves could be thrust enabling carriers to pick up the Ark and move it very handily. Across the top of the Ark was a mercy seat, evidently something like a lid since the dimensions given are the same as the width and length of the Ark. \*Above the mercy seat were two angelic forms whose wings reached out over the mercy seat and touched in the middle. This central piece of furniture of the Tabernacle symbolized the abiding presence of God among His people. As it was carried before the armies of Israel, it signified their God was leading them when they crossed over into Canaan.

8. *Where were the priests to stop with the Ark?* 3:8

When the priests came to the bank of the Jordan, they were to stand still. They were to form a dam as it were against the force of the water which was miraculously arrested in its course and piled upon a heap. It took a great deal of faith for these men to step into the swirling waters of the flooded river, but their faith was rewarded by a miraculous intervention on the part of the triune God. As these priests stood there while the thousands of Israelites swarmed across the river, they stood as a symbol of God's abiding presence with His people. Only after men, women and children, flocks and herds had crossed over into



Canaan were the priests themselves to come up out of the Jordan into the Promised Land.

9. *What significance was there in the use of the Ark?* 3:8

Moses had divided the Red Sea by stretching over it his rod; Joshua was to do the same to the Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark had been the appointed symbol and vehicle symbolizing the presence of the Almighty God since the conclusion of the covenant. Whenever the ordinary means of grace are at hand, God attaches the operations of His grace to them; for He is a God of order, who does not act in an arbitrary manner in the selection of His means.

*Joshua's Instructions to the People* 3:9-13

9 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God.

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.

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

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

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 a heap.

10. *Why call Jehovah a "living God"?* 3:10

Jehovah is called a "living God," in contrast with the dead gods of the heathen. God proved Himself to be liv-

ing and watchful on behalf of His people. His being in the midst of the people did not denote a naked presence but was to a striking degree manifested in extraordinary operations. His presence was seen in the manifestations of peculiar care. The God of Israel would now manifest Himself as a living God by the extermination of the Canaanites, seven tribes of whom are enumerated, as in Deuteronomy 7:1.

11. *Who were the peoples mentioned?* 3:10b

The Canaanites were, in general, the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:1, 6). The word *Canaan* was used to describe all the land west of the Jordan. The Hittites were the descendants of Heth. The word *Hittite* is the equivalent of "son of Heth" (see Genesis 23:5; cf. 25:9). They enter into the narrative of Israel's history at various times, such as these:

- a. Abraham's day (Genesis 15:20)
- b. Spies' day (Numbers 13:29)

Some think the Hivites were villagers and that the term *Hivite* is a general term meaning "villager." At times they are confused with the Horites. No name resembling the Hivite term has yet been found in the Egyptian and Babylonian inscriptions. Of them we learn they dwelt in Shechem (Genesis 34:2), at Gibeon (Joshua 9:7), and at the foot of Hermon (Joshua 11:3). They were peaceful and commercial (see II Samuel 24:7; cf. Judges 3:3; Genesis 34:10, 23, 28, 29).

The word *Perizzite* also signified "a villager," and so corresponds with the Egyptian *fellah*. Hence the Perizzite is not included among the sons of Canaan in Genesis 10:15-19.

The Gergashites, in the Septuagint called *Gergesaios*, are also mentioned in Genesis 15:21, Deuteronomy 7:1, and Joshua 24:11; but their dwelling place is unknown.

The reading *Gergesenoï* in Matthew 8:28 is critically suspicious, although this fits them best of all.

The Amorites were inhabitants of the mountain or heights, though the derivation from *'abmin*, *summit*, is not established. They were a branch of the Canaanites, descended from Emor (Amor), who were spread far and wide over the mountains of Judah and beyond the Jordan in the time of Moses, so that in Genesis 15:16; 48:22, all the Canaanites are comprehended by the name. They were west of the Dead Sea to Hebron (Genesis 13:18; 14:13, cf. Numbers 21:13).

The Jebusites were inhabitants of Jebus, afterwards called Jerusalem.

The listing of these names on various occasions emphasizes the fact of God's judgment which was to come upon each and every one of these people. None was to be spared. All were to be dispossessed.

12. *Was the Ark considered as having authority over all the earth? 3:11*

The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is not called the ruler of the whole earth. The description of Jehovah as "Lord of all the earth" is very appropriately chosen for the purpose of strengthening confidence in the omnipotence of God. Here His government over all the elements of the world is exhibited. The Israelites had no doubt. The seas and rivers were under His control. The waters though liquid by nature became stable at His nod.

13. *Why did Joshua ask the tribes to take men from among themselves? 3:12*

The purpose for the selection of these men is made clear from the events described in chapter four. Each man was to be from a different tribe. Each of the twelve tribes was to have a man from among themselves to stand ready for Joshua's special orders. They were to select stones from the midst of the river bed and carry them out to the other

side. Since each tribe had selected a man from among themselves, each had a part in the memorial which was to be erected. These twelve men stood as representatives of the different tribes, and their participating in the endeavor together symbolized the unity which bound the Israelites in their effort to conquer Palestine.

*14. By what power were the waters to be stopped? 3:13*

The priests themselves had no power. The fact that they were standing in the water would not be sufficient reason for the waters to cease their flowing. They could not make a dam to hold back the waters. The Ark itself had no power to cause the waters to stop. It was the Lord of all the earth who performed the miracle. The fact that the priests stepped into the water demonstrated their faith in God. God chose their standing there as a symbol of the unconquerable faith through which miracles are granted.

*The Parting of the Jordan 3:14-17*

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;

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,)

16 That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a 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.

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.

15. *What is striking about the mention of the overflow of waters?* 3:15

Every attempt to explain the miracle by a natural occurrence is thereby prevented. Often a radical critic pronounces the clause a gloss, and endeavors to get rid of it altogether. The text enjoys integrity, and the statement is a matter of historical record. The fact that the Jordan was overflowing would explain why a miracle was necessary in order for the people of Israel to cross at this time. When the Jordan is flowing naturally, it is a very small stream. When the winter rains have raised the head waters, the Jordan flows through a wide extent of territory stretching from the hill country of Judea to the hill country of Perea. It actually forms a sea of water through which no group of people could cross without divine assistance.

16. *Where was the town called Adam?* 3:16

This city is not mentioned anywhere else. It is not, moreover, to be confounded with Adamah, in the tribe of Naphtali. The town of Zarethan, by the side of which Adam was situated, has also vanished. These towns were evidently located some distance upstream from the point at which Israel entered the Jordan River. It is useless to speculate that they were located at a point where the bluffs of Perea are close to the mountains of Ephraim, thus making a rather narrow passageway for the Jordan's waters. Some who would deny a miracle at this point suggest a rock slide may have dammed up the Jordan River from the north, thus enabling the Israelites to cross on dry ground. Even if God did use an earthquake or a rock slide to dam up the waters at this time, it was a miracle that the waters were stopped at the very moment when the priests stepped into the water. Such an occurrence would be a miracle of timing, but the narrative points to more than a miracle of timing. It was a miracle of

divine intervention into the affairs of man. It was performed by the prerogative and at the insistence of the Maker of heaven and earth.

*17. How long would it take this multitude of people to cross Jordan? 3:17*

It is said that the priests stood in the midst of Jordan in the bed of the river. All Israel went over upon dry ground. This could easily have been accomplished in half a day, if the people formed a procession of a mile or more in breadth. The people evidently did not pass across in single file or two abreast. They must have literally swarmed across the river in great exuberance as they saw what the hand of God was doing for them. Their anxiety about the coming campaign must have been relieved as they saw how God led them even in this initial stage of their attack on Canaan.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. Where was Israel's camp before they crossed the Jordan?
2. How long did the people of Israel wait at the edge of the Jordan?
3. How much space was between the people of Israel and the Ark?
4. List three of the seven names by which groups of the inhabitants of Canaan were identified.
5. How many men were the people of Israel to select for Joshua's special task?
6. What time of year was it when the people crossed Jordan?
7. Near what city on the north were the waters stopped?
2. By what two names was the Dead Sea identified?
9. What town in Canaan was directly opposite the point where they crossed?

## JOSHUA

10. What article of tabernacle furniture was to go before the people?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 4

- Vv. 1- 9 *The memorials of the crossing.* The purpose for the selecting of twelve men from among the tribes of Israel was finally demonstrated as each man took a stone out of the midst of the Jordan River and carried it to the western shore. Joshua himself set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant had stood.
- Vv. 10-18 *The crossing completed.* Joshua was shown to be God's appointed leader as the crossing was successfully completed. After all the people had crossed the Jordan, the priests themselves came up out of the Jordan. When the priests came up out of the Jordan River valley, the water returned to its place and flowed over all its banks as it had done before.
- Vv. 19-24 *The purpose of the memorial.* God did not perform a miracle simply to make the expedition of the Israelites an easy matter for them. What He did was accomplished in order that the Israelites might fear God and all the people of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is mighty (v. 24).

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The fathers are teachers.* God had commanded Joshua to select twelve men from among the tribes of Israel to bear stones up out of the Jordan valley. These were

to be set up as a memorial of the crossing of the Jordan River. God foresaw the day when their children would say, "What mean ye by these stones?" (v. 6). The ancestors of the Israelites would be able to remind them that this was a memorial of God's great miracle in allowing Israel to cross the Jordan on dry ground.

2. *God honors His leaders.* When Joshua did what God had commanded him to do, the Lord magnified him in the sight of all Israel. As a result of this honoring of Joshua, the people of Israel feared him as they had feared Moses all the days of his life. If Joshua had not kept God's commandment, he would not have had this honor. Similar honor will be given to all of God's servants as they live lives of faithfulness for Him.
3. *All men should know about God.* The memorial which the people of Israel erected near Gilgal on the west bank of the Jordan reminded Israel of how God had blessed them. It also stood as a testimony to all the people in the earth that the hand of the Lord is mighty (v. 24).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Memorials of the Crossing 4:1-9*

And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,

2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,

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.

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



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

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?

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.

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.

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.

*1. How long did Israel take to cross the Jordan? 4:1*

The Scripture does not tell us how many hours were consumed in crossing the last natural barrier which stood between the people of Israel and the land God had promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and their descendants. Since the people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the month and observed the Passover at the regular time—the fourteenth day of the first month, the month Abib—and some six days were evidently spent in waiting, the people must have moved across rapidly. The priests stood throughout the time, and we are led to believe the hundreds of thousands of Israelites were moved

across the river in a period of no more than several hours. Certainly they did not take a number of days to make this last journey.

2. *Who were the men Joshua commanded the people to take?* 4:2

The men mentioned here are evidently the men referred to in 3:12. Joshua gave the people some time to select the men from each of the tribes. At the time the initial order was given, he did not indicate the reason for their being selected. After they had crossed Jordan, the reason was made clear. They were to carry stones from the bed of the Jordan River to a point on the west bank where a memorial of Israel's miraculous crossing of the river was to be erected.

3. *How is the importance of the taking of twelve stones exemplified?* 4:3

The main point of the story of their crossing the Jordan is their taking twelve stones with them from the bed of the river to the opposite side to serve as a memorial. To set forth the importance of this fact as a divine appointment, the command of God to Joshua is mentioned first of all (verses 2, 3); then the repetition of this command by Joshua to the men appointed for the work (verses 4-7); and lastly, the carrying out of the instructions (verse 8). The people were not to erect a memorial to remind them of the greatness of one of their own leaders, but they were to be reminded of God's great miraculous blessing upon them.

4. *What other stones served as monuments in Bible history?*

Stones were quite often used as monuments. Some of the more famous ones are these:

1. Jacob (Genesis 28:18) going to Haran
2. Jacob (Genesis 35:14) returning from Haran

3. Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:45-47) as they parted
4. Samuel at Ebenezer (I Samuel 7:12) when the Philistines were defeated

They were sometimes consecrated with oil (Genesis 28:18). At other times, they seem merely to be set up with very little ceremony.

5. *When was the commandment given to the men?* 4:5

Although the twelve men had been selected earlier it is apparent that the commandment for them to pick up the stones was not given to them until the waters of the Jordan were stopped and the people had crossed on dry land. They must have stood about in amazement wondering what their assignment was to be as the crossing proceeded and there was nothing for them to do. When the commandment was finally given, they each must have eagerly selected a choice stone. One can imagine how they carried the stones with alacrity when they moved out to the western side of the Jordan River.

6. *What was the purpose of the memorial?* 4:7

The memorial served a didactic purpose. God was looking into future ages and making preparation for later generations. The Israelite fathers were responsible for the training and education of their children. The memorial stones would be a visible reminder of God's great guidance of Israel. The inquisitive nature of children would incline them to ask about these stones whenever they saw them. The fathers were to be prepared to recount what happened at the Jordan as the people crossed over the dry river bed.

7. *Did Joshua set up a second memorial?* 4:9

In addition to the twelve stones set up by the twelve men, Joshua set up twelve stones for a memorial on the spot where the feet of the priests had stood as they bore the Ark of the Covenant. There is nothing to warrant our calling this statement in question. We cannot set it aside as a gloss, either because nothing is said about any

divine command to set up these stones, or because of the opinion that such a memorial would have failed to achieve its object. Some say it could not possibly have remained, but would very speedily have been washed away by the stream. The water would reach where the priests stood only in flood times, and for the rest of the year this memorial would be high on dry ground. It would appear from 4:9 that two sets of stones were set up. Joshua, following the spirit of the Divine direction, caused a second set to be erected in the middle of the river on the spot where the priests had stood. Water would reach the spot only at flood times, and the memorial would thus be enabled to stand for a number of years. Some have supposed the verse to be an interpolation of later date; but, as it occurs in all manuscripts and as it is expressly stated in the Septuagint and Vulgate that this was a different transaction from the other, we must accept it as such.

*The Crossing Completed 4:10-18*

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 hastened and passed over.

11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

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:

13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the Lord unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

14 And 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.

15 And the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,

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

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

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 onto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

8. *In what way was Joshua commanded by Moses?* 4:10

These words do not refer to any special instructions which Moses had given to Joshua with reference to the crossing, for no such instructions are to be found in the Pentateuch. Such directives cannot be inferred from Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 3:28; or Deuteronomy 31:23. The words simply affirm that Joshua carried out all the commands which the Lord had given him, in accordance with the charge which he received from Moses at the time when he was first called. Of course, Moses himself was not present for the crossing of the Jordan, but all of Joshua's work was done in fulfillment of Moses' appointment of Joshua as his successor. It was Moses' wish for Joshua to succeed him as the leader of God's people. God had sealed this appointment by his marvelous encouragement to Joshua. The fact that Joshua was walking in faithfulness which was typified by Moses had been demonstrated and verified by the miracle of the stopping of the Jordan's waters.

9. *Why is reference made to both the Ark and the priests?*  
4:11

The priests were subordinate to the Ark, because, it was through the medium of the Ark of the Lord that the miracle of drying up the river had been effected. It was not by the priests but by Jehovah, the Almighty God, who was enthroned upon the Ark, that the waters were commanded to stand still. The Ark did not move by its own power. It was carried by the priests, and so both the priests and the Ark are mentioned as passing over the Jordan River.

10. *In what way did the eastern tribes pass over as Moses spoke to them?* 4:12

Once again the reader of the Scripture is not to be confused by the mentioning of Moses' speaking to the eastern tribes. He was not present when the crossing occurred, but he had given specific instructions to the three tribes who wanted to settle east of the Jordan River. His conversation with them is recorded in Numbers 32:20, 27, 28. They had agreed to go over with the other tribes and engage in the battles of conquest. When the conquest had been completed they were granted permission to return to Gilead and to settle there.

11. *Did all the armed men of the eastern tribes cross the Jordan River?* 4:13

Only about one-third of the armed men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh crossed over to the plains of Jericho. The remaining seventy thousand men who were twenty years of age or older stayed behind to take care of the women and children who were not required to cross over into the western part of Canaan. The total of men in these three tribes can be calculated from the census which was recorded in the twenty-sixth chapter of the book of Numbers.

12. *In what way did the people fear Joshua?* 4:14

The people of Israel were not afraid of Joshua. They had not been afraid of Moses. They had respected him. Josephus says when Moses died the people wept bitterly. The old men knew what a great leader he had been, and they knew that they would miss his helpful leadership. The younger people wept because they were to be deprived of the privilege of being closely associated with a great leader. The people had this same kind of respect for Joshua as God magnified him by directing the crossing in such a magnificent way.

13. *Was Joshua in charge of the priests?* 4:16

When Moses selected Joshua to be his successor, God told Moses that Joshua would stand before Eleazar, the priest, who would ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. God said that Joshua would go out and come in at the word of the high priest. Moses himself had never been required to make such inquiries of Aaron, his brother. Joshua was in this way subordinate to Eleazar, the son of Aaron. The specific command for the priests to come out of the Jordan, however, was an unusual request and Joshua was so ordered by God.

14. *How far did the flood waters reach?* 4:18

The Jordan flows through a bed known as the Ghor. It would be eight miles wide at some points. This region is normally covered with trees and reeds, and the greenery presents a striking contrast to the sandy slopes which bound it on both sides. In many places this strip of vegetation occupies a deeper portion of the lower valley. As a result, one might distinguish three different banks—the upper or outer banks which form the first slope of the great valley, the lower of middle banks embracing the strip of land which is covered with vegetation, and the true banks of the river's bed. The floods seldom reach beyond

the lower line which is covered with vegetation. On some occasions the flood may reach out beyond this line of vegetation. One traveler did find the river so swollen when he visited it that it filled the bed to the very brim and covered all the ground where the bushes grew. The rise of water takes place at the time of harvest in April and at the close of the rainy season after the snow has been melted upon Mount Hermon. These melting snows fill the Sea of Galilee until it reaches its greatest height and then the excess water flows off into the Jordan to make it a full stream as it plunges down to the Dead Sea. At such a time, the river can not be waded even at its shallowest fords; whereas this is possible in the dry season when the water is low. Only by swimming could one cross it, and then hardly at all. The spies may have crossed the Jordan and returned in this manner, but the thousands of Israelites with their women and children could not cross in this fashion. For this reason, God cut off the water and allowed them to cross over on the rocky, dry river bed. After the people crossed, He allowed the water to flow out over its usual normal banks, out across the green Ghor and perhaps even to the farthest extents of the sandy slopes which may have been eight miles in width in places.

*The Purpose of the Memorial 4:19-24*

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.

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

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?



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

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:

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.

*15. On what day did the people cross the Jordan? 4:19*

The month Abib was the first month of the Jewish calendar. In latter times this month was called Nisan. It was in this month that the Passover fell as God had given directions for its institution (Exodus 12:18). This first month of the Jewish calendar corresponds to the March and April of the Julian calendar, being the latter part of the month of March and the first part of the month of April. The crossing occurred at the end of the forty years of wilderness wandering and would thus be in the forty-first year after the people left Egypt.

*16. Where was Gilgal? 4:19*

Gilgal was the first camp established by the Israelites on the west side of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan. The place received its name from the events which are recorded in chapter 5 of Joshua. The spot must not have been far from Jericho, and it is called by the name of Geliloth in Joshua 18:17. This was one of the points on Samuel's circuit as he moved about when he judged Israel (I Samuel 7:16). It was here that Agag, the king of the Amalekites, was slain (I Samuel 15:33). At least two other places in Israel bear this same name. One was some four miles from Bethel and Shiloh (II Kings 2:1, 2; 4:38). Another is often referred to as a regal Gilgal since a king lived there. This one is mentioned in Joshua 12:23.

*17. What was the chief end of the miracle? 4:22*

The miracle effectually confirmed the authority of Joshua in the eyes of Israel. The people feared him all the days of his life as they had feared Moses. The immediate end of the miracle, however, was to enable the people to cross the Jordan quickly and easily. The indirect benefit was that the government of Joshua was established. Another benefit also revealed to the Canaanites the omnipotence of the God of Israel. The miracle also would serve as an impulse to the Israelites to fear the Lord their God always (Exodus 14:4, 18; 6:6; see also Exodus 3:19; 6:1; 14:31).

*18. What was the purpose of the memorial? 4:24*

The twelve stones were to be a sign in Israel. They were to serve as a memorial of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan to all succeeding generations.

The purpose of the memorial was really twofold:

1. That the people of the earth might know God
2. That Israel might fear God and know these truths:
  - a. The Lord's power is unlimited
  - b. The Lord's power would be used for them
  - c. Their leader, Joshua, was working under God

Although Israel was not commissioned as a nation of evangelists, they were to be concerned for foreign people; and this memorial not only was to remind the Israelites of God's power but also to help other nations to know God.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 4

1. How many men did Joshua select to carry the memorial stones?
2. What were the names of the three eastern tribes who crossed over Jordan with the main force of Israel?

3. What day of the month was it when they crossed Jordan?
4. In what month was the day of the crossing?
5. What was the name of the place where Israel first camped west of Jordan?
6. What was the purpose of the memorial for all people?
7. What was the purpose of the memorial for Israel?
8. Did Joshua put up a second memorial?
9. How many stones did Joshua put in the memorial which he erected where the priests stood?
10. Where did the men who carried stones out of the Jordan set up their memorial?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 5

Vv. 1-9 *The covenant of circumcision.* The generation of Israelites who crossed over into Canaan had not been circumcised on the eighth day after their births in the wilderness. As a result of this neglect, it was necessary for them to keep this perpetual covenant with God as they entered into a new phase of their lives under His leadership. This was done at the camp, and the place was named Gilgal signifying the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt from them.

Vv. 10-12 *The keeping of the Passover.* On the fourth day after they crossed the Jordan, the people kept the first Passover to be observed in the Promised Land. It must have been a glorious occasion as the people renewed their vows to God. After the people were situated in the land, the manna which had come to them each day during their wilderness wandering was discontinued.

Vv. 13-15 *The appearance of the captain of the Lord's host.* God manifested himself to Joshua in an unusual way as their experience in Canaan began. A man stood before him with a sword drawn. When Joshua asked him for his identity he identified himself as "the captain of the Lord's host" (v. 15).

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *No excuse can be given for disobedience.* The people may have excused themselves in various ways as they failed to keep the covenant of circumcision. They may have felt that they did not have time to perform this rite since they were perpetually wandering in the wilderness. Whatever their reason may have been it was not valid. God expected them to observe this rite, and it was necessary for them to do this before they expected God's continuing guidance upon them. Christians must realize that they too stand in an inexcusable position when they disobey God's plain commandments.
2. *Daily bread comes from God.* Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). God gave the people of Israel manna every day. He will give daily bread to the Christian. Those who want to eat must work; but when they have done their best, they should not be anxious. God feeds the birds of the air, and He knows His children's needs.
3. *God fights for His people.* God's presence with Joshua was symbolized in the form of a man with a drawn sword. God and Satan are at war. When man fights with God, victory is assured. The Christian soldier is given adequate armor (Ephesians 6), and God's Son is the captain of the Christian army (Hebrews 2:10).

## CHAPTER FIVE

*The Covenant of Circumcision 5:1-9*

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.

2 At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

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

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.

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

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 show them the land, which the Lord sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

8 And it came to pass, when they had done circum-

cising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.

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.

*1. Who were the kings of the Amorites? 5:1*

The kings of the Amorites were the lords of the various cities located west of the Jordan River. The word Amorite means specifically "the high one," and it is generally supposed that the Amorites were highlanders (Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7, 20; Joshua 10:6). Many of the cities of the Canaanites were located in high places, and this is probably a reference to the kings who ruled in the hill country. They were undoubtedly those kings which joined together in the southern coalition as they went out to fight against Joshua.

*2. What light is thrown on the question of authorship by this reference? 5:1b*

Both the King James Version and the American Standard Version translate the phrase, "until we were passed over." Some variations of meanings are found which would cause the translation to be, "until they were passed over." The majority of texts point to the first person plural form of the verb, and this is an indication that the book was written by an Israelite who was among the multitude who crossed over into the land of Canaan. Joshua would certainly fit this description, and this is substantiated evidence of his being the author of the book.

*3. Why was it necessary to stop for the circumcision of the people? 5:2*

When the people came out of Egypt, all of them had been circumcised, as distinctly affirmed in verse five. During their journey through the wilderness, circumcision

had been neglected. Since a new generation had arisen, the nation was no longer circumcised, and therefore it was necessary that circumcision should be performed upon all the men who had been born in the wilderness. This was an inviolable commandment; and if Joshua were to keep the Law perfectly, it was an act which had to be performed. It was necessary for the people to be circumcised before they could eat of the Passover. This was especially specified, as Moses gave the directives about the first Passover (Exodus 12:48).

4. *Why had circumcision been neglected in the wilderness?* 5:4

As the covenant of the Lord with the fathers was broken, the sons of the rejected generation were not to receive the covenant sign of circumcision. Nevertheless, this abrogation of the covenant with the generation which had been condemned was not a complete dissolution of the covenant relation, so far as the nation as a whole was concerned. The whole nation had not been rejected, but only the generation of men who were capable of bearing arms when they came out of Egypt. The younger generation who had grown up in the desert were to be delivered from the ban. Some students of the Scriptures have suggested that the people did not have time to perform the rite of circumcision since the people were constantly on the march through the wilderness. A close study of their journey will reveal they were at some forty-one different places and they wandered for nearly forty years. They had an average of almost a year to spend in each place. They surely had time to take care of this important matter if they had been so inclined. They must have felt that since they had disobeyed God and were doomed to die in the wilderness it would be a mockery for them to keep this sign of the covenant.

5. *How many were circumcised?* 5:5

The number of persons to be circumcised is estimated, by some, at a million. According to the general laws of population, the whole of the male population of Israel, which contained only 601,730 of twenty years of age and upwards, besides 23,000 Levites of a month old and upwards, when the census was taken a short time before in the steppes of Moab, could not amount to more than three million in all. Of these between birth and sixty years of age perhaps one half were thirty-eight years old. They would have been born before the sentence was pronounced upon the nation at Kadesh, and for the most part before the exodus from Egypt. These had already been circumcised. Consequently, the proportion between the circumcised and the uncircumcised was one to two. The operation could, therefore, be completed without any difficulty in the course of a single day.

6. *How could Canaan be a land of milk and honey?* 5:6

Their food was produced where grass and flowers abound. These provided nectar for the bees. It was well-watered and good for grazing cattle, sheep, and goats (Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 6:3; Deuteronomy 32:14; Judges 14:8; Matthew 3:4). These animals would produce milk, and thus it could be said that the land literally flowed with milk and honey. The expression is a quaint way of saying that it was a highly productive land.

7. *How long did the men remain in the camp?* 5:8

The Scripture says the men stayed in their camp "till they were whole." This was probably at least a period of three days since we learn from other records that the rite of circumcision left the men sore for at least this long a period of time (Genesis 34:25). Such was the case in the days of Jacob and his sons when the men of Shechem submitted to the ordinance. The time they stayed in their



camp would have hardly been much longer than this inasmuch as they did participate in the Passover which fell on the fourteenth day of the first month. The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and there would thus be only a four-day period between these two events.

8. *What was the "reproach of Egypt"?* 5:9

Two unsatisfactory suggestions have been made, as follows:

a. As slaves (Genesis 34:14; I Samuel 17:26)

b. As taunted (Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28)

The reproach probably was the sentence which rested on Israel as the nation was condemned to wander restlessly about and to die in the wilderness. The reproach was involved in the thoughts and sayings of those who would believe that the Lord had brought the Israelites out of Egypt to destroy them in the desert (Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13, 16; Deuteronomy 28). This was constantly on the mind of Moses, and he made reference to it as apparent failure repeatedly faced the nation he was leading. After they had crossed over into the Promised Land, there was no more danger of this happening; and so the reproach was rolled away from them.

9. *Where was Gilgal?* 5:9b

The word *Gilgal* means "rolling." The name was given to the place as a means of recalling what had transpired at that point. The place was also known as "the hill of the foreskins" (Joshua 5:3) or Gibeath-haaraloth. The place must not have been far from Jericho, for it was here that the Israelites first encamped after they crossed the Jordan. It was here that they set up the twelve stones as a memorial, and it was here that they made preparations to attack Jericho. Two other places in the Promised Land bear the name; one is known as the Gilgal of Elijah and

Elisha (II Kings 2:1, 2; 4:38). This was a locality some four miles away from Bethel and Shiloh in the hill country of Ephraim. There is another spot known as regal Gilgal in the American Standard Version (12:23). This reference speaks of the king of Goiim in Gilgal, and it is believed that the Goiim probably means the nomadic nations who had been driven away by Joshua and settled in a particular unknown spot in Canaan.

*The Keeping of the Passover 5:10-12*

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.

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.

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 of the land of Canaan that year.

*10. Could the Passover be kept on the fourteenth day of that month? 5:10*

The circumcision of the people was performed on the day after the crossing of the Jordan. According to 4:19, the crossing was the tenth day of the first month. Now, as the Passover was kept on the fourteenth (v. 10), the two accounts are said to be irreconcilable. The account of the circumcision is said to have been set down as a later and unhistorical legend. Several objections are made to the historical credibility of this account. One is that the suffering consequent upon circumcision made a person ill for several days, and according to Genesis 34:25 was worst on the third day, so that the people could not have kept

the Passover on that day (see Leviticus 15:1 ff.). Genesis 34:25 by no means proves that the pain was worst on the third day. Even if this were the case, it would not prevent the keeping of the Passover. The lambs could have been killed and prepared by the thousands of men who had been circumcised as children in Egypt. Those who were still unwell could join in the meal, since it was only Levitical uncleanness and not disease or pain which formed a legal obstacle to this (Numbers 9:10 ff.).

11. *What day was the "morrow after the Passover"?* 5:11

In Numbers 33:3, this phrase refers to the fifteenth of Nisan. Here it must be understood as signifying the sixteenth. The produce of the land, of which they ate not only on that day but according to verse 12 throughout that year, was both the corn of the previous year, and the produce of that same year. This would be new corn, and they were not allowed to eat any of that until it had been sanctified to the Lord by the presentation of the wave sheaf on the second day of the Passover (Leviticus 23:11). The fact that both the old corn and the parched corn are mentioned in the same verse throws some light on the abundant crops which grew in the land. The Israelites were able not only to eat of the produce of the present year, but there was produce left over from the previous year. It was a good land which God had promised to them.

12. *When did the manna cease?* 5:12

Special prominence is given to the words, "in the self-same day," because not only did the eating of the new corn commence on that day, but from that day forward "the children of Israel had manna no more." This statement is evidently related to Exodus 16:35 and must be understood according to that passage as signifying that on this day the gift of the manna entirely ceased (Exodus 16:14-36; Psalms 78:25; John 6:31, 49, 58; Revelation 2:17). God had

abundantly provided for His people all during the days of the wilderness wanderings. Each day they had a supply of manna to form the mainstay of their diet. On the day before the Sabbath they gathered a double portion. It did not spoil as they kept it over the Sabbath day. Whenever they tried to become greedy and gathered a double supply during the week, the manna spoiled and would not keep for them. This was a miraculous provision God had made. When they got to the land of promise, there was no need for this special providence.

*The Appearance of the Captain of the Lord's Host 5:13-15*

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?

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?

15 And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

*13. Who was the captain of the host of the Lord? 5:14*

The person who appeared neither belonged to the Israelites nor to their enemies. He was the captain of the army of the Lord, i.e., of the angels. "The Lord's host" does not mean the people of Israel, who were just at the commencement of their warlike enterprise. Although the hosts of Israel who came out of Egypt are called "the hosts of the Lord" in Exodus 12:41, the Israelites are never called the host or army of the Lord (in the singular).

"The host of the Lord" is synonymous with "the host of heaven" (I Kings 22:19; and signified the angels, as in Psalms 148:2 and 103:21). Some students of the Bible believe this "captain" was the second person of the trinity, the Son of God, who is called the Captain of the salvation of the believers (Hebrews 2:10). It seems better, however, to view this "captain" as the Angel of the Lord, who appeared first to Hagar when she fled from Sarah. This angel was recognized as a manifestation of God in one aspect of His being.

*14. Did Joshua recognize this Angel as God? 5:14b*

Joshua fell down upon the ground and "did worship." He recognized him at once as the Angel of the Lord, who was a special manifestation of God. This is more than the giving of reverence upon the part of a dependent to a superior or king (e.g. II Samuel 9:6; 14:33). He recognized him as something more than man, a superior being. The angel accepted his adoration, something the angel would not receive from John on Patmos (Revelation 22:9). Such reception of worship would have caused Joshua to know immediately that before him was standing a divine being. Joshua was facing a severe test as the people of Israel were approaching the strongly fortified city of Jericho. He would need to know that they who were for Israel were greater than they who were against them (II Kings 6:16).

*15. What was the purpose of this appearance? 5:14c*

The object of the divine appearance was indicated by the drawn sword in the hand (cf. Numbers 22:31) by which He manifested himself as a heavenly warrior. The drawn sword contained in itself a practical explanation. God was saying that He had a heavenly army to make war upon the Canaanites and to assist Joshua and his people. Such a theophany would give great encouragement to Joshua.

16. *Was this a vision?* 5:15

It was not in a vision that this appearance took place. It was an actual occurrence belonging to the external world verified by Joshua's senses. He saw the man with the drawn sword at a certain distance from himself. He went up to him to address him, an act that would be perfectly incompatible with an inward vision. He entered into conversation with the man. He heard him reply to his questions.

17. *What are the interesting details of this appearance?*  
5:13-15

The following details of this occurrence are worthy of noting:

- a. A man—Genesis 12:7; 18:2; cf. Exodus 3:2, 6; John 1:18
- b. A sword—cf. Genesis 3:24; Numbers 22:31
- c. Prince of the host of the Lord—Jeremiah 5:14; 15:16; Isaiah 6:3; Psalms 24:10; 80:7, 19. (see also I Samuel 1:3; I Kings 22:19)
- d. Joshua's attitude was like others:
  1. Abraham—Genesis 17:3
  2. Moses—Exodus 3:6
  3. Manoah—Judges 13:22

We also read later that this Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim with a message for Israel (Judges 2:1).

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 5

1. What two names were given to the inhabitants of the Promised Land?
2. What instruments were used in performing the rite of circumcision?
3. What name was given to the place where the people of Israel were circumcised?

4. On what day of the month was the Passover held?
5. When did God stop giving manna to the people?
6. What instrument of war did the man who appeared to Joshua have in his hand?
7. What title did the man give to himself?
8. How did Joshua act in the presence of the man?
9. What military title is given to the man?
10. What article of clothing was Joshua told to remove from himself?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 6

- Vv. 1-11 *Instructions for attacking Jericho.* God gave explicit instructions to Joshua as he attacked Jericho. The men who bore the Ark of the Covenant were to go before the people along with priests who were to blow their trumpets. An advanced guard of soldiers was to lead the way, but the host was to proceed noiselessly until they were given the order to shout.
- Vv. 12-21 *The city destroyed.* The strategy for the campaign was not one which men would devise. The circling of the city for seven days was God's plan, and He blessed the obedience of the people with complete victory.
- Vv. 22-27 *The sparing of Rahab.* Joshua did not forget the promise which the two spies had made to Rahab. He ordered them to go into her house and to bring out all that were with her. Only the vessels of brass and iron, the silver and the gold were spared and put into the treasury of the house of the Lord. When the campaign was completed, Joshua pronounced a curse upon anyone who would rebuild Jericho.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God's ways are not man's ways.* Joshua must have thought it strange that he was not given directions for drawing up his army in groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. God did not tell him how to position his archers or to station his lancers. Instead he received directions for lining up the people and ordering them to march around the city.
2. *Firstfruits belong to the Lord.* A standing order in Israel provided for the people giving back to God the first crops which they raised in a field. They also were to give God the first beasts born to their cattle. Their firstborn sons were to be redeemed at great cost to themselves. God had ordered them to take nothing of the spoils of Jericho. The first city they conquered belonged to God. Everything in it was dedicated to Him. Such sacrificial giving ought to be the earmark of a Christian. He should give God the first and best part of everything—time, talent, and treasure.
3. *God-fearing men are honest.* The spies had made a promise to Rahab. Joshua arranged for them to keep this promise. A Christian man's word should be as good as his bond. By such honest activities God's people gain a good reputation in the communities where they live. Lives of this nature enable Christian people to fill the role of cities set on hills and candles placed on candlesticks. Thus Christ's followers obey His command to let their lights so shine that others may see their good works and glorify their Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:15, 16).



## CHAPTER SIX

*Instructions for Attacking Jericho 6:1-11*

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

2 And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

9 And the armed men went before the priests that

blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

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.

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.

1. *Why was Jericho "straitly shut up"? 6:1*

The strongly fortified city of Jericho was shut up tightly because of the fear of the Israelite people which gripped the inhabitants. When all the kings of the Amorites who were on the side of the Jordan westward and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, their hearts melted. There was no spirit in them any more because of the children of Israel (Joshua 5:1). These pagan people knew the Israelites were blessed by God himself. The actual Hebrew text says Jericho "did shut and was shut up," an emphatic way of saying it was tightly closed against anyone going out or anyone coming into the city. The inhabitants were expecting an attack, and they were trying to prevent any infiltration of the enemy by securely locking up the city. They were also preventing any of the inhabitants giving aid to the Israelites or surrendering to them.

2. *What was the angel's commission? 6:2*

All the Israelite men of war were to go around the town once a day for six days. As they marched in this manner around the city, seven priests were to carry seven jubilee trumpets before the Ark. This implies that the Ark itself was to be carried around the city in solemn procession. On the seventh day they were to march around the town

seven times, and the priests were to blow the trumpets. When there was a blast on the jubilee horn, the people were to raise a great cry. Then the wall of the town would fall down.

3. *What were the seven trumpets?* 6:4

The "trumpets of rams' horns" are the same as the "rams' horn" in verse five. They were not the silver trumpets of the priests (Numbers 10:1 ff.), but large horns, or instruments in the shape of a horn, which gave a loud far-sounding tone (see Leviticus 23:24; 25:11). These horns were not the trumpets which were blown to signal the beginning of a march. They were the horns which were sounded as feast days were announced. The use of these horns for this predominantly military engagement would give a religious significance to the conquest of Jericho.

4. *In what order were the people to march?* 6:7-10

The Ark, with the priests in front carrying the trumpets of rams' horns, was to form the center of the procession. One portion of the fighting men was to go in front of it; the rest, to follow after. The priests were to blow the trumpets every time they marched around during the seven days. It was not until the seventh time of going around, on the seventh day that the people were to raise the war cry at the command of Joshua. Then the walls of the town were to fall.

5. *Why were the people to keep silent until the horns were blown?* 6:10

The people were not to depend upon themselves at all for the conquest of the city until God had wrought His mighty act of deliverance. The sound of the trumpets of rams' horns was to serve as a signal for the raising of the great war cry by the people of Israel. The blowing of a trumpet is frequently introduced into the writings of the prophets. The trumpet signaled the manifestation

of the Lord in great judgments. The blowing of the trumpets and the raising of the war cry of Israel would encourage her soldiers to rise and fight. It would also throw terror into the hearts of the enemies.

*The City Destroyed 6:12-21*

12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord

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 rearward came after the ark of the Lord, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

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

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.

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.

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.

18 And ye, in all 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.

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.

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.

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.

6. *Why did they rise early on the seventh day?* 6:15

The people of Israel were to march around the city of Jericho seven times on the seventh day. The city itself was about a quarter of a mile long and about an eighth of a mile wide. The circumference of the city would thus be almost three quarters of a mile. Since the people would need to stay far enough away from the city walls to prevent their being struck by stones and arrows, the circle that they would use in their march around the city would be considerably longer. This would mean that the distance they traveled would be quite extensive, and it would be necessary for them to start at the dawning of the day in order to encompass the city seven times in one day.

7. *Was anything to be saved?* 6:17

Because the Lord had given Jericho into the hands of the Israelites, they were to consecrate it to Him as a ban—that is, a holy thing belonging to Jehovah. It was not to be touched by man, as being the first-fruits of Canaan (see Leviticus 27:28, 29). Rahab, alone, was excepted from this ban, along with all who belonged to her, because she had hidden the spies. The inhabitants of an idolatrous town laid under the ban were to be put to death, together with their cattle. All the property in the town was to be burned, as Moses himself had enjoined on the basis of the law in Leviticus 27:29. The only exceptions were metals—gold and silver and the vessels of brass and iron. These were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord—the

treasury of the Tabernacle—as being holy to the Lord (v. 19; cf. Numbers 31:54).

8. *Why was Jericho delivered miraculously?* 6:20

Jericho was the first and largest of the Canaanite cities. If the Israelites went out and conquered this city on their own and then conquered the remaining towns on their own, they would be led to believe they had wrought the deliverance by themselves. Now that the Red Sea had been crossed under the leadership of Moses and the Jordan River had been crossed under the leadership of Joshua, there could be no question after the fall of Jericho but that God was leading them in strange paths and over seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

9. *Is there a natural explanation for Jericho's fall?* 6:20b

Different attempts have been made to explain the miraculous overthrow of the walls of Jericho as a natural occurrence. Some suggest it was done by an earthquake, by mining, or by sudden storming. They suggest that the inhabitants had been thrown into a false security by the strange procession repeated day after day for several days and so were quite unprepared. Such humanistic explanations really deserve no serious refutation. All of them are arbitrarily forced upon the text. The destruction of Jericho was a miracle wrought by the hand of God. There is no natural explanation sufficient to account for all the aspects of the great victory won by Israel at Jericho.

10. *Why were Jericho's inhabitants and possessions utterly destroyed?* 6:21

This first town was offered as a sacrifice unto Jehovah. In some of the other towns, the cattle were taken as booty. This town, however, was the first, and it was completely destroyed as an offering unto Jehovah. Since Jericho was devoted to the Lord completely, it was treated as something which a man would devote to God. The rules for handling these materials were laid down in the Law. No devout

thing that a man devoted to God could be sold or redeemed. It was treated as the tithe of the land which belonged completely to God. Man had nothing to do with it after it was devoted to God. For this reason nothing in Jericho was to be saved and used by the people.

*The Sparing of Rahab 6:22-27*

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

27 So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

*11. Why was Rahab left without the camp? 6:23*

After the walls of Jericho fell down flat and the people went up into the city every man straight before him to take the city, Joshua sent the two men who had

spied out the country to rescue Rahab. They had entered into a covenant with her promising to spare her if she would gather everything she had into her house and identify her house by displaying the cord of scarlet thread by which she had helped them to escape. These men thought Rahab had kept her part of the agreement. She had brought her father, mother, and brethren to her house. Everything she had was there. They brought all these people and their possessions out of the city before they burned the city with fire. Rahab was left outside the camp of Israel since she was not yet integrated into the community as a member of a particular tribe. Her mother, father, and brethren would also need to accept the laws of Israel before they could be taken into the community. Leaving them outside the camp was a precaution which they took out of the necessity of the case.

12. *What was the treasury of the house of the Lord?* 6:24

The people of Israel were told to bring out their first-fruits, tithes, and offerings to the house of the Lord. This was the means of providing for the livelihood of the priests and Levites. When they had a special need for materials in the days of Moses, they brought such an abundance that Moses had to ask them to desist (Exodus 36:5-7). It was in this same spirit that the people set apart all the silver, the gold, and the vessels of brass and iron for the use of the priests and Levites at the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle is called the "House of the Lord."

13. *How long did Rahab live among the Israelites?* 6:25

Rahab lived among the people of Israel until the time of the writing of the book of Joshua. The statement that she "dwelleth in Israel even unto this day" can only be a reference to the fact that she was alive at the time of the writing of the book. Since Rahab is presented as an adult at the time when she hid the spies this verse must have been written within the adult lifetime of Rahab herself.



Such a statement prevents our supposing that this book was written at a much later date. If the book was written by a contemporary of Rahab, there is no one in a better position than Joshua to do the writing himself. This is another indication of the fact that Joshua wrote this book.

*14. Why did Joshua announce a curse to prevent rebuilding Jericho? 6:26*

Jericho had been filled with people who were the Lord's enemies. Although their hearts melted in them, they were so hardhearted that they did not repent. The city itself was placed under the ban and was completely destroyed. To prevent a similar civilization from arising on the site, Joshua announced that the man who rebuilt the city would be cursed of God. Some feel that anyone who attempted to rebuild the city would celebrate the laying of the foundation by offering his firstborn son as a human sacrifice. He would then celebrate the completion of the project and the setting up of the gates of the city by offering his youngest son as a human sacrifice. It is better to view this as a prediction that God would smite the heirs of such an irreverent man until his heirs would be cut off—the firstborn as well as the youngest.

*15. Was the curse on Jericho ever executed? 6:26b*

It was not until Ahab's time that Hiel, the Bethelite, attempted to rebuild Jericho (I Kings 16:34). The curse included the loss of all the sons of the man who tried to remake Jericho into a fortified city. The curse was to be upon one who would lay the foundation of a wall, build the wall, and set up the gates of the wall. As the Scripture says, he laid the foundation "in Abiram his firstborn" and set up the gates "in his youngest son Segub." This was "according to the word of the Lord."

*16. How did Joshua's fame become known? 6:27*

God said to Joshua, "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (1:5). God kept His promise.

The Lord was with Joshua. He enabled Israel to cross the Jordan River on dry ground at Joshua's order. He caused the walls of Jericho to fall down when Joshua obeyed His commandments. Such great acts of power as these were to be talked about in all the cities of Canaan. Reports of these events had caused the hearts of the people to melt. Rahab said the people had heard how the Lord had dried up the water of the Red Sea when the people of Israel came out of Egypt. They had heard about the conquests on the east side of the Jordan as Israel defeated Sihon, king of Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Travelers going from village to village would carry the news of the latest victories. The things which God was doing through His people were known by all the Canaanites. Joshua's name was on the lips of all the people. His victories had made him famous, and the people of the land were afraid of him.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 6

1. How many times were the Israelites to circle Jericho on each of the first six days?
2. How many priests were to go before the Ark?
3. On what instrument were they to blow?
4. What article of Tabernacle furniture were the priests to carry with them?
5. How many times were the Israelites to circle Jericho on the seventh day?
6. How many times did they circle the city altogether?
7. How many people were spared when Jericho was destroyed?
8. What materials were spared from the destruction of Jericho?
9. What was done with the material which was spared?
10. What loss would be suffered by anyone who rebuilt the city?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 7

- Vv. 1- 5 *The Israelites beaten.* Achan, a man of Judah, took some of the material which was placed under the ban; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people. As a consequence, when they went up to fight against Ai, the men of Ai defeated the men of Israel. This was a severe blow to the morale of the people. They had crossed Jordan in high spirits, and they had overthrown Jericho completely. Any feeling of strength was drained from them as they were driven away from Ai.
- Vv. 6-15 *Joshua's complaint and the Lord's answer.* Joshua fell on his face before the Ark of the Covenant and cried to the Lord. He was distressed by the defeat which they had suffered. God told him that the defeat had come because there was sin in the midst of the people of Israel. They could not march to victory under God's leadership until they had removed the sin from among them.
- Vv. 16-21 *Achan's confession of sin.* God pointed out the sinner, and the man was confronted by his accusers. He confessed that he had coveted the Babylonish garment, shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold. He had taken them and had hidden them in the midst of his tent.
- Vv. 22-26 *The sin purged from Israel.* The men of Israel took the spoils from the tent of Achan and "laid them out before the Lord" (verse 23). The people then took Achan and stoned him to death. A great heap of stones was raised

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

over the place and the spot was called the Valley of Achor — meaning the valley of trouble.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Sin is a reproach to any people* (Proverbs 15:34b). Even the victorious armies of Israel could not continue to win their battles when sin came among them. Israel had gone against Ai in great confidence. They felt they would be able to take the city without throwing all their forces against it. They had ordered only two or three thousand men to go up and smite the city. When they were utterly defeated, they learned they could not sin and walk with God. The same thing is true with nations and individuals today.
2. *Covetousness is idolatry*. Achan said he had coveted the Babylonish garment, the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold. Covetousness is an overwhelming desire to possess something. Achan's desire to have these spoils of war led him to disobey the plain prohibition of God which stipulated nothing was to be taken as spoils of war by the people of Israel. Even today many people make shipwreck of the faith as they are lured into sin by covetousness, "which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5b).
3. *The wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23a). In these days of spiraling inflation when one round of price increase brings a round of wage increase and a round of wage increase brings a round of price increase, there is still one man whose wage is the same. That man's name is sinner, and his wage is death. Achan was stoned to death because of his sin of stealing the spoils which belonged to God.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

*The Israelites Beaten 7:1-5*

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.

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.

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 labor thither; for they are but few.

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

5 And the men of Ai smote of them 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.

*1. Who was Achan? 7:1*

Achan is described as the son of Carmi. The head of his family was Zabdi, who was an heir of Zerah, a leading man in the tribe of Judah. Achan is called Achar in I Chronicles 2:7, and Zabdi is called Zimri in I Chronicles 2:6. These names are very similar and are evidently forms of the same names. By this one sinful act, Achan fell into disgraceful infamy. His name became synonymous with covetousness and sin. It was especially shameful for the man to be of the tribe of Judah, the leading tribe among the people of Israel, and set this bad example. Judah led in the order of march. If Achan were a soldier and

marching in the forefront of the host of Israel, he would have access to the spoils of war before many others would reach them. Hence, as a leader, he had greater temptation. Although the value of the materials which he took were not great, the fact that his sin was committed after God had granted wonderful victories to the people and promised them full use of the land of Canaan makes it especially despicable.

## 2. *Where was Ai?* 7:2

This town was situated east of Bethel. Bethel was originally called *Luz* (Genesis 28:19), a place on the border of Ephraim and Benjamin (16:2; 18:13). It is frequently mentioned and was well known at a later time as the city in which Jeroboam established the worship of calves. The site was inhabited again after the captivity. Ai has been preserved in the very extensive mound called *et-Tell*, about one and one-half miles from Bethel, and on the east of the road which leads from Jerusalem to Sichem (Nablus).

We may say this of Ai:

1. It dominated the road to Jerusalem
2. It commanded the approaches to the country
3. It involved the fate of Bethel

Of the name we may say Ai means "the heap." "An everlasting tounge," says Wycliffe; in Hebrew, "*Tel*," always appears with the article, *the Tel*, or *the Heap*. For a long time modern archaeologists sought in vain for the site of Ai. A likely location was excavated in 1933 by Mme. Judith Marquet-Krause, and most recently Dr. Joseph Callaway of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. After two seasons of excavations at *Khirbet et-Tell*, a height near Deir Dibwan, Israel, Dr. Callaway reported it is now possible to dismiss speculation about locating Ai at a site other than this one ("Evidence on the Conquest of Ai," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Volume LXXXVII, Part III, September, 1968, p. 315).

3. *Where was Bethel?* 7:2b

Bethel was ancient Luz (see Genesis 28:19; cf. Genesis 12:8; 13:3, 4; 35:7). It was named by Jacob (see Genesis 28:19; 35:14, 15). This was the name used after the conquest (Joshua 16:1, 2; Judges 1:22-26). Bethel lay about one and one half miles west of Ai. The location was about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Near here Abraham had camped (Genesis 12:8; 13:3). The name means "house of God." Bethel belonged to the Benjamites as they settled in the land, but its history was dominated by the people of Ephraim. The area is dominated by ruins now called Beitin, excavated in 1934 by a joint expedition of the Pittsburgh Zenia Theological Seminary and the American Schools of Oriental Research under the direction of William Albright.

4. *Why did the spies suggest sending only a few warriors?*  
7:3

Once again Joshua had used the usual military strategy in spying out the city to be attacked. These men had gone up and looked over the situation at Ai. When they came back, they suggested it would be unnecessary to send all six hundred thousand soldiers of Israel against the city. It was their recommendation that only two or three thousand soldiers would be a sufficient force to take Ai. The basis of their suggestion was the fact that there were only a few people in the city. They were also flushed with victory at Jericho and must have felt invincible.

5. *What was the result of the attack?* 7:5

Following the advice of the spies, Joshua sent about three thousand men to attack Ai. They fled from before the people, and the men of Ai smote about thirty-six of them. They chased them away from the city and attacked them all the way down from the heights to which they had ascended. The hearts of the people of Israel now

melted and became as water even as before the hearts of the Canaanites had melted for fear of the approaching invaders.

6. *Where was Shebarim?* 7:5b

Shebarim was the name of the place where the Israelites were beaten by the men of Ai. The name comes from the root which means "to break to pieces" or "destroy." The area has not been definitely located in modern times, but it must have been somewhere near Ai on the slope which went down to the east from the height on which Ai was located.

*Joshua's Complaint and the Lord's Answer* 7:6-15

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.

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!

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

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?

10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

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.



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.

13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: 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.

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

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.

### 7. *Did Joshua murmur against God?* 7:6-9

Joshua and the elders of the people were affected because Israel, who was invincible with the help of the Lord, had been beaten; and therefore the Lord must have withdrawn His help. In the deepest grief, with their clothes rent (Leviticus 10:6) and ashes upon their heads, they fell down before the Ark of the Lord (Numbers 20:6) until the evening. Joshua's prayer contains a complaint (verse 7) and a question addressed to God (verses 8, 9). The complaint almost amounts to murmuring and sounds very much like the complaint which the murmuring people brought against Moses and Aaron in the desert (Numbers 14:2, 3). It is very different from the murmuring of the people on that occasion, however, for it by no

means arose from unbelief. Joshua was simply asking God why Israel had been beaten.

8. *What answer did God give to Joshua?* 7:10

God told Joshua to get up off the ground. He asked him why he was lying in that way on his face before the Ark (verse 6). The time was not a time for prayer; it was a time for action. The sin had to be purged from the midst of the people. Although Joshua did not know it, the sin of Achan was the cause of Israel's defeat. When God revealed this to him, He gave him instructions about how to proceed in getting rid of this sin from the midst of the people. When this sin was removed, Israel would be strong again.

9. *What was Israel's sin?* 7:11

The whole nation was cursed because one man had sinned. For that reason God said the nation had sinned. The specific sin was Achan's taking the material which had been placed under the ban. Things which had been devoted to God to be put into the treasury of the house of the Lord had been taken by one of the men of Israel. They had stolen. Worse than this, they had stolen from God. Achan had practiced deception. The first three clauses describing this deed—their sinning, their transgressing, and their taking of the cursed thing—depict the sin which had been committed against God. The latter three statements—they had stolen, they had dissembled, and they had put the spoil in their own stuff—described the sin they had committed in the eyes of society. It was indeed a grievous crime.

10. *What was the result of their sin?* 7:12

Because they had sinned so grievously, Israel was not able to withstand the attacks of their enemies. They turned their backs before the men of Ai. All of this occurred because God had forsaken them. A spirit of defeat and terror had evidently come upon them as they fled from

before the Canaanites. What had given promise of being an easy victory was turned into an utter rout for the people of Israel. Such a surprising turn of events makes it clear that a nation needs more than munitions in order to win a victory. They must have the knowledge that they are waging a *Bellum Justum*, and they must have the will to win. Even a small number of people with this conviction and will on the field of battle can bring total victory out of a situation which would otherwise be total defeat. When God forsakes a people, they are forsaken indeed. God had forsaken Israel on account of their sin. For this reason they were chased by the men of Ai.

11. *How were the people to sanctify themselves?* 7:13

As the people of Israel stood before Mount Sinai, they were told to sanctify themselves. At that time Moses told them to wash their clothes and to interrupt their normal way of life (Exodus 19:10-15). As Joshua prepared the people for crossing the Jordan, he commanded them to sanctify themselves. On that occasion they were told to prepare victuals for the journey (Joshua 1:11). The sanctification after the defeat of Ai was something more than any of these former periods of sanctification. Israel had sinned, and it was necessary for the cursed thing to be taken from among them. The sinners had to be punished. All of this would be implied in the sanctification of the people.

12. *Into what groups were the people divided?* 7:14

The tribes, families, households, and men formed the four classes into which the people were organized. As the tribes were divided into families, so these again were subdivided into houses, commonly called fathers' houses, and the fathers' houses again into men, i.e., fathers of families. Each of these was represented by its natural head. We picture the affair as conducted in the following manner: in order to discover the tribe, the twelve princes came

before the Lord; and in order to discover the family, the family heads had to be taken; and so on through the household until the individual was selected.

*Achan's Confession of Sin 7:16-21*

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

17 And he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarahites: and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

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.

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.

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

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.

*13. How were the selections made? 7:16-18*

In what manner the selections were made we do not know. In all probability, little tablets or potsherds were used. The names may have been written upon them, and these drawn out of an urn. This may be inferred from a comparison of Joshua 18:11 and 19:1 with 18:6, 10. Some commentators feel it was not proper for the man to be selected by lottery, but the sacred lot involved no

chance. It was under the special direction of God. This is made clear by the statement that he was the one "which the Lord shall take" (7:14).

14. *What is the meaning of the expression "give glory to God?"* 7:19

This is a solemn formula of adjuration by which a person was commanded to confess the truth before God (see John 19:24). Joshua said also, "And give him praise." His meaning was not that he should make confession, but that he should actually give praise to God by his admission of guilt. Through his confession of the truth, Achan was to render to God, the righteous Judge of all the earth, the praise and honor which were due His name.

15. *What were the materials which Achan had taken?* 7:21

Achan had taken a garment that had been in Babylonia. He had also taken silver of two hundred shekels weight and a wedge of gold. The fact that the garment was of Babylonian style indicates the exchange of commerce between Canaan and the land to the east. The fact that it was a foreign garment would also make it more valuable. Silver was the common form of medium of exchange along with the more precious ingots of gold. Abraham had bought the field and cave of Machpelah from Ephron, the Hittite, for two hundred shekels of silver (Genesis 23:15), giving us some idea of the things which Achan could buy with the fifty shekels of gold and the two hundred shekels of silver which he had stolen. His prize was of some value, but nothing to be compared with the shame which he brought upon himself and his people.

### *The Sin Purged from Israel 7:22-26*

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

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.

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.

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.

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.

*16. In what way were the spoils laid out "before the Lord"?  
7:23*

The messengers which were sent by Joshua ran to Achan's tent and found the items in the place where he had buried them. They brought these out and put them on public display. In this way they were said to be laid out "before the Lord." They were in plain sight of all. Since these items were to have been dedicated to God and put in the treasury of the Lord, this open displaying of the items would indicate they were now to be directed towards their proper use. Since God was directing the purging of the sin from Israel, it was indeed "before the Lord" that this was done.

*17. Where was the valley of Achor? 7:24b*

The valley of Achor is located southwest of Jericho and identified with Wady Deber and Wady Mukelik. The name was given to the area on account of the sin and subsequent punishment of Achan. The word means

"trouble," and the term "valley of Achor" has become proverbial for describing a situation of distress. This expression is used by Hosea (2:15) and in this setting describes the good results which comes from discipline.

18. *Was only Achan stoned?* 7:25

The singular pronoun is used to designate Achan alone as being the principal person concerned. It is obvious enough, however, that his children and cattle were stoned from what follows in the very same verse. It is true that in Deuteronomy 24:16 the Mosaic law expressly forbids the putting to death of children for their fathers' sins; and many have imagined, therefore, that Achan's sons and daughters were simply taken into the valley to be spectators of the punishment inflicted upon the father so that it might be a warning to them. But for what reason then, were Achan's cattle (oxen, sheep, and asses) taken out along with him? Certainly for no other purpose than to be stoned at the same time as he. The law in question only referred to the punishment of ordinary criminals and therefore was not applicable at all to the present special case in which the punishment was commanded by the Lord himself.

19. *Could Achan's family have participated in the crime?*  
7:24-26

Achan had fallen under the ban by laying hands upon what had been banned and consequently was exposed to the same punishment as a town which had fallen away to idolatry (Deuteronomy 13:16, 17). The law of the ban was founded upon the assumption that the conduct for which a man was to be punished was not a crime of which the individual alone was guilty, but one in which the whole family of the leading sinner and everything connected with him participated. Thus, in the case before us, the things themselves had been stolen from the booty by Achan alone; but he had hidden them in his tent, buried

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

them in the earth, which could hardly have been done so secretly that his sons and daughters knew nothing of it. By doing this he had made his family participators in his theft. They, therefore, fell under the ban along with him, together with his tent, his cattle, and the rest of his property, which were all involved in the consequences of his crime.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 7

1. What town did Israel attack after destroying Jericho?
2. What was the name of the man who sinned?
3. Of what tribe was the man who sinned?
4. How many men had Joshua sent against Ai?
5. How many men of Israel were smitten in the battle?
6. What items had been stolen from the spoils?
7. Where had these stolen items been hidden?
8. What name was given to the place where the sinner was punished?
9. Were the sinner's wife and family destroyed with him?
10. Were the sinner's oxen, sheep, asses, and tent destroyed with him?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 8

Vv. 1- 8 *Plans for attacking Ai again.* After God encouraged Joshua, he laid plans for attacking Ai a second time. On this occasion he decided to use ambushes behind the city. The main attacking force was instructed to retire from before the city expecting that the men of Ai would come out to chase them. When the men of Ai were out of the city, those who had been set in ambush would be able to go in and take the city.



## JOSHUA

Vv. 9-29 *The conquest of Ai.* Joshua's strategy worked very effectively. He set a second ambush to make sure that there would be a sufficient force to take the city after the main attacking force had withdrawn. In this way the city was completely destroyed.

Vv. 30-35 *The altar erected on Mount Ebal.* In keeping with the instructions Moses had given, the people of Israel went to the center of Canaan and erected an altar. Joshua served the Lord. He led the people to worship God in an acceptable way.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Trust and obey.* The song which is sung so often in church by this title carries a lot of meaning with it. There is no other way to be happy with God but to trust and obey. Joshua found this out as he made his second expedition against Ai. When the people had failed to obey God, they were defeated. When they purged the sin from the camp, God said to Joshua, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed . . . I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (8:1). When Joshua obeyed God, he was able to capture the city.
2. *To fight against God is to lose.* This lesson was learned by the men of Ai and Bethel as they went out to fight against the armies of Israel. They did not even take the precaution of leaving a guard in the city. We read, "There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel . . . : and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel" (8:17). Since they had won the first battle, they thought ultimate victory would surely be theirs. This is true in

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the spiritual realm as well as in the area of military engagements. Gamaliel had the wisdom to advise his colleagues to be careful, "lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:39).

3. *To God belongs the glory.* After the people had successfully attacked Ai, Joshua led them to Mount Ebal where they built an altar, wrote on it the Law of Moses, offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. Moses had commanded them to do this before he died, and Joshua kept faith with Moses. It was the natural thing for them to do after God had given them such complete victories at Jericho and Ai. Every Christian ought to give God thanks whenever a victory is won in the name of Christ.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Plans for Attacking Ai Again 8:1-8*

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:

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.

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

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:

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,

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.

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.

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.

*1. Why did God reassure Joshua? 8:1, 2*

God had given encouragement to Joshua when he first commissioned him soon after the death of Moses. He had also given him instructions and encouragement as Israel made the first attack against Jericho. Since they had entered into an ill-fated campaign against Ai at first and were utterly routed, Joshua might have fallen into deep discouragement. As a matter of fact, we know he fell to the earth upon his face and rent his clothes in deep sorrow over the defeat which Israel had suffered. It was, therefore, good for God to encourage Joshua to make this second attack.

*2. Why were the people of Israel allowed to take spoil from Ai? 8:2*

God had prohibited them from taking any spoils of war from the city of Jericho. When they made the attack against Ai, He said, "Only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves" (verse 2). The firstfruits of the land belonged to the Lord. The firstborn of man and beast belonged to God. It appears that God took the spoils of war from the first city, Jericho; but He allowed the Israelites to keep the spoils from the other cities for themselves.

3. *How many men went out against Ai the second time?* 8:3

Probably some two hundred thousand men were sent against Ai in the second campaign. As only one third of the two and one-half tribes crossed Jordan, probably about one third of the other men were required to go out to battle. From these Joshua selected thirty thousand brave men and sent them forth in the night with instructions to station themselves as an ambush behind the town and not far from it. Since the distance from Gilgal to Ai was about fifteen miles and the road runs almost straight in a northwesterly direction from Jericho through Wady Faran, the detachment sent out might easily accomplish the distance in a night and arrive on the western side of Ai before the break of day.

4. *Where were the thirty thousand men to hide?* 8:3

In a very specific way God directed the campaign against Ai. He told Joshua, "Lay thee an ambush for the city behind it" (verse 2). The spot for hiding the men must have been on the west side of the city. This would have been behind the city from the location of Joshua's camp to the east. The road that goes by Ai and leads to Bethel dips out of sight just west of Ai. The roadway is hidden from view by a ridge of broken rocks. The rocks would enable an ambush to conceal itself and yet it would not be very far from the city. If these men were hidden at the spot, they would be at an excellent position to rush into the city after the main force fled toward the Jordan Valley, and were pursued by the soldiers of Bethel and Ai.

5. *How many people did Joshua take with him?* 8:5

Joshua evidently stayed with the main force of the Israelite army. If he sent some thirty thousand for the major ambush and then later sent another five thousand (verse 12), he probably took some one hundred and sixty-five thousand men with him. This calculation is based

on the supposition that he did not demand more than a third of the total number of men available to him to take part in the campaign. This would leave four hundred thousand men to handle the military provisions and to care for the women and children.

6. *In what way was burning the city according to the commandment of God?* 8:8

God had strictly warned the people against leaving any of the idolatrous objects of worship in the land of Canaan. The people were instructed to tear down their high places, break up the images, and destroy the altars of these people. Their campaign was to be one of utter destruction. For that reason, Joshua could say that they were to set the city on fire according to the commandment of the Lord. Furthermore, God had carefully instructed them on this occasion to set an ambush behind the city. His directions with regard to the attack on Ai were quite specific, and Joshua very properly referred to his instructions for their razing the city as being according to the commandment of the Lord.

### *The Conquest of Ai 8:9-29*

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

25 And so it was, that all that fell that day, both of men and women, were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai.

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

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.

28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.

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 carcass 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.

*7. Why did Joshua number the people? 8:10*

After Joshua had sent forth the thirty thousand men to lie in ambush on the west side of Ai, he stayed with the main army himself through the night. Early in the morning he rose up and prepared his soldiers for battle. In this preparation he numbered them and evidently set them in groups and battalions so that they might wage an orderly

battle. At this time Joshua must have decided how many men he would take with him in the main force. The others would be left behind to protect the women, children, and supplies of the Israelites.

8. *Who were the elders of the people?* 8:10

The elders of Israel are not military tribunes who were called elders because of their superiority in military affairs; but, as in every other case, the heads of the people who accompanied Joshua as counselors. Neither were these elders to be compared with the officers of the New Testament church. They were the people who had reached an age in life where their experience and wisdom fitted them for places of leadership. It was to these that the younger men looked for their guidance and counsel.

9. *Was a second ambush sent out?* 8:12

Joshua evidently sent out two different groups to besiege the city and take it by surprise. After he had placed the troops on the northwest to come in behind the city opposite the direction of the attack of the main body of the Israelite army, he evidently foresaw a need for another group to cut off any possible assistance from Bethel and sent them to take up their positions southwest of Ai. Some commentators believe that a scribal error has been made here, but without sufficient grounds.

10. *Did the men of Bethel help the men of Ai?* 8:12

It is evident from verse twelve and other references that the inhabitants of Bethel, which was a very short journey from Ai, took part in the battle. Probably this was in consequence of a treaty which the king of Ai had made with them in the expectation of a renewed and still stronger attack on the part of the Israelites. Later on the kings in the South banded together in what has been called the southern coalition. At least five kings were in this league. Still later the kings in the North grouped themselves together under the leadership of Jabin, king of



Hazor. Once again several kings entered into this league. It is not unusual to find these kinds of coalitions, and it was a very natural thing for Bethel and Ai to enter in to this kind of an agreement.

*11. Where did Joshua station himself? 8:13*

Joshua evidently exposed his army in a valley which lay to the east of Ai. He must have placed himself on some promontory where his signal could be seen by those who were in the ambush. It is quite possible that he had stationed other lookouts who could pass along the signal; but wherever the army was, it must have been in a place which encouraged the king of Ai to attack.

*12. Why did the Israelites flee? 8:15*

The king of Ai was anxious to enter into the second battle with Israel. Their position was not strategically advantageous to them, and so the king felt he could win another victory. Moreover, he had defeated these men in the first skirmish, and he was not at all hesitant to join battle with them again. Joshua and the Israelites pretended they were being beaten again. They fled back toward the Jordan Valley and the wilderness from which they had come.

*13. Why did the Canaanites leave Ai unprotected? 8:17*

The first battle between the men of Ai and the Israelites had been won by the Canaanites. In the second engagement it appeared the victory was also going to be won by the king of Ai. For that reason, he mustered all his men to pursue after them. He wanted the second victory to be complete. In doing this he drew out all his men both from Ai and from Bethel. There was not a single soldier left to guard the city.

*14. How could the ambush see Joshua? 8:19*

The raising of the javelin would probably be visible at considerable distance. It may have been provided with a small flag, as both earlier and later commentators assume.

Joshua himself would hardly be in the midst of the flying Israelites, but would take his station as commander upon some height on one side. The men in ambush would have scouts posted to watch for the signal, which had certainly been arranged beforehand. They would relay the information to the others.

15. *Why were the men of Ai without power?* 8:20

The original language used the word "hands" for "power." When the ambush went into Ai and set it on fire, the sight of the city burning left the men of Ai without strength. They were so surprised and shocked that they were thrown into confusion. They did not know which way to turn. There were Israelites behind them and Israelites in front of them. Others were probably guarding the routes of escape on either side. The victory was complete for the Israelites. The sight of the city burning had a different effect upon the men of Israel. This was a signal to them to begin the slaughter of the Canaanites. As a result, the Israelites did not let any of the men of Ai escape.

16. *What was done with the king of Ai?* 8:23

The king of Ai was taken alive as a prisoner of war. The soldiers brought him to Joshua. Joshua was in the midst of the engagement and did not want to take time to give an order with regard to the disposition of the king at that time. Later on we read that the king of Ai was hanged (verse 29). His body was left there until evening. It was then taken down and buried. The law had been given in Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 with regard to such matters. The king of Ai was hanged upon a tree and then his body may have been suspended on a stake (see Numbers 25:4) until the evening. At sunset Joshua had him taken down and thrown at the entrance of the town gate. A heap of stones was piled upon him.

17. *How many men of Ai were killed?* 8:25

The total casualty list of the men of Ai numbered twelve thousand both of men and of women. These were all the inhabitants of the city. Joshua's campaign was a campaign of total annihilation, and he followed the commandment of the Lord completely. There is never any evidence that he enjoyed the bloody conquest which he waged, but it was the only way to eradicate this festering sore from the face of the earth. The cup of iniquity of the Canaanites was full, and God's vengeance fell upon them.

*The Altar Erected on Mount Ebal* 8:30-35

30 Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal,

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.

32 And he wrote thereupon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

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.

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.

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.

18. *When had Joshua been commanded to build the altar at Ebal?* 8:31

Joshua was instructed of Moses in Deuteronomy 27, that, after the crossing of the Jordan, he was to build an altar upon Mount Ebal for establishing the covenant. The fulfillment of these instructions came in this solemn act. The symbolical setting up of the law of the Lord to be the invariable rule of life to the people of Israel in the land of Canaan was a practical expression of thanksgiving on the part of the nation for its entrance into this land through the almighty assistance of God. It was also a practical acknowledgement that in the overthrow of the Canaanites thus far the nation had received a strong pledge of the conquest of the foes that still remained. The capture of the whole of the Promised Land would follow if they persevered in faithfulness to the Lord.

19. *What is the meaning of "... he wrote in the presence"?* 8:32

The law was probably written on or in the plaster with which these pillars were coated. This could easily be done, and such writing was common in ancient times. Archaeologists have seen numerous specimens of it certainly more than two thousand years old. Some are still as distinct as when they were first inscribed on the plaster. The investigation of the Egyptian monuments has shown that it was an ancient Egyptian custom first to plaster the stone walls of buildings, and also monumental stones that were to be painted with figures and hieroglyphics with a plaster of lime and gypsum into which the figures were worked. Thus it was possible in Egypt to engrave on the walls the

most extensive pieces of writing. In this manner Deuteronomy 27:4-8 must be understood, and in this manner it was accomplished by Joshua.

20. *How were the people arranged?* 8:33

We read that Joshua arranged "half of them over against mount Gerizim." These were those who had sprung from the lawful wives of Jacob—Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin (Deuteronomy 27:12). He also stationed "half of them over against mount Ebal." These were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali (Deuteronomy 27:13). Five of these had sprung from the handmaids of Leah and Rachel, to whom Reuben is added, probably on account of his great sin (Genesis 35:22, cf. Genesis 49:3, 4).

21. *What were "... blessings and cursings"?* 8:34

In Deuteronomy 27 a list of curses were brought out by Moses. They were these:

- a. Idolatry (Deuteronomy 27:15)
- b. Contempt of parents (v. 16)
- c. Removing a neighbor's landmark (v. 17)
- d. Inhumanity towards the blind, strangers, orphans, widows (vs. 18,19)
- e. Incest and unnatural crimes (vs. 20-23)
- f. Murder (vs. 24, 25)
- g. In general, against the transgression of the Law (v. 26)

There were also the following blessings in Deuteronomy 28

- a. In the city and on the field (Deuteronomy v. 3)
- b. On all births (v. 4)
- c. On the basket and on the kneading-trough (v. 5)
- d. On going out and coming in (v. 6)
- e. On the arms of Israel in contest with their enemies (v. 7)
- f. On their position among the nations (v. 9-14)

As Joshua read the words of the Law, the people had a

visual presentation of the way in which some of them would keep the commandments of God and be blessed while others would disobey God's laws and be cursed. Not everyone who begins the Christian life will be faithful unto death and be saved. Many are called, but few are chosen. Some go in the broad way to destruction, but only a few go in the narrow gate to life. So was it in the camp of Israel. Some stood to represent the blessed; others, the cursed.

22. *Could all the people hear?* 8:35

It is impossible to conceive a spot more admirably adapted for the purpose than this one. It was in the very center of the newly acquired land. None could more exactly fulfill all the required conditions. Imagine the chiefs and the priests gathered in the center of the valley. The tribes were stretching out as they stood in compact masses. The men of war and the heads of families, half on the north and half on the south, were crowding the slopes on either side. The mixed multitude was also there with the women and the children extending along in front until they spread into the plain beyond. There is no difficulty, much less impossibility, in the problem. A single voice could be heard by many thousands, the sound being shut in and conveyed up and down by the enclosing hills. People in such mountainous countries are able, from long practice, to pitch their voices so as to be heard distinctly at distances almost incredible. They talk with persons across enormous wadies, and give the most minute directions, which are perfectly understood. In doing this they seem to speak very little louder than their usual tone of conversation.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 8

1. Was Israel allowed to take spoil of war from Ai?
2. How many men did Joshua put in the first ambush?

## JOSHUA

3. How many men did Joshua put in the second ambush?
4. From what city did soldiers come to help the men of Ai?
5. What weapon of war did Joshua hold in his hand as a signal?
6. How many people of Ai fell in the battle?
7. By what means was the king of Ai killed?
8. Where did Joshua lead the people to erect an altar?
9. What did Joshua write on the stones of the altar?
10. Before what other mountain did half the people stand?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 9

Vv. 1-2 *The league of kings against Israel.* Moses had led the people in fighting against the kings east of the Jordan. Joshua had successfully fought against the king of Jericho and the kings of Ai and Bethel. The rest of the kings who were west of the Jordan gathered themselves together to form a league to fight against Joshua and Israel.

Vv. 3-15 *Deceit of the Gibeonites.* One group of the Hivites, the Gibeonites, knew the only hope they had for survival was to make peace with Joshua. These people and Rahab are the only ones we find throughout the entire length and breadth of the land who made an effort to save themselves from the destruction which was coming upon them. Although these men deceived Joshua and the leaders of Israel, they are commended inasmuch as they realized the futility of opposing the wrath of God. Joshua and the elders acted very ill-advisedly in not asking the Lord's will in the matter. They were impressed with the false evidence which

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the Gibeonites presented as proof of their having come from a great distance and failed to ask about God's will in the matter.

- Vv. 16-27 *The servitude of the Gibeonites.* Although the men of Israel might honorably have broken the covenant which they made with the Gibeonites since it was entered into under false pretenses, they chose to honor the agreement. They did not put the Gibeonites to death, but they did make them to serve in a very humble capacity. They were made to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (verse 27).

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Ask God first.* The opening statement of the Bible can mean more than a plain historical statement of fact to those who know God. God was "in the beginning." "In the beginning" was the Word (John 1:1). God should be in the beginning of every person's life. He should accept God's way while a child. God should be at the beginning of every day. He should be taken into confidences whenever we enter into a project. Joshua failed to do this. The Scripture says he, "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (verse 14). As a result he entered into an ill-advised league.
2. *Things are not always what they seem.* Man is able to concoct many disguises. Satan himself may be transformed into an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). Man is utterly fooled when he believes things which appear are framed from what we see. As Paul said, "Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). A Christian is more concerned with what a man is than what he has. He is



more interested in a man's character than in his reputation. We must dig beneath the surface to find the true realities.

3. *Dishonesty never pays.* Although the Gibeonites were spared from execution at the time they made a covenant with Joshua, they were made to do servile work. They brought upon themselves and all their descendants the stigma of being servants around the Tabernacle. They were made to cut the wood and provide the water for the people as they worshipped at the altar of the Lord.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *The League of Kings Against Israel 9:1, 2*

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;

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

#### *1. What divisions of Canaan are mentioned? 9:1*

Canaan was a land made up of hills which formed the center of the country. The Jordan River formed a valley which ran the entire length of the land. This river was on the east side of the country, and on the west side was the Mediterranean Sea. This land area is described as "all the coasts of the great sea." There were mountainous areas, and the main range was the Lebanon Mountains which were on the north of the country. By mentioning all these areas the author is giving us the impression that the league took in kings from all over the country. These were leaders of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. All of them were Canaanite people.

2. *Were these kings usually in league with one another?*

9:2

When the twelve spies came back from looking over the land they said it was a country which "eateth up the inhabitants thereof" (Numbers 13:32). This may be a reference to the fact that these kings were constantly at war with each other. Certainly they were often attacked from the east and the south as kings from Mesopotamia and the Nile regions vied with each other for control of the land. Probably these kings were not normally united; but when they had a common foe, they forgot their usual differences and entered into a pact against Joshua and the Israelites.

*Deceit of the Gibeonites 9:3-15*

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

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;

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.

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp of 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.

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

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

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,

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.

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.

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:

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.

14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

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

### 3. *Where was Gibeon?* 9:3

According to Josephus, it was 40-50 stadia from Jerusalem; and judging from its name, it was built upon a hill. It is to be found in the modern *el Jib*, about six miles to the northwest of Jerusalem. A village of moderate size, on a long chalk hill now overlooks a very fertile, well cultivated plain, or rather a basin, consisting of broad valleys and plains. The hill rises like a vineyard in the form of separate terraces. The remains of large massive buildings of great antiquity are still to be seen there. There are also some fountains and two large subterranean reservoirs. The Gibeonites lived in a city which was the head of four towns occupied by the Hivites—Gibeon, Chephirah, Bee-

roth, and Kirjath-jearim (verse 17). It was something of an independent republic (1) with elders (verse 11), (2) with no king—since none is mentioned, (3) and with a name as a royal city (10:2). It was situated at the head of the pass of Beth-horon and commanded the main route from Jerusalem and the lower Jordan Valley to Joppa and the seacoast. The town was inhabited by a numerous and brave population. Gibeon was therefore one of the most important cities of southern Canaan. A team of archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania Museum made excavations in 1960 which attest the fact of the existence of the city of Gibeon. These citizens made famous in the Bible spent a great portion of their funds to build defenses against attack. Dr. James B. Pritchard, director of the museum in the Biblical Archaeology section, reported these findings after five years of excavations at the Arab village of *El Jib*, Jordan, the site of the ancient Gibeon. The excavations were conducted in cooperation with the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. The director of the museum, Dr. Froelich Rainey said that the team of archaeologists uncovered the existence of an elaborate system of civil defense which was designed to enable Gibeon to withstand indefinite siege. Also near the town was a cemetery dating some two thousand years before Christ. This cemetery contained thirty-six rock-cut tombs which illustrated burial customs and shed light on the details of the Gibeonites' daily life, several hundred years before they made peace with the Israelites. According to the report the civil defense system involved construction of two walls which encircled Gibeon. There was also a camouflaged tunnel leading from inside the inner wall to a nearby spring which insured adequate water supply. The outer wall probably was built prior to the time when the Gibeonites made peace with Joshua. The large inner walls erected in the days of the early Israelite kings were prob-

ably erected after Gibeon was conquered by King Seshonk or Shishak in Egypt around 945 B.C. From all appearances the city of Gibeon was able to resist attacks until about 586 B.C. when the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar laid waste the city while on his victorious march to Jerusalem.

4. *Who were the Gibeonites?* 9:4

They were inhabitants of a republic which included not only Gibeon, the capital, but the towns of Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Gibeon was larger than Ai, being one of the royal cities (see 10:2), and was inhabited by Hivites, who were a brave people (10:7; 11:19). It was afterwards allotted to the tribe of Benjamin and set apart as a Levitical town (18:25; 21:17). After the destruction of Nob by Saul, the Tabernacle was removed thither; and there it remained until the building of Solomon's temple (I Chronicles 16:39; 21:29; I Kings 3:4, 5; II Chronicles 1:3 ff.). They are called Hivites in verse seven, but they were all of Canaanite background and origin.

5. *What means did the Gibeonites use to deceive Israel?*  
9:5

They had old sacks upon their asses. These were large bags, usually of hair, in which the Orientals pack their supplies for convenient transport on the backs of animals. In these were all the baggage and commodities required for the journey. Beds, boxes, provisions, pots, packages of goods, all are carried in such bags, slung over the back of the animal, one hanging at each side. Being knocked about and exposed to the weather, these saddlebags, as one might call them but for their size, suffer damage in a long journey; and hence the Gibeonites took old bags to convey the impression that a long journey had been made. They also had wine bottles, i.e., skin bottles, of which classical antiquity has afforded many representations. In

the East the wine was preserved not in casks but in earthen jars and leather bottles made of the skins of goats, oxen, buffaloes. These were turned inside out, washed, and rubbed over with warm mineral tar or naphtha. The wine would be drawn out at one of the feet by opening and closing the cord with which it was tied. This explains how the bottles could be "old," "rent," and "bound up." It also explains the caution of our Lord against pouring new wine into old bottles, lest they should be burst by the wine (Mark 2:22). The Gibeonites wore old shoes—"sandals" made of hide or palm-leaves and papyrus stalks (cf. Mark 6:9). They were "clouted," sewed with patches. The men also wore "old garments." Ambassadors usually appear in clean and decent, if not in splendid, raiment. These men broke custom to put forward their deceit. Their bread was "dry and mouldy." The Hebrew word translated "mouldy" is the same which is rendered by "cracknels" in I Kings 14:3. It denotes a kind of crisp cake. The ordinary bread, baked in thin cakes, was not made to keep more than a day or two, a fresh supply being baked daily. If kept longer it dried up and became excessively hard. It was this kind of bread which the Gibeonites produced and they indicated its hardness—hard as biscuits—in evidence of the length of the journey.

6. *Did the people of Israel go back to Gilgal by Jericho?*  
9:6

We assume that after the setting up of the Law on Gerizim and Ebal, Joshua did not conduct the people with their wives and children back again to the camp which they had left in the Jordan valley on the east side of Jericho. He must have chosen the Gilgal which was situated upon the mountains and only seven hours' journey to the south of Shechem as the future place of encampment. He probably made this the central point of all his further military operations (see II Kings 4:38; Hosea 4:15; 9:15;

12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5; cf. I Samuel 7:16; 10:8; 11:14, 15; 13:7-9). This is a spot alluded to in Deuteronomy 11:30, "beside the plains of Moreh," and near the site of Abraham's first altar (Genesis 12:6, 7). There is a spot called Jilgiliah, a few miles from Bethel.

7. *Why did the Israelites question the Gibeonites?* 9:7

God had told the Israelites to destroy completely all the people of the land of Canaan. They were given permission to make peace with nations which lived far off from the Promised Land, but they were not to make any leagues with those who lived within the borders of the country. Nothing about the costume of the Gibeonites would have caused the Israelites to suspect that they lived among them, but they were being careful as they interrogated the ambassadors. When the Gibeonites stoutly affirmed they were from a land which was quite distant, the Israelites were fooled and entered into the league with them.

8. *What was the motive of the Gibeonites?* 9:9, 10

The Gibeonites were afraid they would be destroyed. They openly affirmed this in verse twenty-four. They also vowed that they were impressed because of what God had done in destroying the kings east of the Jordan. They had heard "the fame of him and all that he did in Egypt" (v. 9b). Some commentaries feel the Gibeonites very wisely made no mention of the crossing of the Jordan River or the destruction of Jericho. If they had been from a very far country, they might not have heard of these most recent events.

9. *What was the Ashtaroth?* 9:10

Ashtaroth was an ancient city of Asia and lay east of the Jordan (Deuteronomy 1:4; Joshua 12:4; 13:12, 31). The location was in the land given to the half-tribe of Manasseh when they settled in Gilead. The town was the center of crude worship offered in adoration of Astarte

and was the capital city of Og, king of Bashan. The site of the ancient city has been identified with Tell Ashtarah and lies twenty-one miles east of the Sea of Galilee on a hill which is surrounded by a well watered plain. By calling attention to this place in particular, the Gibeonites may have been suggesting their country was in a locale beyond this point and an area which would be outside the border of the Promised Land.

10. *What is the meaning of "took of their victuals"?* 9:14

A marginal reading in the King James Version is as follows: "They received the men by reason of their victuals." There is no evidence that the men of Israel tasted of the wine or partook of the mouldy bread. The author is simply saying Joshua and his leaders were impressed by the evidence which was presented to them. They did not take time then to ask counsel of God in the matter. This was a grave mistake and led them into an unholy alliance which caused grief both to the Gibeonites and to the Israelites in later times.

*The Servitude of the Gibeonites 9:16-27*

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 neighbors, and that they dwelt among them.

17 And the children of Israel journeyed and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.

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.

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.



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

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.

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?

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.

24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, 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.

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

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

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.

### *11. How far away was Gibeon? 9:16*

Depending upon the exact location of the camp of Israel, the city of Gibeon could not have been more than a few hours' journey away from the spot where they met Joshua. If Joshua and the Israelites were encamped at the Gilgal which was in the country of Ephraim, they were indeed very close to Gibeon. Even if Joshua led the people

back to the Gilgal which was near Jericho, the Gibeonites did not have to travel more than a few hours to reach the camp of Israel. They were indeed neighbors to Israel. The Israelites came to the cities of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim on the third day after they broke camp. When the Israelites got there, they honored their covenant and let the Gibeonites live.

12. *Could the Israelites have broken their oath with justice?* 9:18

No doubt from the standpoint of strict justice the Israelite rulers would be under no obligation to observe the treaty which they had made with the Gibeonites in full faith in the truth of their word. But the princes of Israel shrank back from breaking the oath, which, as is emphatically stated in verse nineteen, they had sworn by Jehovah the God of Israel. They were afraid of bringing the name of the God of Israel into contempt among the Canaanites, which they would have done if they had broken the oath which they had sworn by their God. Some of the Israelites must have wanted to break the covenant, for we read later that Joshua restrained the people and delivered the Gibeonites out of the hand of the children of Israel so that they did not slay them.

13. *What disposition was made of the Gibeonites?* 9:21

Although the rulers of Israel let the Gibeonites live, they did not let them go unpunished. They made them to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for all the congregation of Israel. Such a phrase indicates that they were forced to do the most servile kind of labor. Their service was evidently largely connected with the offering of sacrifices at the Tabernacle. These sacrifices would demand a great deal of wood for the fire on the altar. They also called for a large quantity of water for the sanitation necessary to the offering of animal sacrifices.

14. *Did the Gibeonites cause them any trouble?* 9:22

As soon as they discovered their error, the princes were bound to do all in their power to ward off from the congregation the danger which might arise from their being drawn away to idolatry. This was the very thing which the Lord had intended to avert by commanding all the Canaanites to be destroyed. They warded off trouble by making the Gibeonites slaves of the sanctuary. Their conduct is never blamed either by the historian or by the history, inasmuch as it is not stated anywhere that the Gibeonites, after being made into temple slaves, held out any inducement to the Israelites to join in idolatrous worship. At a future time God Himself reckoned the attempt of Saul to destroy the Gibeonites as an act of bloodguiltiness (II Samuel 21:1 ff.). This latter incident is the only record we have of their bringing any grief to Israel.

15. *What prophecy was thus fulfilled?* 9:23

The Gibeonites were to perform for the congregation the slave's labor of hewing wood and drawing water for the worship of the sanctuary. This was a duty which was performed, according to Deuteronomy 29:11, by the lowest classes of the people. In this way the curse of Noah upon Canaan (Genesis 9:25) was literally fulfilled upon the Hivites of the Gibeonite republic. Their servitude was only a token of the punishment meted out to all the heirs of Canaan. God was indeed fulfilling the promise made through Noah. No word of God is void of power.

16. *How did the Gibeonites know of God's promise to Moses?* 9:24

God had made the promise to give Canaan to Abraham's seed when Abraham first left Ur of Chaldees. The promise was repeated to Jacob as he fled from Esau. The

promise must have been common knowledge not only among the Israelites, but also among the Canaanites themselves. Moses had led the people to the southern border of Canaan forty years earlier. People living in Canaan may have learned of God's promise to give the land to the Israelites at that time. More recently, Moses had led Israel in the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. The Canaanites would certainly see God was giving the land to Israel. Even if the Canaanites did not know of the exact wording of the promise, they would be able to interpret events of history and come to the conclusion that the Israelites were destined to possess the land. Their reference to the fact that it was told to them leads us to believe that they must have heard of the covenant itself.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 9

1. Name the six groups of Canaanites who came together against Joshua and Israel.
2. List five exhibits presented by the Gibeonites to prove their story.
3. Where was the camp of Israel when the Gibeonites came to them?
4. By what other name were the Gibeonites called?
5. What city in Bashan did the Gibeonites mention?
6. What other cities were associated with Gibeon?
7. What positions of servitude were the Gibeonites made to occupy?
8. Where was this service performed?
9. Were the Gibeonites performing this service when the book of Joshua was written?
10. What king of Israel broke this covenant?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 10

Vv. 1-14 *The southern coalition.* Five kings of the Amorites banded themselves together to punish the inhabitants of Gibeon because they had made peace with the Israelites. They did not attack Israel, but vented their rage on the Canaanites who inhabited the Hivite towns under the direction of Gibeon. These kings were utterly defeated by Joshua near Beth-horon in the battle where God miraculously interfered by causing the sun to stand still for a whole day.

Vv. 15-27 *The death of the five kings.* After the battle was over; Joshua made sure that none escaped, not even the kings. He did not make the same mistake as that made by Saul when he saved Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and some of the best of the spoils, even though he had been commanded to destroy them utterly.

Vv. 28-43 *The summary of the conquest.* Different towns were listed as those completely subjugated by Joshua as he led the Israelites in their victorious battles. The land which they subdued was that which stretched from Kadesh-Barnea in the south to Gibeon in the north. Joshua returned to his camp in Gilgal after the southern coalition was defeated.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Politics make strange bed-fellows.* The combination of the five kings of the Amorites who banded themselves

to punish the inhabitants of Gibeon indicates the way in which these Canaanites would ordinarily fight against themselves. The kings did not attack the Israelites directly; but they went out to punish one of their own cities, because the people there had made a league with the invading Israelites. Probably the king of Hebron and the king of Jebus would not ordinarily get along together at all. When they faced a common enemy, however, they were willing to drop their differences and go out in a unified campaign.

2. *He put the stars in place.* The miracle of the sun standing still has drawn a lot of attention. Many different explanations have been given as to how the phenomenon could have occurred. Some suggest that gases bent the sun's rays so that it was light for a long time on the earth. Others have suggested that it only seemed that the day was long because the Israelites were so busy in fighting that they forgot to notice the time. All these explanations cannot explain the plain historical statement of fact that the sun stood still. God fought for Israel. He who put the sun, moon, and stars in place in the beginning (Genesis 1:14) caused them to stop in their places while Israel won this battle.
3. *Victory belongs to the faithful.* Joshua learned his lesson after Jericho. He knew it was not enough to come close to doing what God asked him to do. He did not spare any of the kings who had fought against God's people. All of them were executed according to the commandments of the law. After these campaigns were waged, he was able to return in peace to his camp at Gilgal. Christians have the same hope of eventual victory and the Sabbath rest in heaven.

## CHAPTER TEN

*The Southern Coalition 10:1-14*

Now it came to pass, when Adonizedek 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;

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.

3 Wherefore Adonizedek 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,

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.

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 their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

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.

7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.

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,

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

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 Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, 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.

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.

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.

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.

1. *Who was Adoni-zedek?* 10:1

The name means "lord of righteousness." It is almost synonymous with Melchizedek which means "king of righteousness." This may have been a title of the Jebusite kings, as Pharaoh was the Egyptian rulers and Caesar was later of the Roman. Adoni-zedek does not appear to have any of the righteous inclinations which belong to Melchizedek, the high priest to whom Abraham paid the tithe. Instead



of being a friend of God's people and the descendants of Abraham, he was an enemy with a burning desire to resist the wrath of God.

2. *Where was Jerusalem?* 10:1b

This word means "the foundling or possession of peace." It was called Salem in the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:18). It was the proper name of the town which was also frequently called Jebus (Judges 19:10, 11; I Chronicles 11:4), or "city of the Jebusites" (Judges 19:11). During the division of the land it was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (18:28); but being situated upon the border of Judah (15:8), it was conquered and burned by the sons of Judah after the death of Joshua (Judges 1:8). It was very soon taken again by the Jebusites whom the sons of Judah were not able to destroy (Joshua 15:63, Judges 19:12); so both Benjaminites and Judahites lived there along with the Jebusites (Judges 1:21; Joshua 15:63). The upper town, especially upon the summit of Mt. Zion, remained a fortification in the possession of the Jebusites until David conquered it (II Samuel 5:6 ff.). He made it the capital of his kingdom and called it by his own name, "the city of David," after which the old name of Jebus fell into disuse.

3. *Why were the Jebusites afraid?* 10:2

The Jebusites were afraid not only because they had heard what the Israelites had done at Jericho and Ai but also because one of their cities had made a league with them. They might have believed the Gibeonites would assist the Israelites and make war against the rest of the Canaanites. Indeed the Hivites who lived in Gibeon would be bound by their treaty to assist the Israelites in whatever way they were directed. In addition, the other Canaanites must have felt a sense of reproach and shame that one of their own cities had signed a treaty with the enemy. This

revealed internal weakness, and they decided to attack immediately.

4. *Where was Hebron?* 10:3a

Hebron, the town of Arba the Anakite (Joshua 15:13; cf. Genesis 23:2), was about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It lay in a deep and narrow valley upon the mountains of Judah and was a town of the greatest antiquity (Numbers 13:22). It is now called *el Khalil*, i.e., "the field" (of God), with reference to Abraham's sojourn there. The ruins include an ancient colossal mosque which contains, according to the Mohammedan tradition, the burial-place of the patriarchs (See Genesis 23:17).

5. *Where was Jarmuth?* 10:3b

Jarmuth was in the lowlands of Judah (Joshua 15:35; Nehemiah 11:29). A hamlet, Jermucha, is on the road to Jerusalem, and is identified as the modern Jarmuk. This village is on a lofty hill and has remains of walls and cisterns of a very ancient date. The name is called Tell 'Armuth by the Arabs.

6. *Where was Lachish?* 10:3c

Lachish was in the lowlands of Judah (15:39) and was fortified by Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11:9). It was besieged by Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 18:17; 19:8; Jeremiah 34:7) but was still inhabited by Jews after the return from captivity (Nehemiah 11:30). It is probably to be found in *Um Lakis*, an old place upon a low round hill. The site is covered with heaps of small round stones thrown together in great confusion containing relics of marble columns.

7. *Where was Eglon?* 10:3d

Eglon was in the lowlands of Judah (15:39). The present name is Ajlan, a heap of ruins. It lies to the east of *Um Lakis*. Eglon was very closely associated with the affairs of the Philistines and was the city most remote from the center of the land. The king must have been

able to contribute something to the campaign led by Adonizedek, and these people joined with their fellow Canaanites in waging a campaign against the Hivites who had made peace with Israel.

8. *Why did the Gibeonites appeal to Joshua?* 10:6

When the men of Gibeon saw that the other Canaanites were attacking them, they sent to Joshua for help. Since the two peoples had entered into a league with each other, the Israelites were honor bound to assist the Gibeonites. Consequently, Joshua left his camp at Gilgal and took with him his full complement of soldiers led by his mighty men of valor.

9. *What was the ascent of Beth-horon?* 10:10

This was the ascent to Upper Beth-horon (*Beit Ur, el Foka*), which was nearest to Gibeon, only a short way distant on the northwest. It lay on a lofty promontory between two valleys, one on the north, the other on the south, and was separated from Lower Beth-horon, which lay further west, by a long steep pass. The ascent to Upper Beth-horon is very steep and rocky, though the rock has been cut away in many places and a path made by means of steps. This pass between the two places leads downwards from Gibeon towards the western plain and was called sometimes the ascent, or going up to Beth-horon, and sometimes the descent, or going down from it (v. 11). Frequent references to this passageway are found both in Biblical and extra-Biblical sources.

10. *Where was Makkedah?* 10:10b

This site is believed to be found in Summeil, a considerable village on an eminence in the plain. It has a large public well 110' deep and 11' in diameter, with strongly built walls of hewn stones. There is also part of an old wall which to all appearances must have belonged to a large square castle built of uncemented stones.

*11. Where was Azekah? 10:11*

Both Azekah and Makkedah are in the lowland on the west of Canaan. Azekah is in the hill-country between the mountains and the plain (15:35); Makkedah, in the plain itself (15:41). Azekah was fortified by Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11:9) and was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 34:7) but still inhabited after the captivity (Nehemiah 11:30). It was not far from Socoh, according to Joshua 15:35.

*12. What were the hailstones? 10:11*

The large stones which the Lord threw upon the flying foe at the slope of Beth-horon were hailstones (see Isaiah 30:30). It was not stone-hail or a shower of stones, but a terrible hailstorm, in which hail fell upon the foe in pieces as large as stones. There was no evidence that Israel was equipped well enough with slingers in order to hail stones upon the army. The author is not trying to express this, but is rather telling the reader that God interfered in the affairs of men. From the heavens which are controlled by the Creator of the heavens poured forth those hailstones which would normally come in less quantity and with less severity. On this occasion, God interfered with what we call the laws of nature and caused such a storm to come upon the Canaanites that they were routed by Israel.

*13. Are there valid objections to the miracle of the sun standing still? 10:13*

Several objections are raised. First, it is said, "No annals of other nations contain such an account." For that matter, annals of many nations do not go back to this period. Second, it is urged that the motion of the stars is unchangeable. These so-called "laws," however, are nothing more than phenomena, or forms of manifestation, of those divine creative powers, the true character of which no mortal has ever fathomed. Third, it is objected that

such a sudden stoppage of the revolution of the earth upon its axis would have dashed to pieces all the works of human hands which were to be found upon its surface and hurled the earth itself with its satellite, the moon, out of their orbits. This leaves out of sight the fact that the omnipotent hand of God, which not only created the stars but gave them the power to revolve with regularity in their orbits as long as this universe endures, is not too short to guard against such disastrous consequences. There can be no valid objections to the view that this was a miracle worked by God Himself.

*The Death of the Five Kings 10:15-27*

15 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp of Gilgal.

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

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

18 And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them:

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

14. *Where was the cave of Makkedah?* 10:15

The place has been identified with *el-Mugbar*, a spot southwest of Ekron. The name, *el-Mugbar*, means "the caves." The area is very far away from where the battle was fought, and the location is really not certain. Makkedah is best known only for this fact recorded here. The kings hid there, and nothing else of importance to Bible history occurred there. The place was later assigned to the tribe of Judah as part of their inheritance (Joshua 15:41).

15. *Where were the fenced cities?* 10:20

The fenced cities were scattered throughout the land. Only cities which were of substantial size and importance

would have these walls around them. There were enough of them that they provided hiding places to all who escaped from the war between Israel and the five kings of the South. Israel was not in a position to begin its total campaign against the Canaanites at the end of the battle with the kings associated with Adoni-zedek. There were still strong forces in the North which had to be subdued before the armies of Israel could lay siege against the fenced cities to force out those who had escaped from the battles fought in the open field. Eventually this task was to be performed by those tribes who settled in the area where the fenced cities were located.

16. *Why did the men put their feet on the necks of the kings?* 10:24

This action was symbolic of the fact that the kings were utterly beaten. The inscription at Behistan shows clearly a picture of Cyrus with a group of vassal kings prostrate on the ground before him. He has his foot on the neck of one of the kings symbolizing the fact that he has completely overthrown his enemies. Israel was told not to leave the dead people hanging after sundown. These kings had been incarcerated in caves until the battle was finished; but when it was over, they were brought out and promptly executed. Their bodies were then thrown back into the caves and great stones were rolled across the doors making rock-hewn tombs for these beaten enemies of the armies of God.

*The Summary of the Conquest 10:28-43*

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

41 And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

42 And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

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

17. *Where was Libnah?* 10:29

Libnah was one of the towns of the plain of the hill-country of Judah. It was allotted to the priests (21:13). The people revolted from Judah in the reign of Joram (II Kings 8:22). Later, it was besieged by Sennacherib (Isaiah 37:8). It is in the South, but on the northeast of Lachish.

18. *Where was Gezer?* 10:33

Gezer was on the southern boundary of Ephraim (16:3) and was given up by that tribe to the Levites (16:9, 10; 21:20, 21). David pursued the Philistines to Gezer after they had been defeated at Gibeon (II Samuel 5:25; I Chronicles 14:16). At a later period it was conquered by Pharaoh and presented to his daughter who was married to Solomon. Solomon built, i.e., fortified, it (I Kings 9:16, 17). The site has been excavated in modern times and has yielded many striking examples of artifacts in burial customs. Gates and walls dating from the time

of Solomon have been uncovered, and the massive fortifications found there attest the strategic military importance of this site which overlooks the maritime plain of the Mediterranean and guards the ascent to the hill country of Judah.

19. *Where was Debir?* 10:38, 39

This town was formerly called Kirjath-sepher, i.e., "book town" (Judges 1:11), and Kirjath-sannah, i.e., in all probability "the city of palm branches" (15:49). It was given up by Judah to the Levites (21:15). It stood upon the mountains of Judah (15:49), to the south of Hebron, but has not been certainly discovered.

20. *Where was Goshen?* 10:41

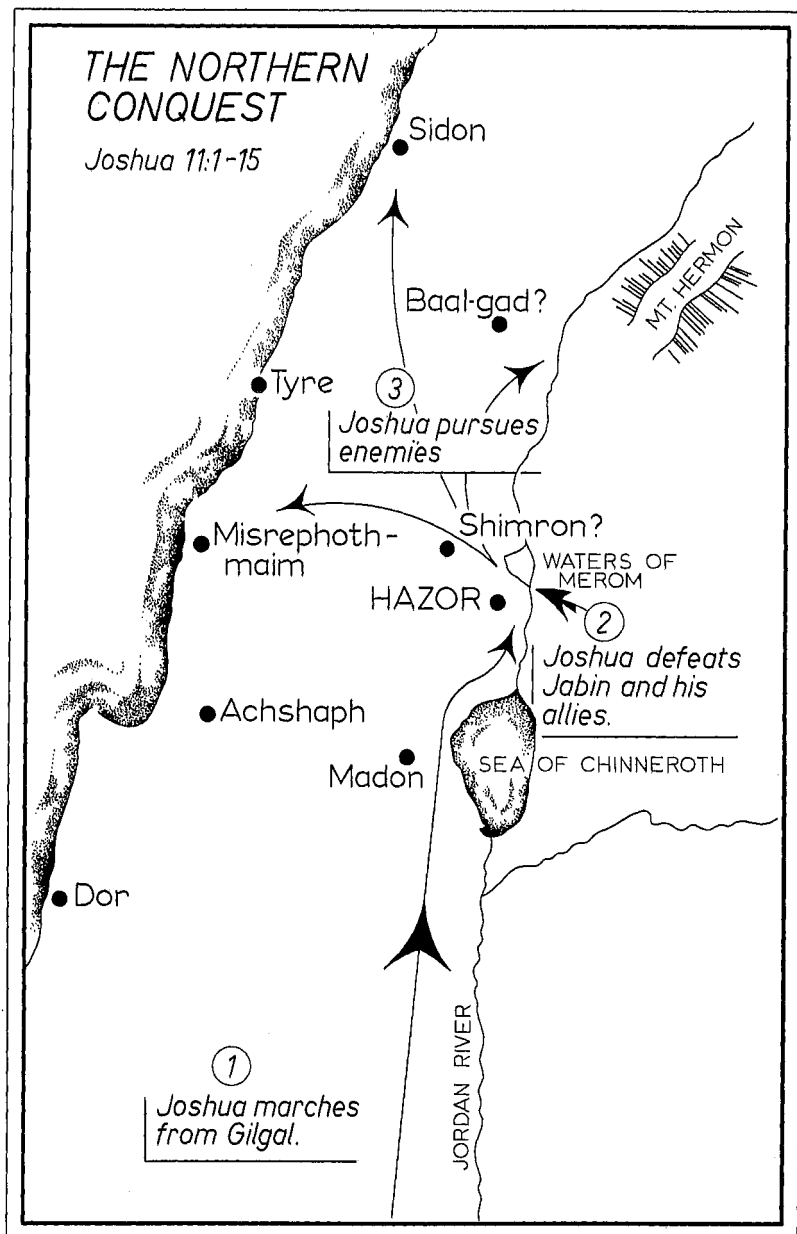
This is a different place from the Goshen of Egypt, deriving its name in all probability from the town of Goshen on the southern portion of the mountains (Joshua 15:51). As the line "from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza" defines the extent of the conquered country from south to north on the western side, so the parallel clause, "all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon," probably defines the extent from south to north on the eastern side. Therefore, we should look for Goshen in the South near the Dead Sea.

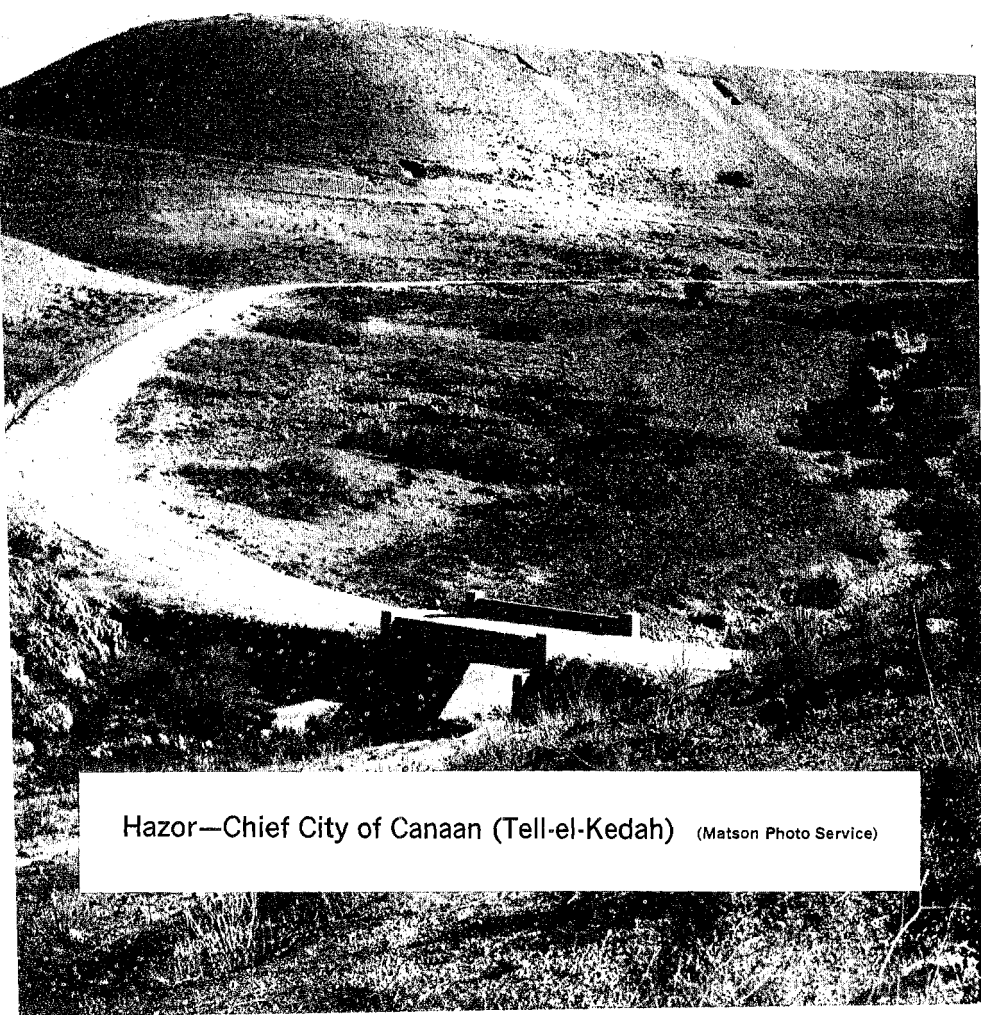
## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 10

1. What was the name of the king who led in the forming of the southern coalition?
2. Of what city was he the ruler?
3. What five other cities joined in the coalition?
4. What city in Canaan did these kings attack?
5. Where was the camp of Israel at the time?
6. Along the way to what city did Israel chase the Canaanites?
7. Over what valley was the moon standing while the battle was fought?

# THE NORTHERN CONQUEST

Joshua 11:1-15





Hazor—Chief City of Canaan (Tell-el-Kedah) (Matson Photo Service)

## JOSHUA

8. Over what city was the sun standing while the battle was fought?
9. What territory on the South is listed as the southern border of the conquered territory?
10. What city is listed as being on the northern border of the conquered territory?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 11

- Vv. 1-9 *The defeat of Jabin.* Jabin was the king of Hazor. He formed an alliance with the kings in his area, and they attempted to hold the northern part of Canaan against the on-rushing Israelites. Joshua attacked them near the waters of Merom and completely routed them.
- Vv. 10-15 *The destruction of Hazor.* Joshua was careful to follow the commandments of the Lord explicitly. He completely destroyed the city of Hazor and burned it with fire. He also wiped out the inhabitants so that there would be no remaining cesspool of sin in the land. As for the other kings, he completely overthrew them; but he did not destroy their cities which were walled. The people of Israel were allowed to take spoils in this northern campaign, but they did utterly annihilate the wicked inhabitants.
- Vv. 16-23 *A summary of Joshua's campaigns.* Joshua took all of the land. Every division is mentioned—the hills, the *negeb*, the Jordan River Valley, the Mediterranean plains, and the mountain ranges. In all these areas there was not a single city which sued for peace except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the rest were destroyed.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *It is foolish to fight God.* The kings of the North should have been able to see that it was foolish to fight against the Israelites. All their neighbors to the south—the king of Jebus, the king of Hebron and the king of Jericho—had been utterly overthrown. A man blinded by sin, however, cannot see what is happening around him. He moves blindly on to his own destruction. Such was the case of the kings of the North.
2. *Righteousness will triumph.* Joshua was fighting a just war. He was wielding the sword of God's wrath because he was involved in fulfilling the Lord's promise to give land to the Israelites. Joshua was invincible. Such will be the ultimate triumph of truth. Jesus said that the gates of Hades could not prevail against His church (Matthew 16:18-20).
3. *No enemy is strong enough to overcome God's people.* Joshua overcame the kings of the South and the kings of the North. There were some very unusual enemies, the Anakims, who lived in the mountains. These people have sometimes been understood to be giants. Even these people fell before the terrible, swift sword of Joshua and the Israelites. It is amazing to see what God's people can do when they are following His leading.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

*The Defeat of Jabin 11:1-9*

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,

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 the borders of Dor on the west,

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.

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.

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

6 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

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.

8 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

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

*1. Who originated the alliance in the North? 11:1*

Jabin, king of Hazor, formed an alliance with the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph, as well as other kings of the North, to make a common attack upon the Israelites. Hazor was formerly the head of all the kingdoms of northern Canaan (see v. 10). Although Hazor was burned to the ground, it was afterwards restored and

became a capital again. It was fortified by Solomon (I Kings 9:15) and was taken by Tiglath-Pileser (II Kings 15:29). It belonged to tribe of Naphtali. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* V, v., 1), it was above Lake Huleh. Recent archaeological excavations in the area are some of the most interesting of all Palestine.

2. *Where was Chinneroth?* 11:2

Chinneroth was another name for the Sea of Galilee. In New Testament times this Sea was also called the Sea of Tiberias after it was renamed by Tiberius Caesar. The same body of water was also known as Lake Genesseret. The alliance which Jabin formed reached out to include kings as far south as the central part of Canaan.

3. *Where was Dor?* 11:2b

The town of Dor was built by Phoenicians who settled there on account of an abundance of purple mussels. It was allotted to the Manassites but was in the territory of Asher (17:11, cf. 19:26), and taken possession by the children of Joseph (I Chronicles 7:29). The city itself was situated on the Mediterranean Sea, below the promontory of Carmel, and was nine miles north of Caesarea.

4. *Where was Mount Hermon?* 11:3

Mount Hermon is the dominating feature of the landscape of northern Palestine. The mountain lies north and east of the waters of Merom. From its heights one can see without the aid of field glasses all the way to Damascus farther north and to Mount Tabor to the south. Snow lies on the peaks of Mount Hermon during most of the year, and the melting snow provides enough moisture to nourish vegetation. The village which lies at the foot of the mountain is some 2000 feet above sea level and the peak lies some 7000 feet higher. It is not a rocky mountain although there are some bold and majestic masses of naked rock to be seen at various points. Most of the surface is covered with soil and shepherds through the years drove



their flocks almost to its summit in search of good pasture. The territory where it was located was called the land of Mizpeh, a name given to it by Jacob as he parted from Laban (Genesis 31:49).

5. *Where did Jabin get chariots?* 11:4

The fact that the northern Canaanites came to fight with horses and chariots is an indication of the advanced civilization which was found in the North. This was the land of the Hittites, a branch of the Canaanites who were very highly developed in artistic skills. No record is made of the Israelites having such equipment for war. They seemed to fight with bows and arrows, spears, swords, and javelins. It is possible that the northern Canaanites had received their chariots from Egypt (I Kings 10:28, 29).

6. *Where was Merom?* 11:5

These peoples who came out to war were as numerous as the sand by the seashore; and they had very many horses and chariots. All these kings agreed together concerning the war and the place of battle, and they encamped at Merom to fight against Israel. The name *Merom* is like *Meirom*, a village whose name is also found as *Meirum*. It is a celebrated place of pilgrimage among the Jews, because Hillel, Shammai, Simeon ben Jochai, and other noted Rabbis are said to be buried there. About two hours' journey northwest of Safed, upon a rocky mountain, there is a spring which forms a small brook and flows away through the valley below Safed. This stream, which is said to reach the Lake of Tiberias in the neighborhood of Bethsaida, is in all probability to be regarded as the "waters of Merom," according to Josephus (*Antiquities* V, i, 18). These kings encamped at Beeroth, a city of Upper Galilee, not far from Kedesh.

7. *Why did God tell Joshua to "hough ther horses"?* 11:6

God told Joshua to make the horses incapable of running fast and pulling the chariots. To hough a horse

was to break the tendons in its lower legs so that it could not run fast. It would still be capable of pulling plows and doing all kinds of domestic work. In this way the horses were spared but were made unfit for military action. The fact that the chariots could be burned indicates that they were made mostly from wood, but they were doubtlessly covered with metal to shield them from spears and javelins.

8. *Why is Sidon called "Sidon the Great"?* 11:8

Sidon is called "the great" (see 19:28), because at that time it was the metropolis of Phoenicia. By the time of David it had lost its ancient splendor and was outstripped by its daughter city of Tyre. It is still to be seen in the town of Saida, a town of five or six thousand inhabitants with many large and well-built houses. The fact that Joshua chased the Canaanites to the far distant point on the Mediterranean Seacoast and to Misrephoth-maim on the east indicates that the campaign was completely successful for the Israelites. Misrephoth-maim was a place with a name which indicated there were slime pits and salt pits in the area. The entire region was flat and marshy. Flat land enabled the northern Canaanites to use their chariots well in their campaigns, but even this advantage in armament did not overcome the men who were doing the will of God.

*The Destruction of Hazor 11:10-15*

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

*9. Why was Hazor utterly razed? 11:11*

Hazor was burned with fire because it was the most important city of the North. Here Jabin had his headquarters. The city had been the rallying point of the Northern Canaanites. When it was destroyed, they would have very little courage to continue their resistance. To burn Hazor was to burn their capital, and its utter destruction symbolized the complete defeat which the northern Canaanites suffered.

*10. Why were some cities spared? 11:13*

The cities which were spared were described as those which stood still in their strength. This may be an indication of the fact that they had not entered into the coalition and had remained at home. The original text, however, indicates that they were cities which were on heights which rose above the plain where the battle was fought. These were probably walled cities and therefore very difficult to take. Joshua did not have time in his campaign to destroy completely all of the cities. This was to be the task of the Israelites who settled the land. It was enough

for Joshua and the men whom he was leading to break the backbone of resistance and to make it possible for the thousands to come in, finish up the conquest, and settle in the Promised Land.

*A Summary of Joshua's Campaigns 11:16-23*

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;

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

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

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.

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 favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

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.

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.

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.

11. *Where was Mount Halak?* 11:17

The name of the mountain indicates it was a smooth mountain. Doubtless this is a reference to an area called the Ascent Akrabbim and mentioned in Numbers 34:3, 4 and Joshua 15:2, 3. The area is somewhat north-northeast of Abdah, an area near Wadi el-Marra. Baal-gad, the point farthest north in the notice of the extent of the conquest, was near Mount Hermon. The mention of these two places gives an idea of how extensive the conquest had been. This point is also called Baal-Hermon (Judges 3:3, I Chronicles 5:23). The exact location of the settlement has not been determined.

12. *How long did Joshua wage war?* 11:18

The exact time of the beginning and ending of the conquest is not known. If Moses died about 1407 and Joshua were 80 years old at the time, the entire lifespan of Joshua would reach only to 1377 B.C. We know that Joshua died when he was 110 years of age. Perhaps only about half of his lifetime was spent in his military action, leaving him the latter half of his life for the allotment of the territory to the tribes. Perhaps the conquest took ten or fifteen years. This would indeed be a long war.

13. *Why did the Canaanites not ask for peace?* 11:19

Not a single leader among the Canaanites asked for any mercy except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the rest of the kings went to war against Joshua. It was the opinion of the writer, as he was moved with divine inspiration to write, that the Lord had hardened their hearts (v. 20). Looking at the situation from the perspective of modern historians, we can agree that it was the Lord's will that these people should be annihilated. They had sinned exceedingly. They were completely reprobate. The freedom of their will was not destroyed, but God had brought them to the place where they had to make a

decision for or against Him. They had been given repeated opportunities to make such decisions, and each time they chose to turn their backs on God. This repeated confrontation contributed to the hardening of their hearts. As we see God doing this, we can say God hardened their hearts. In the final analysis, however, they hardened their own hearts.

*14. Who were the Anakim? 11:21*

The Anakim were descendants of Anak, one of the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The children of Israel first met them when the spies went into the land (Numbers 13:22, 33). In the latter reference the statement is made that these sons of Anak came "of the giants." Elsewhere the giants are called Nephilim (see American Standard Translation here and at Genesis 6:4). In the reference to the "giants" in Genesis 6:4 it is said that these were "mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Whether they were large in stature or great in reputation and ability is a question hard to determine. The fact that the spies said they felt like grasshoppers in their sight and that these men looked upon them in the same way does not give the full answer. The ten spies brought up an evil report. It was quite evidently exaggerated. Nevertheless, these people were to be dealt with, and Joshua went against them without hesitation. They centered their activities in the South near Hebron, Debir, and Anab, points in the mountains of Judah and Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed these people leaving only a few in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. These latter points were in the plain which was later known as the Philistine Plain. They would not be hard to deal with in the open territory of the sea-coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and Joshua evidently felt that it was sufficient to drive them out of the center of the territory.

15. *Why are Judah and Israel mentioned separately?* 11:21

The fact that Judah and Israel are mentioned separately does not indicate the book was written after the kingdom was divided in the days of Rehoboam. Judah always had a unique place among the sons of Jacob. Jacob gave him the *barak* and *bekorah*, his blessing and birthright (Genesis 49:8-12). When the children of Israel marched through the wilderness of Sinai on the route to Caanan, Judah marched first. When they began to make their conquest, it was Judah who went up first to battle (Judges 1:1 ff.). Joshua saw that the land was settled before he died, and the entire southern section of the land was given to Judah. His northern border was on a line which stretched west from the north end of the Dead Sea. His southern border went to the extreme limits of the land given to the children of Israel. All of this southern section was given to him. All the rest of the tribes of Israel settled north of Judah and east of the Jordan. In this way Judah was again separated from the rest of the people and it was natural for Joshua to make a reference to the mountains of Judah and the mountains of Israel.

16. *Where were Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod?* 11:22

Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod were leading cities among the Philistines who lived along the plain on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The lords of these towns were especially active during the period of the judges. Samson went down from the hill country of Dan and carried away the posts of the gate of the city of Gaza (Judges 16:1 ff.). Goliath was the famous Philistine from Gath (I Samuel 17:4). When the Ark was captured by the Philistines, it was taken down to the house of Dagon in Ashdod (I Samuel 5:1). Gaza was the southernmost of the towns and quite close to the sea. Gath was the point nearest the center of the land, and Ashdod was the northernmost

and another city near the sea. All of these points were west of the main part of the Promised Land.

17. *Were all the Canaanite towns conquered?* 11:23

The taking of the whole land does not imply that all the towns and villages to the very last had been conquered, or that all the Canaanites were rooted out from every corner of the land. The conquest was of such character that the power of the Canaanites was broken, their dominion overthrown, and their whole land thoroughly given into the hands of the Israelites. Those who still remained were crushed into powerless fugitives. Moreover, Israel had received the strongest pledge, in the powerful help which it had received from the Lord in the conquests thus far obtained, that the faithful covenant-God would continue His help in the conflicts which still remained. He would secure for Israel a complete victory and the full possession of the Promised Land.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 11

1. What king led in the northern coalition?
2. What was the capital of the leader of the northern coalition?
3. What unusual equipment of war did the Canaanites in the north use against the Israelites?
4. Near what body of water was the battle fought in the North?
5. How far west did Joshua chase the defeated Canaanites?
6. How far east did Joshua chase the enemy?
7. What city did Joshua burn with fire?
8. What mountain on the south marked the extent of Joshua's conquest?
9. What mountain on the north marked the extent of Joshua's conquest?
10. What mighty men did Joshua drive out of the mountains of Judah and Israel?



## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 12

- Vv. 1- 6 *Summary of Moses' conquest.* Moses led the people in battle with Sihon, king of the Amorites, and against Og, king of Bashan. These conquests are mentioned in a succinct fashion before more detailed consideration is given to a summary of the conquest of the people of Israel under the leadership of Joshua. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh settled in the land taken in the conquest led by Moses.
- Vv. 7- 8 *A general outline of Joshua's conquered territory.* The land which Joshua captured for the people of Israel is described in a general way as lying west of the Jordan River. It extended from the Lebanon Mountains in the north to the smooth mountain, Mt. Halak, near the territory of Edom in the south. Topographically it was mountains, valleys, plains, springs, wilderness, and the south country.
- Vv. 9-24 *A list of the kings defeated by Joshua.* Thirty-one kings were defeated by the children of Israel under the leadership of Joshua. The first one mentioned whom they attacked was the king of Jericho. The last one named was the king of Tirzah, evidently one of the kings who had taken part in the northern coalition.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Christian life is a warfare.* The Bible is replete with references which place God-fearing people in the role of fighters. This is true not only of the New Testament, but of the Old Testament as well. Moses was primarily the great law-giver, but it was also his lot

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

to lead Israel in their first battles. Although some may not be engaged in polemics in Christian living and teaching as much as others, all must "fight the good fight of faith" (I Timothy 6:12).

2. *God keeps His word.* When God called Abraham out of the Ur of Chaldees, He said He would make of him a great nation. Later he told him He would give him the land of Canaan as his possession, displacing the nations who dwelt in the land at the time (Genesis 15:18). This promise was repeated to Jacob as he lay on the ground at Bethel (Genesis 28:13). Abraham and Jacob did not see the fulfillment of these promises, but God kept His word. The promise was fulfilled in the days of Joshua as they drove the Canaanites from the Promised Land. God is just as faithful to His promises of special blessings to those who trust Him today. He never fails.
3. *None can withstand God.* Thirty-one different kings are listed among those who hardened their hearts and resisted the onrush of the people of God. The last verses of this chapter are like a casualty list of those who threw away their lives and reaped punishment as a result. Christians today should be very careful lest they should make the same mistake and eventually find their names are not in the book of life, but are rather listed with those who have attempted to resist God.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Summary of Moses' Conquest 12:1-6*

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:

2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who 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;

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 Beth-jeshimoth; and from the south, under Ashdoth-pisgah;

4 And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,

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.

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.

*1. What is the "other side" of Jordan? 12:1*

The reference to "the other side of Jordan towards the rising of the sun" is a phrase which reveals the point of view of the writer. Joshua wrote the book after he had crossed into the Promised Land. On occasions when the writer is east of the Jordan, he refers to the land of the Jordan as "the other side of Jordan." This area was sometimes called Perea, or Gilead. The main part of the land was west of the Jordan. That part which was east was called "the other side."

*2. Where were the Arnon, the Jabbok and Gilead? 12:2*

The Arnon was a river which flowed from the highlands east of the Dead Sea into the middle of that sea. The mouth was about one half the distance between the

northern and southern ends of the Salt Sea on the east side of the Sea. The Jabbok was a river which rose in the heights on the east of the Jordan River and flowed into the Jordan River about half-way between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Gilead was a term given to the territory which lay east of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Sihon had ruled this area, and his people were known as the Amorites, the highlanders. His capital was in Heshbon, and his kingdom extended as far south as the town Aroer, sometimes called the "Beersheba of the east." Heshbon is almost due east of the point where the Jordan river enters the Dead Sea.

3. *Who were the children of Ammon?* 12:2b

The children of Ammon were descendants of Lot through his younger daughter. When the younger daughter bore her first child, she called his name Ben-Ammi. From him the children of Ammon were descended, and they occupied the territory which lay east of the country ruled by Sihon. Moses had not fought against the Amorites but had passed by and left them unmolested.

4. *What was "the plain"?* 12:3

The plain is sometimes called the Arabah. The term is applied to the great valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba in most contexts, but here it is used as the name of the valley lying between Mt. Hermon and the Dead Sea. From the Sea of Galilee to the south end of the Dead Sea, the Arabs call it the Ghor, or depression. Some geographers feel that an exact point of division may be made between the Ghor and the Arabah along a line of white cliffs which crosses the valley at an angle between the flat marsh land to the south of the Dead Sea. From that point to the gulf of Aqaba it is thus known as the Arabah, but that which lies north to the Sea of Galilee

is better known as the Ghor. The Sea of Chinneroth is the Sea of Galilee, and the Sea of the Plain is identified as the Dead Sea. Beth-jeshimoth is an Anglicized form of the word which means "the house or place of deserts." It was a town in Moab not far east of the mouth of the Jordan River. Ashdoth-pisgah is a word pointing to the springs of Pisgah, the mountain where Moses was buried. It lay to the south of the north end of the Dead Sea. All these points were within the kingdom of Sihon.

5. *Was Og a giant?* 12:4

The conquest of Og is more fully described in Deuteronomy 3:1-13 and Numbers 21:33-35. The American Standard Version describes Og as being of the remnant of the Rephaim. His bedstead was preserved and was a matter of public interest (Deuteronomy 3:11). This does not mean necessarily that he was as large as his bed. A king would probably have a very impressive throne and bed. No doubt he was a mighty man and one of the men of renown. He may have been of large stature, but there is insufficient evidence to justify taking the view that he was of terribly unusual stature. Bashan, his territory, was east of the Sea of Galilee. His headquarters were at Ashtaroth and Edrei, two cities in his territory. Tell Ashtarath is located twenty-one miles east of the Sea of Galilee, and Edrei is now known as Ed-derah and is another twenty miles south and east of Ashtaroth. His territory embraced Mt. Hermon to the north. Salcah is the modern Salkhad and reached to the border of the Geshurites, a Syrian principality. The Maachathites were a small kingdom probably in the stony desert which lay east of Argob. Og thus ruled over half of Gilead, the half which lay north of the kingdom of Sihon. This land then became the possession of the men of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

*A General Outline of Joshua's Conquered Territory 12:7, 8*

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 Baal-gad 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;

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:

*6. To what points did the Promised Land reach? 12:7*

The Promised Land extended from Baal-gad near Mount Hermon on the north to Mount Halak, a smooth mountain near the territory of Edom on the south. All the mountain ranges, including Mount Tabor, Mount Carmel, Mount Ebal, and Mount Gerizim were theirs to terrace and cultivate. The valleys, especially those of the Jordan River and Jezreel, belonged to them. The Maritime plains of Sharon and Philistia made up a part of this land God gave to Israel. The *South*, the Negeb, was Israel's to inhabit. From the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Arabian Desert on the east, Palestine belonged to the sons of Jacob.

*7. Why did Joshua repeat the names of the Canaanite tribes? 12:8b*

Along with a listing of the various sections of the country which were possessed by the Israelites, Joshua listed the tribes of Canaanites who were dispossessed. These tribes were first listed when God predicted the fate of his descendants (Genesis 15:19-21). At that time, ten different tribes were listed; but in Joshua only six are given. All of them are embraced in the name, Canaanites. When different groups are placed under a general title, such as

Amorite, a smaller number is given than when such bands as Gergashites, Kadmonites, and Hittites are listed individually. None of the Canaanites escaped completely from the avenging sword of Joshua as it exacted God's punishment of those whose cup of iniquity was full and overflowing. All were driven out of Canaan; and the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their children was finally given to the people led by Joshua.

*A List of the Kings Defeated by Joshua 12:9-24*

9 The king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Beth-el, one;

10 The king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;

11 The king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;

12 The king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one;

13 The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;

14 The king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one;

15 The king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one;

16 The king of Makkedah, one; the king of Beth-el, one;

17 The king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one;

18 The king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;

19 The king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one;

20 The king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;

21 The king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one;

22 The king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one;

23 The king of Dor in the coast of Dor, one; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one;

24 The king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

8. *Why was the king of Bethel not mentioned?* 12:9

The men of Bethel joined with the men of Ai when they were ambushed by the Israelites. The town of Bethel was close to Ai, and there was apparently no separate battle fought against Bethel itself at this time. Ai was the main city known as a regal city; and when Ai fell, it also brought the downfall of Bethel. The "children of Joseph" later possessed the city, and the conquest of Bethel by these men of Ephraim is described in some detail in Judges 1:22-26.

9. *Who was the king of Jerusalem?* 12:10

Jerusalem was known as Jebus, and her king was Adonizedek. Adonizedek was the leader of the southern league of kings who tried to join themselves together to attack the Gibeonites after they made peace with Israel. The next kings in the list were those who were in this southern coalition. Jerusalem was ruled by a king as early as the days of Abraham; for when he came back from rescuing Lot, he was met by Melchizedec, the king of Salem (Genesis 14:18). It is easy to see how this city once called Jebus and again called Salem eventually became known as Jerusalem.

10. *Who was the king of Hazor?* 12:19

Jabin was the king of Hazor. It was he who led the league in the North as the kings in that area banded themselves together to fight against Israel. The next kings in the list were those who formed this northern coalition. None of these kings was successful in defending his city against the people of Israel. All of them fell, and their cities were destroyed. With the fall of the kings in the



northern and southern coalitions, the major part of the resistance of the Canaanites was destroyed.

11. *Who was the "king of the nations"?* 12:23

Some commentators view the Hebrew word for nations as a proper noun. They thus translate this passage like the others and talk about the king of the Goyim. They thus make the word *Goyim* a proper name both here and in Genesis 14:1 where Tidal is called the king of the nations. Some identify the location as that of Gityon; and inasmuch as all the other names are proper names of cities, it would seem better to describe this man as the king of Goyim. Otherwise, we are left at a loss to know over what nations he ruled.

12. *How many kings were there in all?* 12:24

There were thirty-one kings who were overthrown by the Israelites as they swept into Canaan and took possession of the land which was promised to them. Most of these kings have been met in the account which precedes this summary and further study of the exact battles in which they were involved would lead to a review of the preceding text. These were kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites—nations whom God was driving out from before Israel.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 12

1. What two kings did Moses overthrow?
2. What three tribes settled in the land taken by Moses?
3. On which side of the Jordan River was the land taken by Moses?
4. What river formed the southern border of the land taken by Moses?
5. What mountain was on the northern border of the land taken by Moses?

# THE TWELVE TRIBES

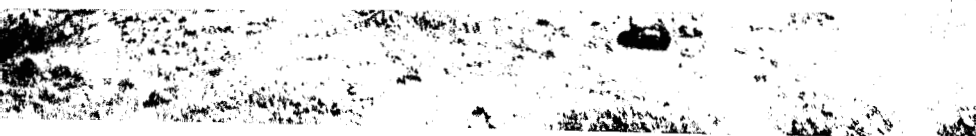
Joshua 13-24

☆ Cities of Refuge





Beth Shemesh—Section of the North Wall—Valley of Sorek on the left—Judean Hills in Distance (Matson Photo Service)



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

6. What king is sometimes described as a descendant of giants?
7. What mountain is described as the northern border of the land taken by Joshua?
8. What mountain is given as the southern border of the land taken by Joshua?
9. How many kings in all did Joshua overthrow?
10. What six names are given to the Canaanite tribes whom Israel drove out?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 13

- Vv. 1- 6 *God's instructions to Joshua.* This chapter marks the turning point of the book of Joshua. The first twelve chapters were devoted to the narration of the conquest of the land. The final chapters are devoted to the recording of the process of dividing the land among the tribes. Some time may have passed after the battles were over before God gave these instructions to Joshua since it is said that at the time Joshua was "old and stricken in years" (verse 1).
- Vv. 7-14 *A description of the land east of Jordan.* The land east of the Jordan had been given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. When God gave instructions to Joshua about dividing the land west of the Jordan, He reminded Joshua of the promises which Moses had already made to the eastern tribes. At the same time, there was a review of the general borders of the entire land east of the Jordan.
- Vv. 15-23 *The territory of Reuben.* Moses gave the southernmost part of the land east of the Jordan to the children of Reuben. Their territory was

## JOSHUA

down around the Dead Sea on the east side of that large body of water. It lay north of the Arnon River which flowed into the eastern side of the Dead Sea about halfway up the east coast.

Vv. 24-28 *The territory of Gad.* The children of Gad were given the land which lay east of the Jordan River and north of the territory of Reuben. It was roughly one half of the territory sometimes called Gilead.

Vv. 29-33 *The territory of Manasseh.* Moses gave the northernmost part of the land east of the Jordan to the children of Manasseh. Not all of the children of Manasseh settled east of the Jordan, but roughly one half of the descendants of Manasseh lived in this area. Their territory lay north of the land given to Gad and east of the sea of Galilee. It was primarily the land which had been ruled by Og, king of Bashan.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The Lord is not slack.* When Jacob, the great patriarch of the children of Israel, lay on the land where Joshua was standing, God promised to give the territory to his descendants. This promise had been made half a millennium prior to the time when God actually gave directions to Joshua for distributing the land. It may seem to man that God works slowly; but as it has been said, the mills of the gods grind exceedingly slowly but they grind exceedingly fine. No promise of God has ever failed. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise" (II Peter 3:9).

2. *God's leaders are led by God.* Joshua had a position of responsibility, but he did not bear the responsibility alone. Although Joshua led the people, God led him. God gave specific directions to Joshua for distributing the land among the twelve tribes. In giving these directions to Joshua he reminded him that Moses had already made certain provisions for Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.
3. *God has something for all His children.* The tribe of Levi was not included in the giving out of the land itself. The tribe of Levi were God's own special people. They had been taken from among the children in lieu of the firstborn from among all the tribes. These sons of Levi did not receive any land as such. They were given forty-eight cities in which to dwell, with small surrounding suburbs for their use. Their inheritance was the sacrifices of the Lord. They lived from the tithes and offerings brought to God by God's people. This special provision for the tribe of Levi is indicative of the fact that God does provide for every need.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *God's Instructions to Joshua 13:1-6*

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.

2 This is the land that yet remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri,

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:

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:

5 And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from Baal-gad under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.

6 All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, 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.

*1. How old was Joshua? 13:1*

The statement is made that Joshua was "old and stricken in years." His exact age is not given, but we know that he died at the age of one hundred and ten years (24:29). He would of necessity have been at least sixty years old when he came into the Promised Land, since he was among those numbered at Sinai and also among those numbered in the steppes of Moab forty years later. Only Joshua and Caleb were among those counted in the first census and among those who were allowed to go into the Promised Land. If he were sixty when he came into the land and died when he was one hundred and ten, he would be allowed some fifty years for conquering the land and settling the tribes in it. It seems reasonable to suppose that he made this division of the land some years before he died. Nevertheless, he must have been approaching the last years of his life when God gave him these instructions.

*2. How much land remained unconquered? 13:2-6*

Part of the unconquered land lay towards the South, part toward the North. The cities still occupied by the Canaanites were left for capture by the tribes into whose allotment they might fall; but the land especially mentioned falls into the following districts: (1) The Shephelah

and the Maritime Plain, being described as “. . . the borders of the Philistines;” (2) Geshuri, the land of an ancient tribe, which lived in the desert between Arabia and Philistia (cf. I Samuel 27:8); (3) Pentapolis, the region of the five cities—Gaza, Ashdod, Eshkalon, Gath, and Ekron; (4) Hamath, the extreme northern boundary point of Palestine; (5) and the land stretching from the Lebanon Mountains to Misrephoth-maim, probably the place later known as Zarephath.

*A Description of the Land East of Jordan 13:7-14*

7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

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;

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;

10 And all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon;

11 And Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah;

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.

13 Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the Israelites until this day.

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.



3. *Why were there nine and a half tribes?* 13:7

Since Reuben, Gad, and part of the tribe of Manasseh received an inheritance east of the Jordan, there were nine and a half tribes left to receive land west of the Jordan. The western tribes were to receive the major part of the Promised Land. They received territory which lay west of the Jordan River and extended to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Since all of Simeon's territory lay within the boundaries of the land given to Judah, the Simeonites are not counted as a separate tribe. In reality, they were divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel (Genesis 49:7).

4. *What was the extent of the land east of the Jordan?*  
13:8-14

The territory east of the Jordan had all been conquered in the days of Moses. It is apparent that there was less territory unconquered in those campaigns. At least no mention is made of land which had not been taken from its original inhabitants. The land east of the Jordan extended north from Aroer, a settlement on the north bank of the Arnon River. This river flowed into the Dead Sea about halfway up the east coast of that body of water. The territory extended through all of what was called Gilead and reached to the territory east of the Sea of Galilee. This northern part had been ruled by Og and was best described by the word "Bashan."

5. *Who were the giants?* 13:12

The American Standard Version translates the word from the original language with the English word *Rephaim*. The word is elsewhere translated as "dead things" (Job 26:5), and the word seems to be a derivative of the verb which means to "sink" or to "relax." It probably was a reference to the descendants of Rapha, and properly translated as a proper noun in the American Standard translation. Og did have a large bedstead, but he may have had

this as a symbol of his affluence as much as for the accommodation of his large body (Deuteronomy 3:11).

6 *How did these people live among the Israelites?* 13:13

Reference is made to the fact that the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwelt among the Israelites for a considerable length of time. If Joshua lived fifty years after he came into the Promised Land and perhaps even forty years after the original conquest was finished, sufficient time had elapsed to incline him to make mention of the fact that these people were still among the Israelites. Radical critics say this reference is an indication of the fact that the book was not written by Joshua, but the argument is not strong enough to overcome all the other indications of its having been written by Joshua.

7. *Why did the Levites receive no inheritance?* 13:14

In two different verses of this chapter mention is made of the fact that the Levites did not receive an inheritance. One is in this verse and the other is in the closing verse of the chapter. In the latter instance it is said that "the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance" (verse 33). At this point it is said that "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance." The descendants of Levi were given the responsibility of teaching the Law to the people of God. Out of their midst came the priestly family, the descendants of Aaron. They did not receive land which they could till, but they were given forty-eight cities in which they might live. Around these cities lay suburbs, or open ground which they could use for grazing animals or for other small crops, but it was not their privilege to have vineyards and fields of grain. They lived from the tithes and offerings made by the people of Israel. Certain portions of the sacrifices were designated for their consumption. This was God's way of taking care of these servants.

*The Territory of Reuben 13:15-23*

15 And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben inheritance according to their families.

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;

17 Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baalmeon,

18 And Jahazah, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath,

19 And Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar in the mount of the valley,

20 And Beth-peor, and Ashdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth,

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.

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.

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.

8. *Where was the land of Reuben? 13:15-23*

In general terms, the borders of the land of the tribe of Reuben may be described as follows: on the west, the Dead Sea and the Jordan River; on the south, the land of Moab; on the east, the land of Ammon; and on the north, the Wady Nusariyat. Sihon, king of the Amorites, had ruled this land; and it had been taken from him by the children of Israel in the campaign led by Moses (Numbers 21:21-31).

9. *Who had ruled this land formerly?* 13:21

Sihon, king of the Amorites, had ruled over this land before the children of Israel conquered it. The conquest was made under the leadership of Moses (Numbers 21:24). His capital had been in Heshbon, the town which had originally belonged to the Moabites. Later it was made a Levitical city (Joshua 21:39). The present location is called Hesban and lies twenty miles east of the Jordan and stands some four thousand feet above the valley. An excellent spring is located at this point and thus it is an extremely pleasant location. Extensive ruins are still on the site. The king had several chiefs who assisted him in government, and Moses destroyed these along with their leader.

10. *Who was Balaam, the son of Beor?* 13:22

Balaam was the soothsayer from the east who had been summoned by Balak, king of the Moabites (Numbers 22:5). He had been warned of God to speak only those things which were revealed to him by God. His cupidity was so strong that he is described in the New Testament as the epitome of avarice (II Peter 2:15, 16; cf. Jude 11). When God revealed only blessings for Israel through Balaam, Balaam stayed among the Moabites and was slain when Israel was purged of the foreign seducers who had come in among them (Numbers 31:8).

*The Territory of Gad* 13:24-28

24 And Moses gave inheritance unto the tribe of Gad, even unto the children of Gad according to their families.

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;

26 And from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim: and from Mahanaim unto the border of Debir;

27 And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Baphon, 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.

28 This is the inheritance of the children of Gad after their families, the cities, and their villages.

*11. What were the borders of the tribe of Gad? 13:24-28*

The men of Gad inhabited the center of the land east of the Jordan River. On the south, their border was Reuben; on the east, the Arabian desert, on the west, the Jordan River; and on the north, the land of the half-tribe of Manasseh. The territory is designated especially as centering around Mahanaim. Mahanaim itself figures into later Israelite history with a great deal of regularity and importance.

*12. Where was the Sea of Chinnereth? 13:27*

The Sea of Chinnereth is best known as the Sea of Galilee. It is also sometimes called the Sea of Tiberias, or Lake Gennesaret (Matthew 17:27; Luke 5:1; John 21:6). This body of water was very outstanding and important to those people who lived in Canaan. It made a good point for a boundary line, and the tribe of Gad evidently settled in the territory which had a border running from Mahanaim in a northwest direction to the south tip of the Sea of Galilee.

*The Territory of Manasseh 13:29-33*

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.

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:

31 And half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, 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.

32 These are the countries which Moses did distribute for inheritance in the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward.

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.

*13. In what area did the half-tribe of Manasseh settle east of Jordan? 13:29-33*

Children of Machir, a son of Manasseh, settled east of the Jordan. The rest of the descendants of Manasseh by his other children settled west of the Jordan. Thus, each of the two groups of the children of Manasseh became known as a half-tribe. The half-tribe which settled east of the Jordan inhabited the northernmost part of the land east of the Jordan. Their land was the former kingdom of Og, king of Bashan. In New Testament times it was the country known as Decapolis. On the west, it was bordered by the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River; on the south, by the land of Gad and especially Mahanaim; on the east, by the Arabian desert; and on the north, by the northernmost boundaries of the Promised Land, the land of Hamath.

*14. Who was Jair? 13:30*

Jair was the son of Segub, the descendant of Judah on his father's side (I Chronicles 2:22) and from Manasseh on his mother's side. Moses counted Jair among the children of Manasseh (Numbers 32:41; Deuteronomy 3:14), largely because of his conquest and settling of Gilead (I Chronicles 2:23). His descendants appeared to have settled in the southern part of the tribe of Manasseh, and some of the towns there are known as Havoth-Jair, or

villages of Jair (Numbers 32:41; Deuteronomy 3:14). They are variantly numbered as being twenty-three (I Chronicles 2:22), thirty (Judges 10:4), and sixty (I Chronicles 2:23; Joshua 13:30). It is thought that sixty may have been conquered by Jair and his brethren, with only twenty-three designated for him and seven others being added later.

15. *Who was Machir?* 13:31

Machir was the oldest son of Manasseh (17:1). He was old enough to have children before Joseph died in Egypt (Genesis 50:23). His grandson, Zelophehad, had only daughters; and a special decree was made about their inheritance (Numbers 27:1; 36:1; Joshua 17:3). It was his daughter who became the wife of Hezron and mother of Segub (I Chronicles 2:21). It was this line of the descendants of Manasseh who made special request for the land east of the Jordan, and their request was granted by Moses before he died. Joshua was fully informed about this as he began to make preparations for distributing the rest of the Promised Land to the other tribes.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 13

1. How many tribes settled west of Jordan?
2. How many tribes settled east of Jordan?
3. Which tribe received no land as an inheritance?
4. Which tribe was southernmost in the land east of Jordan?
5. What Amorite king had formerly ruled this area?
6. Which tribe was in the center in the land east of Jordan?
7. Which tribe was northernmost in the territory east of Jordan?
8. What king had formerly ruled this land?
9. How many cities were in this area?
10. By what name was this northern area known?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 14

- Vv. 1-5 *The plan for dividing the land.* God told Joshua to divide the land by "lot" (v. 2). This plan had already been selected during the days of Moses (Numbers 26:55, 56; 33:54; 34:13). The sacred lot was often used to decide such matters, God showing His will through this instrument.
- Vv. 6-12 *Caleb's request.* Caleb had been the member of the tribe of Judah selected to go with eleven other men to spy out the land. Joshua had been the man selected from the tribe of Ephraim. These two men had gone out together under Moses' order (Numbers 13:6, 8, 17-20). The passage here clarifies the statement which God made about Caleb in the days of Moses (Numbers 14:23, 24). Caleb believed God and expected that His promise would be fulfilled.
- Vv. 13-15 *Caleb's inheritance.* Joshua knew full well the faithful service rendered by Caleb. He must have known also about the promise which was made concerning the land. For that reason He blessed Caleb and gave him Hebron, the city made dear to the Israelites by Abraham's dwelling there. Since the tribe of Judah received all the land south of the north end of the Dead Sea, Hebron lay in the very center of Judah's territory. It was an ideal place for the faithful leader to settle. Full details of his taking the land are given later in Joshua 15:13-19 and Judges 1:12-15.



## JOSHUA

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God makes clear His will.* Sometimes the Bible seems repetitious to the reader. A statement may be repeated two or three times. The radical critics often charge that these repetitions indicate different authors who knew the same material and wrote it down. They further charge that the editors or redactors of the Scriptures put these different accounts together. On the other hand, it is apparent that the reason for repetitions in the Scripture is for emphasis. God made it crystal clear to Joshua that He wanted the land divided by lot. Joshua followed God's will.
2. *Blessed is the man who obeys God.* The psalmist says that the man who follows God will be like a tree planted by the river of water; his leaf will not wither; and whatsoever he does will prosper (Psalms 1). Caleb was this kind of a man. For eighty-five years God had given him strength.
3. *Men who follow God build fast friendships.* The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above. Joshua and Caleb had been sent out together with the spies (Numbers 13). They had been faithful to God's bidding and Joshua was happy to give Caleb the inheritance which God had indicated should be his.

### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

#### *The Plan for Dividing the Land 14:1-5*

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.

2 By lot was their inheritance, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe.

3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and a half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.

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.

5 As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

*1. Why was Eleazar involved in the allotting of the land?*

14:1

Eleazar, the priest, was the son of Aaron who had been Israel's first high priest. Aaron was the brother of Moses and had died while the children of Israel were wandering in the desert. When Joshua was appointed successor to Moses, he was informed that he should go to the high priest for assistance (Numbers 27:18-23). The high priest would make inquiry of the Lord concerning His will in some matters. The Lord's will would then be made known to Joshua, the leader of the people. The allotting of the land was evidently of such importance that the high priest was asked to assist Joshua in making the assignments.

*2. How did they cast lots? 14:2*

The use of lots was especially characteristic of the ancient world. It was a standing custom of the Athenians to assign the land of conquered enemies to colonists by lot. How Joshua took the lot on this occasion we are not told. The Rabbins conjecture that there were two urns, in one had been placed little tablets with the names of the tribes and in the other similar tablets with the names of the dis-

tricts; and that one of each was drawn at the same time. The decision was made by lot to prevent all disputes with reference to their respective possessions. It was also to remove every ground of discontent and complaint. Each tribe might cheerfully and thankfully accept the share awarded to it as the inheritance intended for it by God. Calvin says that casting of lots is not regulated by opinion, caprice, or authority of men. It is true that it seems as though this might have been easily accomplished if Joshua or the high priest had been divinely inspired to give to every tribe its inheritance. But, men are never so ready to submit cheerfully to the decisions of another man, even though they may be the result of divine inspiration, as they are to a decision arrived at by lot over which the Lord presides; for this seems to raise the choice above human caprice.

3. *Why were Ephraim and Manasseh considered two tribes?*

14:4

Both Ephraim and Manasseh were children of Joseph. When Jacob had come into Egypt and found Joseph alive, he was so thankful for the preservation of his son's life that he adopted the two sons of Joseph as his own sons. He gave them special blessings before he blessed his own sons. By adopting these two sons in the place of Joseph, Jacob thus had thirteen sons, but the tribe of Levi was not considered with the other tribes. For these reasons we still speak of the twelve tribes of Israel—Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Judah, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtail, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. Ephraim and Manasseh received inheritance along with the sons of Jacob, and each was counted as a tribe in Israel. This fact was mentioned here, and it is explained that they received an inheritance along with the descendants of the eleven sons of Jacob.

*Caleb's Request 14:6-12*

6 Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

7 Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.

8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God.

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.

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.

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.

12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim 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.

4. *Why was Caleb called a Kenazite? 14:6*

The word 'Kenazite' is a title given to Caleb or to Jephunneh. This reference causes some to believe that Caleb descended from an Edomite named Kenaz. Kenaz was one of the sons of Eliphaz, the oldest son of Esau. He became the leader of one of the Edomite tribes (Genesis

36:11, 15). Caleb also had a brother, the father of Othniel by this same name (Joshua 15:17, Judges 1:13; 3:9, 11). Several descendants of Caleb, or names which may be compared with Edomite names are listed here:

- a. Shobal (I Chronicles 2:52, Genesis 36:29)
- b. Korah (I Chronicles 2:43; Genesis 36:14, 16, 18)
- c. Elah (I Chronicles 4:15, Genesis 36:41)

The Kenezites are mentioned in Genesis 15:19 along with the Kenites and the Kadmonites who were among the nations to be dispossessed by Israel. These nations evidently dwelt somewhere in the southern part of Canaan.

5. *How long had Israel been in Canaan when Caleb made his request?* 14:7, 10

Caleb said that he was forty years old when he went to spy out the land (v. 7). This was in the days of Moses and at the beginning of the wanderings (Numbers 13). When he made his request for land in Canaan he was eighty-five years old (v. 10). Forty-five years had elapsed between the time of Caleb's espionage and the time of his request of Joshua. Forty years of this had been spent in wandering before they entered into the Promised Land. This would indicate that the wars of conquest occupied only five years.

6. *Why did Caleb call the ten spies his brothers?* 14:8

Caleb said the other spies had made the hearts of the people to melt, but he wholly followed the Lord his God. Caleb had very little in common with the spies bringing the evil report, but they were related to him by their common ancestry in Jacob. The brotherhood was one of the flesh and not one of the spirit. The ten spies had come from the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Napthali, Gad, Asher, Manasseh, and Benjamin. Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim. Caleb was with the tribe of Judah. These two tribes were honored in having such able men as Joshua and Caleb.

7. *Is there a record of Moses' promise to Caleb?* 14:9

Moses said of Caleb that he would see the land and that God would give to him the land that he had trodden on (Deuteronomy 1:36). This appears to be something of a general promise because God said to Joshua: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses" (1:3). It is also recorded that God said of Caleb he would be brought into the land and his seed would possess it (Numbers 14:24). All of this points to the promise as a rather general covenant made with Caleb. He probably was given the privilege of selecting whatever land he desired.

8. *What was the reason for Caleb's strength?* 14:11

Caleb said that he was as strong at eighty-five years of age as he had been when he was only forty. For this reason, some have called him a "cheerful old prevaricator." Such a title was given to him by an octogenarian who said that he knew he was not as strong at eighty as he had been at forty. Nevertheless, we find that the natural force of Moses was unabated when he died at one hundred twenty years of age. It was said of him that "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Caleb had wholly followed the Lord, and God had given him unusual longevity and strength.

9. *What mountain did Caleb want?* 14:12

It is not apparent from the Scripture text that Joshua and Caleb were in the southern part of Canaan when Caleb made his request, yet his request was so definite that there was no misunderstanding about which mountain he wanted. His reference may have been in general to the hill country of Judah, a mountainous section of the land which formed the central part of Canaan. Further clarification of the land he desired was made by his continued description of the territory.

10. *Who were the Anakim?* 14:12b

The Anakim were descendants of Anak. Anak is identified as the son of Arba. The Anakim were a terror to the children of Israel (Numbers 13:22-28), but Caleb was not afraid of them. He said if the Lord were with him, he would be able to drive them out. He was resting on the promises of God. He had no fear, even though these people are sometimes described as giants since the name means "the long neck ones."

11. *What cities were in the area?* 14:12c

Caleb described the land as being a land in which the cities were "great and fenced." Hebron is mentioned as one of these cities. Another was Debir, a city which was also known as "the book city"—Kirjath-Sepher (15:15). These cities had been the capital cities for kings who had entered into the southern coalition to fight against Joshua. The kings had been defeated in battle, but their cities had not been razed. The land had not been occupied. This was Caleb's task.

*Caleb's Inheritance* 14:13-15

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.

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.

15 And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

12. *What is known about Caleb's inheritance?* 14:13

Caleb's inheritance was within the borders of the tribe of Judah (15:13-19) and centered around the ancient city of Hebron, known from earlier times by the name of

Kirjath-arba, Arba being a great man among the Anakim whom the spies had encountered when they went through the land in the days of Moses. The author of the book of Judges gives a recapitulation of the giving of this land to Caleb in Judges 1:8-15. Caleb evidently gave the city itself to the Levites (21:11) and kept the surrounding territory for his own possession.

*13. Where is Hebron? 14:13*

Hebron was one of the important towns in the mountains of Judah. It stood between two thousand and twenty-eight hundred feet above sea level and lay between Beer-sheba and Jerusalem, being about equidistant from each other. In earlier times, it had been called Kirjath-Arba (Genesis 23:2), and Mamre (Genesis 13:18; 35:27). The modern name is *El-Khulil*. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had all lived here (Genesis 13:18; 35:27). Joshua had fought against the city (10:36), but Caleb finally occupied it. It was a city with a rich heritage and Caleb must have felt himself richly blessed to be allowed to settle here.

*14. What evidence is given here for the date of the writing of Joshua? 14:14*

It was noted by the author that Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb "unto this day." Such a reference would indicate the passage of some little time, but it is not sufficient evidence to warrant the assumption that the book was not written until many hundreds of years later. The fact that it is said it was the inheritance of Caleb would limit the time between the settlement and the date of writing to the lifetime of Caleb. Since the book was quite evidently written within the life span of Rahab, the harlot, who was allowed to live among the Israelites (6:25), it is apparent that the book was written sometime within that generation.



15. *What was the meaning of the old name of Hebron?*  
14:15

Hebron had been known as Kirjath-Arba. This name indicated it had been the home of a man named Arba. He is described as a great man among the Anakim, who were the descendants of Anak. The word ARBA means "four" but it is hard to see any significance to this name for the man. Arba is the name given to the father of Anak (Genesis 35:27). It is significant to note that at this time "the land was at rest from war."

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 14

1. Who assisted Joshua in distributing the land to the tribes of Israel?
2. Which tribe received no inheritance of land?
3. How many tribes received land east of Jordan?
4. How many tribes were left to receive an inheritance?
5. Who were the children of Joseph?
6. How old was Caleb when he went to spy out Canaan?
7. How old was he when he asked for land to be given to him?
8. What city was given to Caleb as his inheritance?
9. What was the former name of the city?
10. Why was Caleb granted this special request?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 15

Vv. 1-12 *Borders of Judah.* The territory which was given to Judah was outlined with specific points mentioned on each of the borders. The southern border reached from the south tip of the Dead Sea to a point farther south at Kadesh-barnea. From Kadesh-barnea the southern border ran to the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Sea formed the west border.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

The north border was on a line from the northern end of the Dead Sea west to the Mediterranean Sea. The east border was, therefore, the Dead Sea itself.

Vv. 13-19 *Caleb's inheritance*. Caleb had asked Joshua for the territory of his choice. This was generally outlined in chapter 14, but the material in chapter 15 added some of the details of Caleb's inheritance. His daughter was given in marriage to Othniel, who helped Caleb to conquer the land.

Vv. 20-63 *Cities of Judah*. The territory of Judah included some of the outstanding cities of all the land of Canaan. Many of them figured prominently into later Jewish history. Special notice was made of the fact that the Jebusites continued to live in Jerusalem, and the children of Judah did not drive them out. The city of Jerusalem later became the capital of all Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *It is good to be first in God's sight*. Judah was not the first son of Jacob. Three other sons were born to Jacob before Judah was born. Each of these had been of such character that Jacob by-passed them when he was bestowing his blessing and announcing the birth-right among his sons. When he came to Judah, Jacob said: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise" (Genesis 49:8). It is significant that Judah was the first of the tribes to be settled in Canaan. Later on, Judah was the first to go up to battle to exterminate the remaining Canaanites (Judges 1:1-2).

2. *Children are like arrows.* The psalmist said: "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalms 127:4-5). Caleb was blessed with a daughter who was dear to his heart, and he arranged for her to be married to a valiant man in Israel. When he set out to conquer the land which had been allotted to him, he promised the hand of his daughter in marriage to the man who would go up and successfully capture Debir. Caleb, himself, was a valiant warrior and his son-in-law proved to be of the same mettle. One of the great blessings of service in the army of the Lord is to be associated with those of like courageous spirit.
3. *No city is like the Holy City.* More than one hundred cities are mentioned by name in the closing verses of chapter 15. Some of them were very important and figured prominently in the later history of Israel. None was as prominent as Jerusalem, and it was quite appropriate for special mention to be made of its status. Although the children of Israel did not drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem, it was later captured by David and became "the City of the Great King." God used this city as a type of the Holy City which is to come down out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2).

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Borders of Judah 15:1-12*

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.

2 And their south border was from the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that looketh southward:

3 And it went out to the south side to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-barnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa:

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.

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:

6 And the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben:

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 En-shemesh, and the goings out thereof were at En-rogel:

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:

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 Kirjath-jearim:

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 Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah:

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.

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.

*1. Where was Edom? 15:1*

Edom was the territory inhabited by the descendants of Esau. It lay south of the Dead Sea. This land was the southern border of the tribe of Judah. The wilderness of Zin was a part of the Sinaitic Peninsula. In this area Israel had wandered for forty years in the days of Moses. When Israel left Kadesh-barnea, their major camp site in the wilderness of Zin, they asked the king of Edom for permission to travel through his territory. He refused their request, and the Israelites were forced to go all the way back to the head of the Gulf of Aqaba at Ezion-geber in order to go around the land of Edom (Numbers 20:14-21).

*2. Where was the wilderness of Zin? 15:1b*

The wilderness of Zin was the section of the Sinaitic Peninsula where the children of Israel had wandered for forty years. They had arrived here soon after leaving Mount Sinai, and it was from Kadesh-barnea that Moses had sent twelve spies to search out the land. They returned to this point prior to the death of Aaron and then turned back into the wilderness during the final year of their wanderings. This wilderness also formed a part of the border of Edom, the nation of Esau's descendants, who lived in an area south of the Dead Sea.

*3. Where was the Salt Sea? 15:2*

The Salt Sea was the Dead Sea. The Salt Sea is the lowest spot on the face of the earth. It was the southern

extremity of the Jordan River. The waters of the Jordan flow into the sea, but there is no outlet from the sea. As a result, the water stagnates and is filled with all kinds of minerals derived from the evaporation of the waters. Plant life and marine life is killed by the saltiness of the sea. For this reason, it is known as both the Salt Sea and the Dead Sea. This body of water formed the east border of Judah, and a line drawn in a westerly direction from the south end of the Dead Sea formed Judah's southern boundary line.

4. *What points were on the southern border of Judah?* 15:2

The southern border of Judah was along a line drawn from the south end of the Dead Sea. This border followed a southwesterly course until it came to Kadesh-barnea. From this point, it turned back in a northwesterly direction and finally went to the shore of the River of Egypt. The boundary then stretched along the River of Egypt to the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

5. *Where was the River of Egypt?* 15:4

Some commentators believe that the River of Egypt was the Nile River, but there is never any historical evidence of the children of Israel possessing all of the land between Canaan and the Nile River. Most maps will show a small river running in a northwesterly direction which empties into the Mediterranean Sea, a few miles south of Gaza. It was a stream which flowed rapidly in winter which was the rainy season, and it is now called Wady el-Arish.

6. *What was the east border of Judah?* 15:5

Judah's east border was the Dead Sea. The Scripture says that it was the "Salt Sea, even unto the end of Jordan." This was a reference to the fact that the eastern border ran from the junction with the south border at the southern end of the Dead Sea to the north end of the Dead Sea.

It was here at the north end of the Dead Sea that the Jordan emptied into the sea. This is the meaning of the phrase, "unto the end of Jordan." Of course, the Salt Sea is the Dead Sea.

7. *What was the north border of Judah? 15:5b-11*

Judah's north border was along a line which ran from the north end of the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The border passed along by the south side of the city of Jerusalem and continued on westward. It ran along the north side of the famous Philistine city of Ekron before reaching the shore of the Mediterranean. Kirjath-jearim was another well-known site on the northern border, for here travelers coming to Jerusalem from the west caught their first view of Jerusalem. It was customary for them to stop at this point on the border between Judah and Benjamin, refresh themselves, take in the magnificent view, and then continue gratefully on their way.

8. *What was the west border of Judah? 15:12*

Judah's west border was the Mediterranean Sea. The Scripture reference calls it "the Great Sea." It was larger than the Dead Sea or the Sea of Galilee, and thus deserving of this title. The land of Judah thus included the rich maritime plain from a point near Joppa all the way to the point where the River of Egypt emptied into the Mediterranean Sea. The fertile hill country from Jerusalem to Kadesh-barnea was also a part of this great tribe's territory and included such prominent centers as Bethlehem, Hebron, and Beer-sheba.

*Caleb's Inheritance 15:13-19*

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.

14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.

15 And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher.

16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

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?

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.

*9. What is the meaning of the name Kirjath-sepher?*  
15:15

Kirjath-sepher is a name meaning "a book-city." As the Scripture makes clear, this was the old name of the city of Debir. The city was probably a location of book storage, and thus the name was given to the community. This city was the prize which Caleb offered to the courageous man who would conquer the town. Since Achsah was also to be the bride of this conqueror, it was an honor to be desired. Othniel, son of Kenaz, performed this feat and received the city as a prize for his valor.

*10. What was Othniel's relationship to Caleb?* 15:17

Othniel is described as the son of Kenaz. He is also known as Israel's first judge (Judges 3:9). Since Caleb is described as a Kenezite (14:6) some suppose that his ancestor was also Kenaz, but Caleb is definitely described as the son of Jephunneh. It would appear, therefore, that



Kenaz was Caleb's younger brother and that Othniel was the son of Caleb's brother. The Masoretes have decided against this and have concluded that Othniel was Caleb's younger brother. Still, it seems better to believe that Kenaz was Caleb's brother and that Othniel was Caleb's nephew. Such marriages were not uncommon in ancient times; for we notice that Abraham married his half sister, and Nahor, Abraham's brother, married his niece, the daughter of Haran (Genesis 11:29). The marriage of a man with his brother's daughter, however, was not forbidden in the Law.

11. *For what field did Achsah ask?* 15:19

The field for which Achsah asked was not the field which surrounded the town of Debir for this would naturally go with the town. Achsah asked for a specific field which could be cultivated and which was abundantly supplied with springs of water, both an upper and lower spring being mentioned. Caleb granted her request. Thus, Caleb, the faithful judge, who was chosen out of the tribe of Judah was comfortably settled with his family in the midst of the land which was given to Judah.

*Cities of Judah 15:20-63*

20 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.

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,

22 And Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah,

23 And Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan,

24 Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,

25 And Hazor, Hadattah, and Keriöth, and Hezron, which is Hazor,

- 26 Amam, and Shema, and Moladah,
  - 27 And Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet,
  - 28 And Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah,
  - 29 Baalah, and Iim, and Azem,
  - 30 And Eltolad, and Chesil, and Hormah,
  - 31 And Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sansannah,
  - 32 And Lebaath, and Shilhim, and Ain, and Rimmon:
- all the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages:
- 32 And in the valley, Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah,
  - 34 And Zanoah, and En-gannim, Tappuah, and Enam,
  - 35 Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah,
  - 36 And Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages:
  - 37 Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdal-gad,
  - 38 And Dilean, and Mizpeh, and Joktheel,
  - 39 Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon,
  - 40 And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,
  - 41 And Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages:
  - 42 Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,
  - 43 And Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib,
  - 44 And Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages:
  - 45 Ekron, with her towns and her villages:
  - 46 From Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages:
  - 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:
  - 48 And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,
  - 49 And Dannah, and Kirjath-sannah, which is Debir,
  - 50 And Anab, and Eshtemoh, and Anim,
  - 51 And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages:

52 Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean,  
53 And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah,  
54 And Humtah, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron,  
and Zior; nine cities with their villages:

55 Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,  
56 And Jezreel, and Joddeam and Zanoah,  
57 Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their  
villages:

58 Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor,  
59 And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six  
cities with their villages:

60 Kirjath-baal, which is Kirjath-jearim, and Rabbah;  
two cities with their villages:

61 In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Se-  
cacah,

62 And Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and En-gedi;  
six cities with their villages.

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.

*12. How are the towns of Judah listed? 15:21-63*

The towns contained in the land of Judah were listed in four different districts. The land was naturally divided according to the richness of the soil with the southland or Negeb listed first. Following these towns were the towns in the lowland, or Shephelah, on the Mediterranean sea-coast. The third listing was of the cities in the hill country or mountain area. Last of all, a list of the cities in the barren land of Judah was given. Much of the land between Hebron and the Dead Sea was barren as was the land east of Jerusalem.

13. *How many towns were in the Negeb?* 15:21-32

The total is given in verse 32. Here it is said that there were twenty-nine cities in all. It is also said that there were some villages with these cities. By counting the total number of proper names, we arrive at the number thirty-seven. There were evidently twenty-nine important cities and some rather unimportant villages. All of these were grouped according to their general location. The first group was one of nine places (vv. 21-23). The second group (vv. 24-25) was a list of six places. The third group (vv. 26-28) was one of nine towns. The last group (vv. 29-32) was one of thirteen towns in the western portion of the Negeb.

14. *How many towns were in the Shephelah?* 15:33-47

Some fifty towns were in the hilly region or slopes on the western side of the territory of Judah. Fourteen of these towns were in the northern part of this area, while sixteen towns were listed in the actual plain in its full extent from north to south. The third group of towns, all in the southern half of the hilly region, comprised a total of nine towns. The fourth group, with eleven points mentioned, was a section later given to the tribe of Dan.

15. *How many towns were in the mountains?* 15:48-60

The towns in the mountains were divided into six different groups. The mountains in Judah rise sharply from the southern area and reach some three thousand feet above sea level in the area around Hebron. This mountainous region then runs north to a broad valley just north of Jerusalem. The range is one of limestone mountains with some jagged peaks, but the sides are often covered with vegetation. The whole area is crisscrossed by many fertile valleys. Likely these towns were located in these valleys, but the whole area was thickly dotted by the towns.

16. *How many towns were in the wilderness?* 15:61-62

Only six cities and their villages were in the land sometimes called the "Desert of Judah." This area ran along the Dead Sea from the northern border of Judah to Wady Fikreh on the south. For the most part, this area was uninhabited, but these six cities were located there. En-gedi is the best known of the six. A perennial spring supplies an ample abundance of water and even today the area is a welcome oasis in an otherwise extremely barren territory.

17. *What was the status of Jerusalem?* 15:63

Adoni-zedek, the king of the Jebusites, had been killed by Joshua. His city had been pillaged and sacked, but the Israelites had not inhabited it. As a result, the Jebusites had come back to live there. The children of Judah left them alone, and they dwelt for a long time in the midst of Israel. Technically, the city was in the territory given to the people of the tribe of Benjamin; but David captured it and established his capital there (II Samuel 5:6-10).

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 15

1. What country was on the southern border of Judah?
2. What wilderness was along this same southern border?
3. By what name was the Dead Sea called in this passage?
4. What was the best-known point along this south border?
5. What sea formed the east border of Judah?
6. What famous city was on the north border of Judah?
7. What was the west border of Judah?
8. What did Caleb offer to the man who captured Kirjath-sepher?
9. Who took the town?
10. Did the people of Judah occupy Jerusalem?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 16

- Vv. 1- 4 *The territory of the children of Joseph.* Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, but no tribe bore his name. Instead, two tribes were formed from the descendants of the two sons of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh. The land given to these two sons was outlined in general at the beginning of this chapter. The land lay between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and was in the very heart of the territory.
- Vv. 5- 8 *The boundaries of Ephraim.* Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph's children, but he was given the first choice of the land allotted to the sons of Joseph. His territory lay south of the territory given to Manasseh and his border was shared with Dan and Benjamin on the south.
- Vv. 9-10 *The later history of Ephraim.* The children of Ephraim settled in some cities which were outside the boundaries of their territory. These cities were in Manasseh, their brethren to the north. On the other hand, the children of Ephraim did not drive all the Canaanites from their cities. The city of Gezer, in particular, was occupied by the Canaanites who were made subject to task work.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *All things work together for good.* The entire story of Joseph is an exposition of the central theme of the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together

## JOSHUA

for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). The descendants of Joseph must have reveled in the history of their ancestor. They must have known of his suffering in prison. They must have thanked God many times for his deliverance and his exaltation to the rank of second man in the great kingdom of Egypt. As God fulfilled His promise to Joseph, so He fulfilled His promise to His children. They were given a bountiful inheritance in the Promised Land.

2. *Joseph was a fruitful bough.* When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, he said of Joseph, "Joseph is a fruitful bough" (Genesis 49:22). Jacob went on to describe him as being like a fruitful tree which was planted by a well where the roots could run deep and find water. He depicted Joseph as a tree whose branches ran over the wall. Such was certainly the case of Ephraim as we read that he not only fathered the children who inherited the Promised Land but that his children inherited some of the finest land of Canaan. In addition, Ephraim had separate cities which were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh (verse 9). All God's children should strive to be like the descendants of Joseph through Ephraim and Manasseh. With the blessing of God upon them, they would indeed be as "fruitful boughs."
3. *There is bad in the best of us.* The children of Joseph failed to drive out the Canaanites (verse 10). These Canaanites dwelt in Gezer. The Ephraimites did make them to become servile and placed them under tribute. Nonetheless, their instructions were to drive out these people. Since they failed to do this, we read that they were like thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes (Judges 2:3).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*The Territory of the Children of Joseph 16:1-4*

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 Beth-el,

2 And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,

3 And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea.

4 So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

*1. Who were the "children of Joseph"? 16:1*

Joseph had two children—Manasseh, the first-born; and Ephraim, his younger brother. In Joshua's day, the members of the two tribes are described as the "children of Joseph." These two sons were born to Joseph while he was in Egypt. Joseph married Asenath, who was the daughter of the high priest of On (Genesis 41:45). On is called Heliopolis by the Greeks, and it was the "city of the sun." Since the god who was symbolized by the sun to the Egyptians would be the chief god, it is believed that this was one of the chief religious cities of Egypt in Joseph's day. When his sons were born, Joseph called his first-born Manasseh, a word that signifies "forgetting." His reason for this was that God had made him forget all his toil and all his father's house. He wanted to forget his father's house because his brothers had sold him as a slave. Ephraim was named "fruitful." Joseph named his boy this because he said God had made him to be fruitful in the land of his affliction.



2. *What was the southern border of the inheritance of Ephraim and Manasseh?* 16:2

The border on the south went from the Jordan River near Jericho up into the hill country around Beth-el and moved on west to the old site of Luz. From there, it dropped down into Joppa and out to the seacoast. This was also the northern border of the tribe of Benjamin and Dan. These tribes then were the southern neighbors of Ephraim. Dan was on the west and Benjamin on the east along the lower border of the "children of Joseph." Beth-el was one of the most prominent points on the south border of Ephraim. This town was twelve miles from Jerusalem and on the right of the road between Jerusalem and Shechem. Ruins at this point bear the name Beitin. Luz was the old name of Beth-el, and the southern border of Ephraim ran along past the old town to Ataroth-adar. The border then went down to the territory possessed by the Japhletites, an ancient tribe who dwelt on the hills in the west part of Ephraim's territory. Beth-horon lay on the boundary between Benjamin and Ephraim and was settled by the Kohathites. The upper village is some four miles from Gibeon, and marks the descent down into the Philistine plains. The border of the territory assigned to the children of Joseph finally reached to Gezer, a town that figured prominently in later Israelite history, and the site of which has recently been excavated by a number of capable archaeologists, including Professor Reuben Bul-lard of the Bible College of The Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Finally, the southern border reached to the Mediterranean Sea.

3. *Who were the Archites?* 16:2b

The Archites are a family of people otherwise unknown except for this reference here. They evidently lived on the south border of Ephraim between Beth-el and Ataroth. Hushai, the beloved counselor of David, was an

Archite (II Samuel 15:32; 16:16; 17:5, 14). Any village which belonged to them is not known, their settlement having been lost in the passage of time.

4. *Where is Gezer?* 16:3

Gezer stands right on the edge of the northern promontory of Japhleti and overlooks all of the plain of Sharon and on out to the Mediterranean Sea. It is about one half of the distance between Joppa and Jerusalem and was a very important outpost in the defenses of the land of Canaan. The site was excavated in modern times by Dr. MacAlester, and later by a team under the auspices of Hebrew Union College. Gates built in the time of Solomon have been discovered, and a worship area dating back into the third millenium before Christ is also in evidence.

5. *What was the western border of the "children of Joseph"?* 16:3b

The western border of the territory of the "children of Joseph" was the Mediterranean Sea. The scripture says, "the goings out thereof are at the sea" (16:3b). No western border is given in so many words, but it goes without saying that the Mediterranean Sea was the western border of both Ephraim and Manasseh. The southern border was given since this divided the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh from the territory of all the other tribes to the south. In giving the border of the children of Ephraim, the author makes it clear that the territory was divided between the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The northern border of the tribe of Manasseh is given in the next chapter.

6. *Why did Manasseh and Ephraim receive their inheritance together?* 16:4

Since both Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, they were given a single portion of land. This portion was then divided between them. In addition, Manasseh also

was divided with part of his descendants living east of the Jordan while others lived west of the Jordan. In receiving this double portion of land, Joseph indeed became "a fruitful bough by a fountain; his branches ran over the wall" (Genesis 49:22).

*The Boundaries of Ephraim 16:5-8*

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 Ataroth-addar, unto Beth-horon the upper;

6 And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;

7 And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.

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.

*7. What border of Ephraim was given first? 16:5*

A brief description of the southern boundary was repeated in verse five. A more minute description of this boundary was given in verses one through three. Upper Beth-horon was mentioned in verse five instead of Lower Beth-horon, but the two places stood quite close together. No difficulty is created by this difference. Since the border on the south was shared by two other tribes, Dan and Benjamin, it is given more careful attention. Manasseh and Ephraim were both sons of Joseph and had much in common. The border between them is not as carefully defined or given as much attention.

8. *Where was the border between Manasseh and Ephraim?*  
16:6

The border of the children of Ephraim was defined by a line drawn from the area near Shechem, first to the west and then to the east. Shechem and its territory were central in the land. The people of Israel had gathered on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim for the readings of the blessings and the curses when they first entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Ephraim's border was first described by pointing out the boundary which ran west from this central spot in the mountains to the Mediterranean Seacoast on the west. The boundary line was next described as it stretched from this central location to the Jordan River.

9. *What points were on the northeastern boundary of Ephraim?* 16:6-8

The northern boundary of Ephraim was given in two sections. A central point was selected and then the border as it extended to the east was described in detail. It stretched from Michmethah to Taanath-shiloh and then went along to the east of Janohah. Michmethah was near Shechem, and Taanath-shiloh was in the direction one would take in going to the Jordan River. It is thought to be the present Tana, a heap of ruins southeast of Nablus. Janohah is to be found in the ruins of Janun. The Ataroth is a different place from Ataroth-addar mentioned in verses two and five. This spot must have been on the eastern slope of the mountains which stretched down to the Jordan Valley. Naarath was found some six miles northeast of Jericho. Ephraim's boundary then went down to the territory of Jericho, but probably did not reach to the city itself since Jericho was given to the tribe of Benjamin. At this point, Ephraim's northern border coincided with her southern border and stretched out to the Jordan River along the boundary of the tribe of Benjamin.

10. *Did Jericho belong to Ephraim?* 16:7

The border of Ephraim is described as coming "to Jericho" (verse 7). From other scriptures (Joshua 18:21), it is evident that Jericho belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. The border finally reached the Jordan River on the east. A prominent feature of the west border was a small stream which flowed across the Philistine plain to the Mediterranean Sea. This River Kanah figured prominently in establishing the border between Ephraim and Manasseh. It was customary for those laying out borderlines to use prominent physical features of the land, such as this river, to determine boundaries. The river itself was not important for commerce, but it did afford a water supply, especially in the rainy season. Its primary importance, however, was in establishing this border for Ephraim and Manasseh.

11. *What was the east border of the children of Ephraim?*  
16:7

The east border of the children of Ephraim was the Jordan River. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea. The land thus stretched all the way from the river to the sea and was some of the finest land of Canaan. Many future events in Israel's history occurred in the highlands which belonged to Ephraim. The capital of the northern kingdom was established in this territory. Several centuries later, the prophets worked in this area with great zeal since the false worship established by Jeroboam permeated the land. Ephraim was of great importance in the later history of Israel, and her land became filled with historical sites.

12. *What points were in the western half of Ephraim's northern border?* 16:8

The narrator returned to the point from which he departed in giving the eastern half of the northern border and described the western half of the northern border of Ephraim. This border went west from the central point

to Tappuah. This point was west of Shechem and has not yet been discovered. Ephraim's northern border then ran to the brook Kanah and followed it out to the Mediterranean Sea.

13. *In what way was the inheritance "by their families"?*  
16:8

When Moses took the census of the children of Israel as they lay encamped in the steppes of Moab, he found that there were 32,500 men in Ephraim who were twenty years of age and over. At that time, he also listed the following men as heads of families: Shuthelah, Becher, and Tahan. He also listed one of the sons of Shuthelah who was named Eran. These men made up the families of the Shuthalhites, Bachrites, Tahanites, and Eranites (Numbers 26:35, 36). The tribe of Ephraim with these many thousands of people was subdivided into these family groups. Each one would be given enough land to meet the needs of its members. Ample provision was made for each tribe to have the territory which it needed.

### *The Later History of Ephraim 16:9, 10*

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.

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

14. *What were "the separate cities"?* 16:9

The children of Ephraim evidently conquered, occupied, and possessed cities which were outside their borders. They did not settle cities in many of the other tribes, but it is specified that they did have such cities in the land which was given to the children of Manasseh. Since both

Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, they had a common heritage. This would make it easy for them to dwell together in harmony. The fact that they did occupy these cities must have led to a rather indefinite boundary line being maintained between these two tribes. Various reasons have been put forth as answers to the question about Ephraim settling scattered towns and villages in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. Most commentators believe that after the boundaries had been fixed there was an evident disproportion in the amount of land given to the very numerous children of Ephraim. Since they were so numerous it was felt that they had received too small a possession and that therefore they settled cities in Manasseh in order to accommodate their many people. This is quite possibly the major reason for this extension of Ephraim's territory, but there may have been other reasons which were not recorded in the historical narrative.

*15. What Canaanites remained in the land of Ephraim?*  
16:10

The Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer were not driven out by the Ephraimites. They continued to dwell among the Israelites, although they were reduced to a state of servitude. God had directed His people to annihilate the Canaanites, but many of the tribes failed to comply completely with God's demand. As a result, these Canaanites lived among them and seduced many of them to commit idolatry and other abominable practices. These foreign peoples living among them were like "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides" (Numbers 33:55). Gezer was such an impregnable fortress that it was evidently very difficult for the Ephraimites to drive out the Canaanites who occupied the site. Fortifications which have been found there in recent years under the expeditions led by MacAlester, and in later times under Dr. Nelson Glueck, have uncovered ruins of massive walls which ran the

entire length of the last mountain height on the northern end of Shephelah. This site would be almost impossible to take from the north. It would likewise be inaccessible from the lowlands of the Philistine plain on the west. Since valleys surrounded on the south and east, it was similarly hard to attack from any of these points. The Ephraimites could have taken the city with God's help, but they were dilatory in their duties. When the book of Joshua was written, the Canaanites were still there. The author says that they were there "unto this day."

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 16

1. What two tribes are called "children of Joseph"?
2. What river was on the east border of these tribes?
3. What sea was on their west border?
4. Near what town did the southern border of the children of Joseph begin on the east?
5. Was Beth-el along the southern border of the children of Joseph?
6. Along what river did the northern border of Ephraim run out to the sea?
7. Did Jericho belong to Ephraim?
8. In what tribe's territory did Ephraim inhabit separate cities?
9. From what town did Ephraim fail to drive out the Canaanites?
10. Were these Canaanites made to serve under tribute?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 17

- Vv. 1-13 *Inheritance of Manasseh west.* One half of the tribe of Manasseh received land east of the Jordan; but the other half was to have territory which was north of Ephraim, lying between



## JOSHUA

the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Manasseh was the elder of Joseph's two sons, but he did not receive the preeminence. Ephraim was preferred above the older Manasseh when Jacob crossed his hands and gave his right-hand blessing to Ephraim and his left-hand blessing to Manasseh (Genesis 48).

Vv. 14-18 *The complaint of the children of Joseph.* The descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh complained, saying they were a large and prosperous group of people and needed more land than was given to them. Joshua heard their complaint and offered a very suitable solution. He suggested that they develop to the fullest the land in which they were living before they asked for more. Since they had not yet fully conquered the territory, this was a challenge to the children of Joseph to set an example for the rest of the tribes by reaching the fullness of their potential.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Neither male nor female.* In Christ there is no bond or free; neither is there male or female (Galatians 3:28). Each has a role to play by nature, and a woman's soul is just as precious in the sight of God as the soul of a man. The same was ultimately true under the Old Testament dispensation. The Bible teaches that man has the preeminence, but woman's place as a help meet for him has always been respected in the eyes of God. This truth was borne out in the provisions made for men who had no sons. In such cases, their daughters inherited their land and goods.

2. *It is good for brothers to dwell together.* How pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalms 133:1). This was the cry of the psalmist, and such a condition is exemplified by the associations of Ephraim and Manasseh. They were brethren. They were both sons of Joseph. Jacob had placed his hands on both of them and adopted them as his own sons. When the inheritances of the people of Israel were assigned, Ephraim and Manasseh had lots which were next to each other. Brethren in Christ should dwell together in such peace and pleasantness as well.
3. *"Stir what you have."* During World War II, sugar was rationed in the United States. A preacher told about asking for a little more sugar for his coffee as he ate lunch in a restaurant. The waitress' curt reply was, "Stir what you have." This is what Joseph told Ephraim and Manasseh to do. They were complaining that they needed more land. Joshua told them to make better use of what they had. Christians should use their talents to the fullest of their ability instead of complaining because they do not have more talents.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *Inheritance of Manasseh West 17:1-13*

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he was the first-born of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.

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 Hephher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the

male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families.

3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, 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.

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.

5 And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan;

6 Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

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 En-tappuah.

8 Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim;

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:

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.

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 En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even three countries.

12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

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.

1. *Who was Machir?* 17:1

Machir was the eldest son of Manasseh. This inheritance had already been given to him (Numbers 32:39-42). His people had led in conquering Bashan, and his descendants were given the territory as an inheritance. This land lay east of the Sea of Galilee and was the north end of the territory east of Jordan. Their fierce warring had earned for Machir the title of "a man of war." Their land had formerly been the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan.

2. *How many sons did Manasseh have?* 17:2

Six other sons of Manasseh were listed in addition to Machir. The men listed were not the men who settled the land but the sons of Manasseh from whom those Israelites of Joshua's day were descendants. The total of these men was 52,700 as they were numbered before crossing the Jordan into Canaan (Numbers 26:34).

3. *Who was Zelophehad?* 17:3

Zelophehad was a descendant of Manasseh who had no sons to inherit his land. His daughters petitioned Moses in this respect. Moses and the elders decided that it was proper for them to inherit as long as they married men who were members of their own tribe (Numbers 36). This became a statute in Israel. Such a provision prevented the woman's inheriting land in her tribe and her husband's

inheriting land in another tribe. At the same time, it gave recognition to the woman as an heiress. The five daughters were given by name here and in Numbers 36.

4. *Did the territory of Manasseh include Shechem?* 17:7

Some confusion exists in the minds of some commentators who study these statements about the land, but it seems apparent from the text that the land of Manasseh stopped at Michmethah which lay "before Shechem." Other passages of Scripture bear out the fact that Ephraim possessed Shechem. Manasseh's territory lay north of Shechem. Shechem was an important site. Abraham first stopped there when he entered Canaan (Genesis 12:6). Jacob bought land there when he returned from Haran (Genesis 33:19). In the present time, it is the center of bustling activity; and it has always been an important site in Palestine.

5. *Who possessed Tappuah?* 17:8

The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim. Men of Ephraim possessed it. At the same time it is clear that it lay on the border of Ephraim and Manasseh. The men of Manasseh probably possessed the fields around Tappuah on the north, but the town itself was inhabited by the Ephraimites. Many important border towns enjoyed this kind of situation. Although legally belonging to one tribe, some of these cities fell largely under the commercial and social influence of a neighboring tribe.

6. *Where was the river Kanah?* 17:9

The river Kanah rose in the hill country of Ephraim and made its way westward to the Mediterranean Sea. It was a natural boundary between Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh had the land lying on the north and Ephraim possessed the land on the south of the river. The stream was not navigable; but it did provide water, especially in the rainy season. Its chief importance, however, was in its being a landmark which served as a boundary.

7. *What sea was Manasseh's west border?* 17:10a

The Mediterranean Sea formed the west border of Manasseh. The maritime plain was theirs for the taking. The sloping hills which rose up from the sea were also available to the men of Manasseh. This gave the people an outlet to the sea and its commerce as well as access to the rich marine life which was in the sea. Since both Ephraim and Manasseh failed to drive out the Philistines who lived along the seacoast, neither of these Israelite tribes became great seafaring people.

8. *What were the northern and eastern borders of Manasseh?* 17:10b

On the north, Manasseh reached to the territory of the tribe of Asher. On the east, these people reached to the territory of the tribe of Issachar. In actuality, his east border reached to the Jordan River, but the southern border of Issachar ran in a diagonal line from the northwest to the southwest and thus formed much of Manasseh's northeastern border.

9. *Why did Manasseh possess cities in Issachar?* 17:11

Beth-shean, Ibleam, Dor, En-dor, and Megiddo, with their towns, were listed as cities which were in Issachar but possessed by the people of Manasseh. Natural borders, such as the Kishon River, apparently made it practical for Manasseh to possess these rather than Issachar, since they lay south of the river and across the river from the main part of Issachar's territory. V. G. Blaikie, (*The Book of Joshua, The Expositor's Bible*, page 304), says that these cities were very important to the defense of the Esdraelon Plain and that it was therefore necessary that they be held by some tribe stronger than Issachar.

10. *Why could Manasseh not drive out the Canaanites?* 17:12

Manasseh may have been numerous and strong, but she was not able to do all God expected the people to do.

They possessed many cities, even taking possession of some which lay in the territory of her neighbors, but the people could have done better. Perhaps they trusted in their rich heritage and did not reach the potential which was possible for them. Heredity is never a guarantee of success; success takes hard work.

*11. How did most of the children of Israel deal with the Canaanites? 17:13*

God had commanded the children of Israel to drive out the Canaanites. He expected His people to exterminate them, lest they pollute the people with their idolatrous ways. Evidently, the rest of the children of Israel were like the children of Manasseh. They were not strong enough or ambitious enough to do what God commanded them to do. They allowed the Canaanites to be subject to task work. This was the agreement made with the Gibeonites who had deceived Joshua. The Gibeonites were made to be hewers of wood and drawers of water (Joshua 9). The people of Israel put the Canaanites under tribute and made them perform servile tasks.

*The Complaint of the Children of Joseph 17:14-18*

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?

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.

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 Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.

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:

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.

*12. What was the request of the children of Joseph? 17:14*

The children of Joseph asked for more than one lot and one portion. Ephraim must have led in this request. They were saying that since the descendants of Manasseh received two portions in two lots—one east of the Jordan and one west of the Jordan—they, too, should receive an equal amount of territory. Manasseh west may have joined in the request, since the complaint is attributed to “the children of Joseph.”

*13. What was Joshua's answer? 17:15-18*

In effect, Joshua told them to make full use of what they had. The territory which they possessed was very mountainous, but it would be possible for them to terrace the hillsides and grow crops on the slopes. The Perizzites were Canaanite villagers; and if the children of Joseph had driven out all these people from their villages and taken possession of them, they would have had plenty of room.

*14. Why mention the chariots of iron? 17:18*

No record is made prior to this time of the Israelites having any chariots for warfare. Their battles were fought by men with swords and spears. Her soldiers were on foot and at a disadvantage when going against those who had these chariots. Jabin, king of Hazor, the leader of the northern coalition, had used these chariots against the children of Israel (Joshua 11:6). The people of Israel had defeated these Canaanites in this engagement. The chil-



dren of Joseph were fainthearted in feeling that they would not be able to possess the land since their enemies had these chariots. They were evidently looking for an excuse.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 17

1. Who was Machir?
2. Who was Zelophehad?
3. Where was Bashan?
4. What was Manasseh's western border?
5. Which tribe lay south of Manasseh?
6. What tribe lay north of Manasseh?
7. What tribe lay east of Manasseh?
8. What river lay between Manasseh and Ephraim, near their western borders?
9. What did the children of Israel do to the Canaanites who lived among them?
10. What was the name given to the mountain in the land of the children of Joseph?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 18

Vv. 1-10 *The remaining land divided into portions.* There were seven portions of land left to be assigned; and after the children of Joseph were settled in the midst of the land, the remaining territory was divided into lots for those tribes which had not yet received their portions. Joshua was determined to complete the work which had been assigned to him by God.

Vv. 11-20 *Benjamin's inheritance.* The first tribe of the seven remaining without an inheritance was Benjamin. The territory assigned to these people lay just north of the land given to the

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

tribe of Judah. The east border was the Jordan River. The territory was rather small, reaching only to the hill country which was in the center of the land. On the west of Benjamin's territory was the land eventually assigned to Dan. On the north of Benjamin's territory was the land assigned to the tribe of Ephraim.

Vv. 21-28 *List of Benjamin's cities.* A total of twenty-six cities were listed as belonging to Benjamin. Twelve of these were in the eastern half of the land, and fourteen were in the western part of the territory. Most of these cities figured prominently in later Israelite history. Most important among these cities was the city later known as Jerusalem.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God's house should be in the midst of His people.* The Lord had said that Israel was not to worship on every high hill (Deuteronomy 12). He said that He would appoint a place for His house to be established among His people. Although the Tabernacle was more or less temporary, it was important for it to be set up in the midst of the land. In like fashion, every community should have the church in its midst. God's people should make provisions for His house to be established among them.
2. *A place prepared for all.* The children of Israel came into a land which was intended for them. It was described as a land flowing with milk and honey. There was to be room for all the millions among the people of Israel. Such a beneficent provision points to God's preparation of a city not made with hands. Jesus said

He was going away to prepare a place for those who will be with Him in His glory (John 14:1 ff.). Every child of God will have a place in the heavenly home, just as every Israelite had a home in the days of Joshua.

3. *God's people should be busy with His work.* Joshua was old and impatient with laziness and irregularity. "How long are ye slack to possess the land?" he asked. When Jesus' mother asked why He had stayed behind in Jerusalem, He answered by asking if she did not know He was busy with His Father's business. Such should be the tenor of the life of every Christian.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *The Remaining Land Divided Into Portions 18:1-10*

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.

2 And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

9 And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host at Shiloh.

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.

1. *Where was Shiloh?* 18:1

Shiloh was in the midst of the territory assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. It was admirably situated near the geographic center of the land. It lay east of the road which ran along the center of the ridge which formed the backbone of the Promised Land. In Shiloh, the house of God was established; and here it stayed through the three hundred years of the time of the judges. Shiloh was the center of Israel's worship down into the reign of David. Only when David made preparation for the building of the Temple was the site of Israel's worship moved from this place which became hallowed to them through the worship which centered there around the Tabernacle.

2. *How many surveyors were employed?* 18:4

Twenty-one men went out to survey the land which had not yet been assigned to the tribes. Their work consisted not in the taking of accurate measurements of all the borders, but in preparing a list of the towns in the

different parts of the land. Probably this included an account of the size and character of these towns. They would have made a notice of the quality and condition of the soil, but it hardly would have been necessary for them to penetrate into every corner of the land and every town which was still inhabited by the Canaanites in order to accomplish their end. Since only seven tribes were involved in receiving this territory, three men were selected from each of these tribes; and the total of twenty-one workers would have been sufficient to accomplish the task in a very short time.

3. *Which tribes had already been settled?* 18:5

Three tribes—Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh—had land east of the Jordan. Judah and “the children of Joseph”—Ephraim and Manasseh—were settled west of the Jordan. Since Levi was to have no land as a possession, only seven tribes remained without a portion of land. These were Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan.

4. *Why did Levi receive no inheritance?* 18:7

It was understood that “the priesthood of the Lord” was the inheritance of Levi. They had no time or need for land in which to plant grains, vines, and trees. They were to give themselves completely to the service of God, teaching the law, protecting the rights of the oppressed, and in general, fulfilling their mission as the Lord’s peculiar possession. In return for these services, they were to receive forty-eight cities in which to dwell; and their livelihood was to be provided by the other tribes who gave a tithe of all their income to the Lord for the support of the Levites.

5. *How did the surveyors work?* 18:8, 9

The description was not a measurement made in feet and inches. The art of surveying was well known in Egypt in ancient times. The Israelites would have learned

this skill while in bondage there, but their description which was written in the book was of a general nature. The men chosen for this purpose were able to perform their tasks without being hindered by the Canaanites. These Canaanites had been crushed, although not exterminated, by the victories which the people of Israel had gained. When the formal record was finished, they brought it back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh. Joshua then assigned the land as he cast the sacred lot.

*Benjamin's Inheritance 18:11-20*

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.

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 Beth-aven.

13 And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, which is Beth-el, southward; and the border descended to Ataroth-adar, near the hill that lieth on the south side of the nether Beth-horon.

14 And the border was drawn thence, and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that lieth before Beth-horon southward; and the goings out thereof were at Kirjath-baal, which is Kirjath-jearim, a city of the children of Judah: this was the west quarter.

15 And the south quarter was from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah:

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 En-rogel,

17 And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, 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.

18 And passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah:

19 And the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah 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.

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.

*6. Which lot came up first? 18:11*

The first lot to be assigned was that given to Benjamin. Benjamin was the son of Jacob by Rachel (Genesis 35). The children of Benjamin inherited a territory which lay north of Judah and south of Ephraim. His land did not extend all the way from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, but reached to the boundary of the children of Dan who had territory on the west of the territory of Benjamin.

*7. What were the borders of Benjamin? 18:12*

The border of Benjamin on the east was the Jordan River. From a point on the river just north of Jericho the northern boundary ran almost due west to Beth-el, or Luz, as it was called in the early times. The western border ran directly south from lower Beth-horon to Kirjath-jearim. The southern border ran directly east from Kirjath-jearim to the north shore of the Dead Sea. The tribe of Ephraim was on the north, Dan was on the west, and Judah was on the south. The Jordan River (and across it, the tribe of Gad) was on the east.

8. *Where was Jebusi?* 18:16

Jebusi was the city of the Jebusites. This site later was captured by David and became known as Jerusalem, David's capital and the capital of the succeeding kings of Judah until it was finally captured by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This passage of Scripture clearly indicates that the site lay within the border of the tribe of Benjamin. It is mentioned again later in the list of the cities which belonged to Benjamin (18:28).

*List of Benjamin's Cities 18:21-28*

21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz,

22 And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el,

23 And Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah,

24 And Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages:

25 Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth,

26 And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,

27 And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,

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.

9. *Why was Jericho mentioned?* 18:21

Although Jericho was destroyed earlier, its site was important. The city itself was not rebuilt until much later in the days of Ahab. Nevertheless, the site was important to Israel and was worthy of mention among the cities possessed by the men of Benjamin. In addition, certain smaller villages pertained to most of the larger cities; and such was probably the case with Jericho.



10. *Where was Beth-el?* 18:22

Beth-el was in the hill country, and was famous as well as hallowed among the Israelites since it was there that the father of the twelve sons who were heads of the tribes of Israel had worshiped. At Beth-el Jacob received the vision of a ladder set upon the earth and saw angels going up and down on it (Genesis 28). Abraham had pitched his tent near Beth-el, with Beth-el on the west and Ai on the east (Genesis 12); and the people of Benjamin must have counted themselves fortunate to have such an important spot within their borders.

11. *Where was Gibeon?* 18:25

Gibeon was a Canaanite city west and a little south of Beth-el. The Hivites, a group of the Canaanites, had lived here. These people had tricked the children of Israel, pretending to have come from a great distance to make peace with God's people (Joshua 9). It was the defecting of these people which led to the formation of the southern coalition of Canaanite kings who attacked Israel and were defeated on the occasion when Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still, thus giving more time for his warriors to attack their enemies (chapter 10).

12. *Why mention Ramah?* 18:25

Ramah was the home of Samuel. It was a high place, and the name itself means "height." Such a high hill rises above Gibeon, and is pointed out as the burial place of Samuel. The land of Benjamin was filled with sites which became famous as events in later Israelite history transpired. Other sites to the north of Gibeon are also identified as Ramah's or "heights" and are considered to have been the Ramathaim-Zophim, the "heights of Zuph," the home of Samuel's parents (I Samuel 1:1).

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 18

1. Where was the Tabernacle located?
2. How many tribes remained without land?
3. How many men went out from each tribe to survey the remaining land?
4. Which tribe had no inheritance of land in Israel?
5. Where was the record made of the survey?
6. Which tribe was first to receive a part of the remaining land?
7. What was the east border of this tribe?
8. What two cities were on the western border of this tribe?
9. What famous city, which was later David's capital, was within this tribe's border?
10. How many cities were within this tribe's borders?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 19

- Vv. 1- 9 *The inheritance of Simeon.* Simeon received land within the boundaries of the territory of Judah. Jacob had said of Simeon and Levi, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7b). Apparently this prediction of God's future dealings with Simeon was partially fulfilled when the men of Simeon received inheritance within the borders of another tribe. Generally speaking, Simeon inherited land within a twenty-mile radius around Beersheba. A number of cities are mentioned as being within the land which fell to this tribe, cities like Ziklag, Ramah, Moladah, and Sharuhén.

## JOSHUA

Vv. 10-16 *The inheritance of Zebulun.* The tribe of Zebulun received land in Galilee, with boundaries along the Kishon River on the south, the tribe of Asher on the west, and the tribe of Naphtali on the north and east. The village of Nazareth, not listed at this time but made famous in New Testament times because the home of Joseph and Mary which was there, was in the territory of Zebulun. The land was varied, reaching on the east almost to the Sea of Galilee and on the west to the foot of Mount Carmel. Fertile plains were broken by mountain ranges, and little streams watered it well.

Vv. 17-23 *The inheritance of Issachar.* A general outline of the territory of Issachar would be achieved by drawing a line from Mount Carmel east to the Jordan River over Mount Gilboa to form the southern boundary and another line from Mount Carmel east to the Jordan River over Mount Tabor to form the northern boundary. The land lay south and east of the land belonging to Zebulun and north of the eastern half of the territory of Manasseh. Within Issachar's borders were such important cities as Jezreel, Shunem, En-gannim, and Tabor. The territory was very rich in mineral resources and was mostly fertile soil, the plain of Jezreel being famous for its fertility.

Vv. 24-31 *The Inheritance of Asher.* Asher received land along the Mediterranean seacoast. The land lay north of Mount Carmel and stretched all the way to the borders of Tyre. Asher's territory extended inland about half the distance to the

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

Sea of Galilee and the upper waters of the Jordan River. The land was rich, and the people of Asher were so far north that they engaged in commerce with the great Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon and were not as active in the affairs of Israel as were some of the other tribes. It is interesting to notice that Anna, the prophetess who was in the Temple at the time of Jesus' presentation, was of this tribe (Luke 2:36).

Vv. 32-39 *The inheritance of Naphtali.* Naphtali also received land in Galilee. On the west was Asher; on the south, Zebulun and Issachar; on the east, the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River; and on the north, the region of Hamath. Naphtali and Asher thus received the northernmost land which was allocated to Israel.

Vv. 40-48 *The inheritance of Dan.* Dan's territory was perhaps the smallest of all; but it was known as the garden spot of southern Palestine. Dan was situated on the Mediterranean seacoast, and the territory extended inland to the western boundary of the land of Benjamin. Thus the borders were Ephraim on the north; Benjamin on the east; Judah on the south; and the Mediterranean Sea on the west. Joppa was an important town on Dan's border, and the tribe became famous in Bible history as the homeland of Samson.

Vv. 49-51 *The inheritance of Joshua.* The Israelites gave Joshua an inheritance in the midst of them. It is said that it was given him "according to the word of the Lord." This does not refer to a

## JOSHUA

divine oracle, but to a promise which Joshua had probably received from God at the same time as Caleb. It was only fitting and proper for these people to give a place for their leader to live. God's promises are always fulfilled. God had told Abraham that He would make of him a great nation. He told him at one time that He would make his children as numerous as the sands on the seashore. Over 300,000 men of war, twenty years of age and older, were counted among these tribes whose inheritances are listed in this chapter. God had, furthermore, promised Jacob that the land whereon he lay around Beth-el would be given to his descendants. Under Joshua's administration, this promise was also fulfilled.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *To each according to his several ability* (Matthew 25:15b). In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught us that God gives to each of us according to his ability. The land given to the tribes of Israel was suited to their needs. Not only did Joshua, their military leader, and Eleazar, their priest, use their best judgment in making these assignments; but they asked for God's guidance in the matter. They cast the sacred lots in determining the portions to be given to each of the tribes, and in this chapter we read of the completion of this work.
2. *Last but not least.* When they had made an end of distributing the land for an inheritance by the borders of it to all the children of Israel, the people made proper provision for Joshua, the son of Nun; and they gave him an inheritance in the midst of them. The grand warrior of God had led them from victory unto victory.

He had also guided and inspired them until they had completed the work of settling the land. Their giving him a place to dwell in their midst was a fitting reward for his years of faithful service. In addition, as the text points out, it was "according to the commandment of the Lord." Since Joshua was a member of the tribe of Ephraim, his inheritance was appropriately in the hill country of Ephraim, where he built a city and lived in it.

3. "*Let all things be done decently and in order*" (I Corinthians 14:40). This injunction was given to the Christians in Corinth, but it is a principle which has always been applicable to God's work. The orderliness of the processes by which God called the universe into being according to the Biblical record (Genesis 1) has amazed and intrigued the keenest scientific minds. The arrangements made for Israel's encampment and marching during the wilderness wanderings explains a part of the process by which God forged a nation out of a band of emancipated slaves (Numbers 2-4). The way in which God directed the orderly allotment of land to the tribes of Israel is another incident which elicits reverence from all God-fearing people.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *The Inheritance of Simeon 19:1-9*

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.

2 And they had in their inheritance Beer-sheba, and Sheba, and Moladah,

3 And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem,

4 And Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,

5 And Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

6 And Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhén; thirteen cities and their villages:

7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

8 And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

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.

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1. *Who was Simeon?* 19:1

Simeon was the son of Jacob by Leah. He was the second son born to them; and when he was born, his mother gave him a name that indicated that her petitions had been heard of the Lord. His name comes from the Hebrew verb, *shamah*, "to hear." His birth is recorded in Genesis 29:33. When Jacob blessed his sons, he prophesied that Simeon would be with Levi and scattered among the others of Jacob's descendants. Simeon was not to have a separate inheritance of his own. As a result of this prediction's being fulfilled, Simeon inherited cities which centered around Beer-sheba and were completely within the borders of the land given to the children of Judah (Genesis 49:5-7). At the first numbering, made before Israel left Sinai (Numbers 1), there were 59,300 men in Simeon. His tribe decreased in number until there were only 22,200 when the children of Israel were numbered again in the plains of Moab (Numbers 26).

2. *Where was Beer-sheba?* 19:2

Beer-sheba was immediately west of the south end of the Dead Sea and central in the territory given to Simeon. Isaac had lived there when Jacob left to seek a wife among his mother's people (Genesis 28). Abraham had dwelt there (Genesis 22:19), and Isaac had digged a well there (Genesis 26:25). Beer-sheba is famous in modern times as a center of business activity in Israel. A world-famous camel market is located at this southernmost city of Israel.

3. *Where was Ziklag?* 19:5

Ziklag was about twenty miles north and east of Beer-sheba. In the days of David the town was given to him by Achish, king of Gath; and the sacred writer says that Ziklag thereafter pertained unto the kings of Judah until the time of the writing of his narrative (I Samuel 27:6). Such a circumstance indicates that the town had fallen into the hands of the Philistines although it originally was given as a possession to the men of Simeon.

*The Inheritance of Zebulun* 19:10-16

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:

11 And their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that is before Jokneam;

12 And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sun-rising unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia,

13 And from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah;

14 And the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el:



15 And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Beth-lehem: twelve cities with their villages.

16 This is the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

4. *Who was Zebulun?* 19:10a

The third lot came out for Zebulun, who was the son of Jacob and Leah, being the sixth son born of this union (Genesis 30:19). Since Leah at that time had borne six sons to Jacob, she felt her husband would certainly want to live continually with her. She gave this son a name from a Hebrew word, *zabal*, which means "dwelling." Jacob foresaw that Zebulun would not be a great leader among his people, but he did make a prophecy that he would "dwell" at the haven of the sea. By divine foresight, Jacob predicted Zebulun's inheritance would be in the northern part of the land given to Israel. There were 57,400 men in this tribe when they were numbered at Sinai (Numbers 1), and they had increased to a total of 60,500 when the second census was taken in Moab (Numbers 26).

5. *Where was the land given to Zebulun?* 19:10b-15

Although Jacob had predicted that they would dwell at the haven of the sea, there is some doubt about the exact location of this land. Keil and Delitzsch say in their *Commentary on the Old Testament, Joshua, Judges and Ruth* that the territory of Zebulun did not touch either the Mediterranean Sea nor the Jordan River (page 191). Nonetheless, this territory was in the fertile valley which stretched from the Mediterranean Sea, along the Kishon River, and extended to the east almost to the Sea of Galilee. By residing in such a position, the men of the tribe of Zebulun were in a position to derive the benefits which came from being close to both the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee.

6. *Which Beth-lehem was in Zebulun's territory ? 19:15*

The Beth-lehem within the borders of the tribe of Zebulun was not the place of Jesus' birth. It is for this reason that quite often reference is made to Bethlehem-Judah (Judges 17:7, 19:1; see also Micah 5:2). Bethlehem of Zebulun was probably the home of Ibzan, one of the judges of Israel (Judges 12:8, 10). After him ruled Elon, the Zebulonite (Judges 12:11). Although it is not specified that Elon was his son, it is assumed that Ibzan, the Bethlehemite, and Elon, the Zebulonite, were from the same area, thus identifying Beth-lehem in Zebulun.

*The Inheritance of Issachar 19:17-23*

17 And the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according to their families.

18 And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesul-loth, and Shunem,

19 And Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anaharath,

20 And Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,

21 And Remeth, and En-gannim, and En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez;

22 And the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Beth-shemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages.

23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

7. *Who was Issachar? 19:17*

Issachar was the fifth son born to Jacob and Leah. His name was from a Hebrew word, *zachar*, which meant "to hire." Leah felt she had "hired" her husband by allowing Rachel to have the mandrakes found by her son, Reuben. Issachar's birth is recorded in Genesis 30:17, 18,

and Jacob's prophecy about his future is given in Genesis 49:14, 15. When the children of Israel were numbered at Sinai, there were 54,400 men, twenty years of age and older, among these people. Later at the second census, there were 64,300 (Numbers 1 and 26).

8. *What were the borders of Issachar?* 19:18

Issachar lay in the valley between Mount Tabor and Mount Carmel. His land ran east to the Jordan River. Asher and Naphtali inherited land to the north, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (west) was on the south. It is doubtful that the land of Issachar reached either to the Mediterranean Sea or to the Sea of Galilee, but the fertile land in the valleys within his borders provided some of the best soil in all of Canaan.

9. *What cities of importance were in Issachar?* 19:18-22

Sixteen cities are listed as a part of the inheritance of Issachar. Jezreel was an important city. It became the summer home of the kings of Israel (I Kings 21:1). Shunem (verse 18) was the home of the Shunammite who befriended Elisha (II Kings 4:8 ff.). En-gannim (verse 21) was the scene of Ahaziah's escape from Jehu (II Kings 9:27), where it is translated, "the garden house," in the King James Version, and is identified with the modern city of Jenin, a large town of four thousand people. These cities were strategic defense outposts in the days of Israel's monarchy.

*The Inheritance of Asher* 19:24-31

24 And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families.

25 And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Becten, and Achshaph,

26 And Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-labnath;

27 And turneth toward the sunrising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el toward the north side of Beth-emek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand,

28 And Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great Zidon;

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:

30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.

31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

#### 10. *Who was Asher?* 19:24

Asher was the son of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, and Jacob. When he was born (Genesis 30:13), he was given a name which signified that his mother was happy. *Ashrab* means "happy" in the Hebrew. Jacob mentioned him in his blessings of his sons (Genesis 49:20). At the census taken near Mount Sinai, there were 41,500 men of war in Asher. Later at the census taken in Moab, he had 53,400 men, twenty years of age and older (Numbers 1 and 26).

#### 11. *Where was the territory of Asher?* 19:24-31

The land assigned to the tribe of Asher reached from Mount Carmel to the northern border of Canaan itself. Carmel is a wooded mountain which stretches in the north-westerly direction, along the southern side of the River Kishon. Some of the land was very rich soil, and it made an excellent home for the descendants of Asher. Most of the land was along the Mediterranean seacoast, and would have been naturally bounded on the north by the Leontes

River. Deborah made reference to the nature of the land as she said, "Asher sat still at the haven of the sea and abode by his creeks" (Judges 5:17b).

12. *How many cities were in Asher?* 19:30

Twenty-two cities are listed as being within the borders of the tribe of Asher. Most of them are rather unimportant, being mentioned very infrequently in the rest of Bible history. Anna, daughter of Phanuel, was from the midst of this tribe (Luke 2:36). The phrase, "Great Sidon," denotes the preeminence which that city enjoyed over Tyre, the sister city, mentioned in verse 29, as being a "strong city." These non-Israelite cities maintained their preeminence. Asher did not drive out the inhabitants; and the history of the people of Asher was inextricably intertwined with the history of the Phoenicians, who lived in Tyre and Sidon.

*The Inheritance of Naphtali* 19:32-39

32 The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

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:

34 And then the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, 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 sun-rising.

35 And the fenced cities are Ziddim, Zer, and Ham-math, Rakkath, and Chinnereth,

36 And Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,

37 And Kedesh, and Edrei, and En-hazor,

38 And Iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.

39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

13. *Who was Naphtali?* 19:32

Naphtali was the son of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, and Jacob. His birth is recorded in Genesis 30:8; and his name is from a Hebrew word, *naftal*, meaning "to wrestle." Rachel and Leah were wrestling with each other in an attempt to gain the favor of their husband, Jacob. Jacob gave a blessing to Naphtali (Genesis 49:21); and at the first census, he had 53,400 warriors (Numbers 1). He decreased in numbers until there were only 45,400 when the second census was taken (Numbers 26).

14. *Where was the territory of Naphtali?* 19:32-39

The territory given to the children of Naphtali lay immediately east of the territory given to Asher. On the south the land touched the territory of Issachar and Zebulun. On the east border were the streams which ran together to form the Jordan River, flowing through the waters of Merom, and finally into the Sea of Galilee. This tribe also reached to the northern extremities of the Promised Land, and its north border was the Syrian territory which lay beyond the Leontes River.

15. *How many cities were given to Naphtali?* 19:38

Nineteen cities and their villages were within the borders of the territory given to Naphtali. "Judah upon Jordan" is a very unusual reference and caused a great deal of controversy until it was noticed that the sixty towns of Jair, which were upon the eastern side of the Jordan, were called Judah. These cities were reckoned as pertaining to Judah; because Jair, the possessor of these

towns, was a descendant of Judah on the father's side through Hezron (I Chronicles 2:5, 21, 22). Manasseh East had received this territory on the other side of the Jordan opposite the land given to Naphtali. Barak was from this tribe (Judges 4:6).

*The Inheritance of Dan 19:40-48*

40 And the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families.

41 And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-shemesh,

42 And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,

43 And Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron,

44 And Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,

45 And Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon,

46 And Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.

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.

48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.

*16. Who was Dan? 19:40*

Dan was also the son of Bilhah and Jacob (Genesis 30:6). His name means "to judge." Jacob gave him a rich blessing (Genesis 49:16-18); and when the tribes of Israel were counted at Sinai, there were 62,700 men, twenty years of age and older, in this tribe (Numbers 1). At the later census he had grown until there were 64,400 men of this age (Numbers 26).

17. *Where was the territory of Dan?* 19:40-46

The major part of Dan's territory lay along the Mediterranean seacoast, immediately west of the land given to the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was thus on his eastern border. On the northern border was the territory of Ephraim, and on the southern border was the territory of Judah.

18. *What additional territory was given to Dan?* 19:47, 48

Joshua mentions a conquest which was recorded more fully as an appendix to the book of Judges (Judges 17 and 18). These Israelites went up to the north part of the land given to Israel and conquered an area around Leshem, which was near the headwaters of the Jordan River. This point was the northernmost spot of the land of Israel; and after the name of the place was changed from Leshem to Dan, it was common to speak of the territory of Israel as extending from Dan to Beer-sheba, the northernmost and southernmost important towns, respectively.

*The Inheritance of Joshua 19:49-51*

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:

50 According to the word of the Lord they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.

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.



19. *Where was Timnath-serah?* 19:50

Timnath-serah was in the midst of the land assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. Captain Warren Conder said that there was no place in all Palestine so striking as that of Joshua's home. It was surrounded with deep valleys and rugged hills. Josephus, Jerome, and Eusebius all identify it with *Tbamma*; and it is mentioned again in Joshua 24:30 as reference is made to Joshua's final resting place.

20. *Who made the assignments of the territories?* 19:51

Joshua took the lead in assigning the inheritances for the various tribes; but Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, was also instrumental in performing this task. These men were ably assisted by all the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. Every tribe was interested in it, and each tribe had one or more men who were officially part of the group making these assignments. The assignments were made in Shiloh at the door of the Tabernacle. This was an appropriate place, signifying that the hand of God was felt upon the work of these men.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 19

1. In the midst of which tribe did Simeon receive an inheritance?
2. What city was central in Simeon's portion?
3. What was Asher's western border?
4. What two famous Phoenician cities were in Asher's territory?
5. What was Dan's west border?
6. What was the name of the town Joshua built?
7. In which tribe was Joshua's inheritance?
8. Who was priest in Joshua's day?
9. In what town were the leaders when they made the assignments?
10. How many tribes were mentioned as receiving a portion in this chapter?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 20

Vv. 1- 6 *God's instructions to Joshua.* Joshua walked humbly in the sight of God. He waited for instructions from his Heavenly Guide before he proceeded to lead the children of Israel in the direction they should travel. When Joshua was selected to succeed Moses, God told Moses that Joshua should stand before Eleazar, the priest, who would ask counsel for him before the Lord (Numbers 27:21). No doubt, Joshua and Eleazar worked together in this; but it was Joshua who took the initiative.

Vv. 7- 9 *The appointment of the cities of refuge.* God had spoken unto Moses while the children of Israel were in the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Jericho, and commanded him to select three cities to serve as cities of refuge. Six cities in all were to be appointed, but Moses was to select three cities on the east side of the Jordan. At that time, God defined the difference between murder and manslaughter and laid down the rules and regulations for the protection of those who might be falsely accused of murder (Numbers 35). Moses had selected three cities—Bezer, Ramoth-Gilead, and Golan. When the tribes were settled under Joshua, three more cities were to be selected; and the three which Moses appointed were to be recognized.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *"Thy will be done."* Every Christian should learn to pray as Jesus taught His disciples in the Model Prayer. We should learn to say, "Thy will be done." We should learn to pray even more meaningfully as Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. There He prayed, "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Joshua walked with the Lord. God commanded him, and Joshua did the Lord's bidding. His delight was in the law of the Lord. His meat was to do the will of God.
2. *A city of refuge.* Although there is no Biblical reference to the cities of refuge being a type of Christ, the Christian cannot read this arrangement for protection of the innocent without thinking of how he is able to flee to Jesus for refuge. In a sense, he finds this same refuge in the church. Although evil was not to go unpunished, God was careful that the innocent did not suffer unjustly. In the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, God's justice is tempered with mercy. He has made gracious provision for the salvation of those who flee to Jesus Christ for refuge.
3. *Life is sacred.* Throughout the history of mankind God has made it clear that a murderer should not go unpunished. God stated an everlasting principle when He told those coming out of the ark after the flood that whosoever shed man's blood by man should his blood be shed (Genesis 9:5). The arrangements made in Joshua 20 followed the prescriptions laid down in Numbers 35. These prescriptions called for the slaying of the murderer, but they also provided for the protection of those who were innocent of guilt.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

*God's Instructions to Joshua 20:1-6*

The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying,

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:

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.

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.

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 neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

6 And he shall dwell in this 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.

*1. How did God speak to Joshua? 20:1*

When Moses was told to select Joshua as a successor, he instructed him to set Joshua before Eleazar, the priest. God said Joshua would stand regularly before Eleazar, the priest, who would ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord (Numbers 27:21). The Urim and Thummim were a part of the high priest's garments and were instruments by which the Lord made known His

will (Exodus 28:30). Joshua normally must have asked Eleazar to inquire for him concerning the Lord's will, and it is probable that at the time of the appointing of the cities of refuge, God's will was revealed in this way.

2. *What instructions had God given to Moses?* 20:1b

Before the children of Israel left Sinai, God had revealed how He would appoint a place for anyone who killed another man accidentally (Exodus 21:13). Later, God had revealed how He would select cities from among those assigned to the Levites as their inheritance (Numbers 35:6, 11, 14). The Levites were to receive a total of forty-eight cities, and six of these were to be designated as cities of refuge. Still later, God revealed how the children of Israel were to prepare a road to lead to these cities. They were to divide their borders into three equal parts on each side of the Jordan so that no Israelites would be at any great distance from a city of refuge (Deuteronomy 19:2, 9). These facts were all well known to the Israelites, and now it was Joshua's task to implement the designation of these cities.

3. *What purpose did these cities serve?* 20:3

The cities of refuge were selected for the protection of those who killed someone but did not actually commit murder (see Numbers 35:9-34). The roads leading to the cities were always kept in thorough repair and according to tradition were required to be at least thirty-two cubits broad. All obstructions were removed. Nothing was to be allowed to stay the fugitive's foot or hinder his speed. No hill was left ungraded and no river was unbridged. At every turning were posts erected bearing the word "refuge" to guide the unhappy man in flight. When the manslayer was settled in such a city, he was given a suitable habitation; and the citizens were to teach him some trade by which he might support himself.

4. *Who was the avenger of blood?* 20:5

From the time of Noah, God had said the blood of a murderer would be required. He said that it would be required "at the hand of every man's brother" (Genesis 9:5). Normally, the brother of a man who was slain would set out to punish the man who had killed his brother. Joab thus attempted to avenge the killing of his brother, Asahel (II Samuel 2:18-24; cf. II Samuel 3:27; see also II Samuel 14:4-7). If the slain man's immediate brother was dead, the nearest relative then became the "avenger of blood."

5. *How could they tell the difference between a manslayer and a murderer?* 20:5

Certain guidelines were laid down in the law for distinguishing between a man who had committed manslaughter and a man who had committed murder. If a man struck another man following premeditation, the killing was judged to be murder. If he smote him with an instrument of iron or with a stone in his hand, he was guilty of murder. The same was true if he struck a man with a weapon of wood. On the other hand, if the head flew off his ax and struck another man, the congregation would have judged him guilty only of manslaughter (Deuteronomy 19:5; cf. Numbers 35:1-34). When a man was guilty of murder, he was delivered up to the avenger of blood; and the murderer was slain.

6. *How long was a fugitive allowed to stay in a city of refuge?* 20:6

If a man was judged innocent of murder, he was allowed to take up residence in the city of refuge. If he went out of the city of refuge, he went at his own risk. Of course, if the avenger of blood found him out of the city and killed him, the avenger of blood himself would have been guilty of committing murder. He, in turn, would have been tried and judgment passed on his acts.

The man who lived in the city of refuge was to stay there until the death of the high priest. At that time, he was free to go. Such an arrangement seems rather arbitrary to us, but it would make provision for the emptying of these cities of the fugitives from time to time.

*The Appointment of the Cities of Refuge 20:7-9*

7 And they appointed Kedesh in Gaililee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

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.

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.

*7. What three cities were selected west of the Jordan?*  
20:7

West of the Jordan, Joshua selected Kedesh in the tribe of Naphtali, Shechem in the tribe of Ephraim, and Hebron in the tribe of Judah. Kedesh lay just north and west of the waters of Merom and was in the very far north part of the land allotted to the children of Israel. This would be readily accessible to people who lived in the borders of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali. Shechem was in the hill country of Ephraim and was west of the Jordan River about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Men who lived in the broad expanses of the territory of the tribes of Manas-

seh and Ephraim would have ready access to Shechem as a city of refuge. Hebron was west of the Dead Sea about halfway down the length of the sea. This location was situated where it would be within easy reach of those who lived in the borders of the tribes of Dan, Benjamin, Simeon, and Judah.

8. *What cities were selected east of the Jordan?* 20:8

East of the Jordan, Joshua selected Golan in the land belonging to the children of Manasseh, Ramoth-Gilead in the land belonging to the children of Gad, and Bezer in the land belonging to the children of Reuben. Golan was in the north part of the land beyond the Jordan, Ramoth-Gilead was in the center, and Bezer was in the south. Once again, provision was made so that no person living east of the Jordan would have too far to go to get to a city of refuge. Each one of the three tribes had a city of refuge within its borders.

9. *What strangers sojourned in Israel?* 20:9a

When the children of Israel left Egypt, a mixed multitude went up with them (Exodus 12:38). This mixed multitude must have been a group of natives of Egypt and other countries who cast their lots with the children of Israel. When the laws were given to Israel, specific notice was made of these people; and it was clearly ordered that the laws which governed Israel's society were to apply to all who lived among them. There was not a separate law for men who were native Israelites as opposed to those who were strangers among them. Even this law with regard to murder was to be enforced on strangers in their midst, as well as upon those who were native Israelites.

10. *In what sense did the fugitive stand "before the congregation"?* 20:9b

The fugitive was to declare his cause in the ears of the elders of the city of refuge (verse four). These elders were to receive the fugitive into the city and give him a



place where he might dwell among them. If the avenger of blood came to the city, these men were not to deliver the slayer to the avenger of blood. When the fugitive's case had been heard and judgment had been rendered, the elders were to see that the proper execution of the judgment was implemented. In this sense, a fugitive "stood before the congregation." The elders of the city of refuge and the inhabitants of that city passed judgment on behalf of all Israel.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 20

1. Who selected the cities of refuge east of the Jordan?
2. Who selected the cities of refuge west of the Jordan?
3. How long was a fugitive to live in the city of refuge?
4. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Naphtali?
5. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Ephraim?
6. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Judah?
7. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Reuben?
8. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Gad?
9. What city of refuge was within the borders of the tribe of Manasseh?
10. Were only native-born Israelites protected by these provisions?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 21

- Vv. 1- 8 *Preparation for the assignment of the Levitical cities.* Since the children of Levi did not have any land as an inheritance in Canaan, they were

to be given forty-eight cities, scattered throughout the borders of the other tribes. Their inheritance was the service of the Lord. Some of them were to attend to the work of the Tabernacle, while others were living in the six cities of refuge which were appointed out of the total of forty-eight cities given to them. The remainder must have been busily engaged in teaching the Law, making copies of the Scriptures, and in general, "waiting on the Lord."

- Vv. 9-19 *Cities given to the family of Aaron.* The high priests were all descendants of Aaron. Aaron had four sons—Nadab, Abihu, Ithamar, and Eleazar. Anyone eligible for the priesthood had to be a descendant of these men. Two of them, Nadab and Abihu, were killed (Leviticus 10); and the line of the high priests was traced through the other two sons—Ithamar and Eleazar. A total of thirteen cities were given to the descendants of these high priests.
- Vv. 20-26 *Cities given to the family of Kohath.* Both Aaron and Moses were from the family of Kohath, a descendant of Levi. Other prominent men such as Korah were also out of this family. When the Levites were numbered at Sinai, there were 8600 of the family of Kohath among the Levites (Numbers 3:28). During the exodus, these men resided in the area immediately south of the Tabernacle and had charge of the Ark, the Table of Shewbread, the Candlestick, the altars, and the vessels of the

## JOSHUA

sanctuary. Whenever camp was broken, these men shouldered these hallowed items of furniture and carried them until camp was set up again. A total of ten cities were given to the families of the children of Kohath.

Vv. 27-33 *Cities given to the family of Gershon.* There were 7,500 Levites, a month old and upward, among the families of the Gershonites when they were numbered at Sinai (Numbers 3:22). These members of the tribe of Levi encamped at the back of the Tabernacle in front of the tents of the tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin. These workers had charge of the coverings of the Tabernacle itself, the hangings, the screen for the door of the tent of meeting, and the cords (Numbers 3:25, 26). Thirteen cities were given to the Gershonites.

Vv. 34-40 *Cities given to the families of Merari.* Twelve cities were given to the remaining families of the Levites by the tribes of Israel. These Levites were all descendants of Merari, one of the descendants of Levi. There were 6,200 of them when they were numbered at Sinai (Numbers 3:34). Their workmen had charge of the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, pins, and cords (Numbers 3:37).

Vv. 41-45 *Summary of the assignment of the land.* A total of forty-eight cities with their suburbs were given to the Levites. Since all the other tribes had received their inheritance of land, the work of assigning the territory to the children of Israel was completed.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *There is a task for every worker.* The children of Israel were very well organized. Captains were appointed over groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. The work was thereby properly administered, and the special task of the Levites was the service of the Lord. In Numbers, specific details were given with regard to their service. Such a division of labor reminds us of the fact that there is a job for each Christian.
2. *A laborer is worthy of his hire.* When Jesus sent forth the seventy disciples, two by two, He told them to enter into whatever house would receive them. As they stayed in these houses, they were to eat whatever was given to them. He then said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). The Apostle Paul declared that they who preached the gospel should live of the gospel (I Corinthians 9:14). God made provision for the Levites to receive their livelihood at the hands of their fellow Israelites. Not only did they receive a tithe of the income of the land, but they also were given cities in which to dwell.
3. *Jesus never fails.* It is a frequent statement of truth on the part of the Christian that "Jesus never fails." Jesus came into the world that they who beheld Him would behold the Father. He said that if any man had seen Him, he had seen the Father. Jesus' faithfulness is an example of the never-failing goodness of God. When the Israelites had been settled in the Promised Land and cities had been assigned to the Levites, we read, "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

*Preparation for the Assignment of the Levitical Cities*  
21:1-8

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;

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1. *Who were the "heads of the fathers of the Levites"? 21:1*

Every tribe was led by the respected elders who had been appointed and recognized. The leaders of the twelve tribes were listed in the first chapter of Numbers. Since the high priests were from the tribe of Levi, Eleazar would be recognized as the primary leader of these Israelites. Under him were the "heads of the fathers' houses" (Numbers 1:4). At the time of the first numbering, the names of the heads of the three families of Levites were listed (Numbers 1:18-20). Their successors must have approached Eleazar and Joshua when they asked for the cities to be assigned to them.

2. *When did God command Moses to give cities to the Levites? 21:2*

God spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, and commanded him to give an inheritance to the Levites. He stipulated that this inheritance was to be cities in which they might dwell. They were also to receive suburbs for the cities (Numbers 35:1, 2). Such provision made it possible for them to have some cattle and other beasts. They could also erect their houses in which to live and perhaps have some small vegetable crops.

3. *Where were the cities given to the children of Aaron? 21:4*

A total of thirteen cities were given to the children of Aaron. These lay within the borders of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon. Thus, all the cities given to the children of Aaron were on the west side of the Jordan and in the south part of the territory.

4. *Where were the cities given to the family of Kohath? 21:5*

Since all the children of Aaron were also descendants of Kohath, only ten additional cities were given to the remaining families of the Kohathites. These cities were located within the borders of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan,

and the half tribe of Manasseh, who lived west of the Jordan. All of these cities were also west of the Jordan, but they were in the central part of the western territory.

5. *Where were the cities given to the families of the Gershonites?* 21:6

Thirteen cities were given to the families of the Gershonites. These were located within the borders of the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh which lived east of the Jordan. These cities were, thus, located on both sides of the Jordan River, but were all in the extreme northern part of the Promised Land.

6. *Where were the cities given to the families of Merari?* 21:7

Twelve cities were given to the descendants of Merari. These were located within the borders of the tribe of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. The cities assigned to these Levites were more scattered than any of the others. Some of them were east of the Jordan and some were west of the Jordan. Some of them were in the north—in the tribe of Zebulun, and some were in the far south—in the tribe of Reuben. Others were in the central part of the eastern territory—within the borders of the tribe of Gad.

#### *Cities Given to the Family of Aaron 21:9-19*

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.

10 Which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites, who were of the children of Levi, had: for their's was the first lot.

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.

12 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.

13 Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,

14 And Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs,

15 And Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs,

16 And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

17 And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs,

18 Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities.

19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs.

*7. What important cities were given to the children of Aaron? 21:10-19*

Several of the cities given to the children of Aaron were well known and figured prominently in later Israelite history. Jattir, for example, was one of the cities to which David sent spoils from Ziklag (I Samuel 30:27). This town lay twelve miles south of Hebron. The ruins of Attir have been located on a hill at this point. Hebron, a city of refuge, was one of the most famous cities in the entire land. Gibeon was famous as the home of the Hivites, who had tricked Joshua into making a peace treaty with them. Anathoth was the home of high priests in the times of David.

*8. What special provision was made with regard to Hebron? 21:11*

Since Caleb had asked for territory in the South and had been given Hebron and its suburbs, a provision was made for him to have jurisdiction over the villages which



belonged to Hebron. The fields that surrounded the city were also left in Caleb's possession.

*Cities Given to the Family of Kohath 21:20-26*

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.

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,

22 And Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs; four cities.

23 And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,

24 Aijalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; four cities.

25 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; two cities.

26 All the cities were ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

*9. What important cities were given to the families of the Kohathites? 21:20-26*

Prominent among the cities given to the Kohathites was Shechem, which was also one of the cities of refuge. Gezer was on the Shephelah, and was one of Solomon's fortified cities. Beth-horon was a point on the western border of Benjamin and served to identify the line between Benjamin and Dan. Aijalon was the point over which the moon stood when Joshua prayed for an extension of time as he fought against the kings of the South. Tanach has been excavated in recent times and was an important citadel on the northern border of Ephraim.

*Cities Given to the Family of Gershon 21:27-33*

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.

28 And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh with her suburbs,

29 Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs; four cities.

30 And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

31 Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.

32 And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammoth-dor with her suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.

33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their suburbs.

*10. What important cities were given to the families of Gershon? 21:27-33*

The families of Gershonites were given Kedesh, which was also a city of refuge. In addition, they had jurisdiction over En-gannim, which is the modern Jenin, a town of four thousand inhabitants. They also possessed Golan, east of the Sea of Galilee. This was an important city in Bashan and was one of the cities of refuge.

*Cities Given to the Family of Merari 21:34-40*

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,

35 Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.

36 And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and Jahazah with her suburbs,

37 Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four cities.

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,

39 Heshbon with her suburbs, Jezer with her suburbs; four cities in all.

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.

*11. What important cities were given to the families of Merari? 21:30-40*

Jokneam, a city located on a high hill, overlooking the valley of Jezreel, belonged to these people. Definitive archaeological excavations are yet to be undertaken at this site. They also had two cities of refuge—Bezer and Ramoth-Gilead. The families of the Merarites also lived in Heshbon, which had been the capital city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who was defeated by Moses.

*Summary of the Assignment of the Land 21:41-45*

41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs.

42 These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

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.

44 And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

12. *What was the total number of cities?* 21:41

Moses had commanded Joshua to give the children of Levi a total of forty-eight cities—six cities of refuge and forty-two other cities (Numbers 35:6, 7). Joshua was faithful in fulfilling the will of God in this matter. He, Eleazar, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel were careful to give the exact number of cities to the Levites.

13. *What were the "suburbs"?* 21:42

When the original instructions were given by God to Moses, He ordered suburbs to be given to the Levites. He specified that these were to reach out a thousand cubits from the city wall on every side (Numbers 35:1-5). Evidently these suburbs were strips of land around the cities where the Levites could tether their animals and plant some small vegetable crops. They did not have enough room for vineyards or large fields of grain, but they were able to raise some produce for their tables. This would supplement their sustenance which they received from the tithe given by the other tribes.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 21

1. How many cities were given to the families of Aaron?
2. How many cities were given to the other Kohathite families?

## JOSHUA

3. How many cities were given to the families of Gershon?
4. How many cities were given to the families of Merari?
5. Which family possessed Shechem?
6. Who possessed Kedesh?
7. Who possessed Ramoth-Gilead?
8. What was the total number of cities given to the Levites?
9. How many of these were cities of refuge?
10. Were any of God's promises left unfulfilled?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 22

Vv. 1-9 *The dismissal of the eastern tribes.* The war of conquest had been finished. Land had been distributed to the tribes receiving an inheritance west of the Jordan. The three eastern tribes had fulfilled their promise of assisting to conquer the land, and they were now ready to return to their possessions east of the Jordan. Joshua called the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh and sent them home from Shiloh.

Vv. 10-20 *An altar erected at Jordan.* When the three eastern tribes reached the valley of the Jordan River they stopped on the west side and erected an altar. Their actions were reminiscent of the two memorials which Joshua and the children of Israel erected in the Jordan Valley when they crossed over on dry land near Jericho. Their motive in building this altar was misunderstood for a time, and it nearly caused a civil war in Israel.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

Vv. 21-34 *A reason given for the altar.* The eastern tribes explained that their purpose in erecting the altar was reasonable. They had not built the altar in order to have their own place to worship. They were not trying to abandon the sanctuary which had been set up at Shiloh. It was not their purpose to offer strange sacrifices to a heathen god. They had erected the altar as a reminder to their brethren on the west that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were an integral part of Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Avoid the very appearance of evil.* The eastern tribes had not been very careful to prevent giving the wrong impression to their brethren. They erected an altar which had the appearance of being in competition with the altar at Shiloh. The Apostle Paul has written that Christians should avoid the very appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22). It should be the aim of every Christian to dress in such a way that he would not be mistaken for a lewd person. He should conduct himself so as not to be thought of as one who is riotous and unruly. In every aspect of his life he should be careful of the appearance he makes.
2. *Zeal without knowledge is dangerous.* Phinehas led the children of Israel to war against the eastern tribes. On the surface, it had appeared that the eastern tribes were in rebellion against the Lord. Without making full inquiry into the matter, the ten princes who were with Phinehas and all the armies of Israel were ready to begin civil war. Phinehas charged the Gileadites with committing iniquity, similar to that practiced in Peor. They were compared to Achan, who committed a trespass in

the accursed thing. After the eastern tribes explained their actions, the other Israelites were satisfied; and civil war was averted. In many similar instances today, people jump to conclusions and condemn their neighbors on circumstantial evidence. Their zeal in striving to do what is right is admirable; but when zeal is based on insufficient evidence or inaccurate information, dangers of every sort arise.

3. *Out of sight; out of mind.* The eastern tribes were afraid that they would be forgotten by their brethren west of the Jordan. This was their reason for building an altar after the pattern of the altar at Shiloh. They knew that people soon forget their friends who are absent. Parents become unmindful of children who are away from home and neglect to pray for them. Children move aged parents to rest homes and are negligent in not observing their birthdays and other special occasions. Missionaries are sent to the field and forthwith forgotten. Such things ought not so to be, and every effort should be made to establish means for remembering those who are absent.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### *The Dismissal of the Eastern Tribes 22:1-9*

Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

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:

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.

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.

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.

6 So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.

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,

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.

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.

*1. When were the eastern tribes dismissed? 22:1*

The eastern tribes were summoned to accompany Joshua across the Jordan as he made his plans for the conquest of Canaan (1:12 ff.). Since this summons began the account of the war, their dismissal might be considered a proper conclusion to the history of the conquest. Some suppose these auxiliaries were sent back home immediately after the conquest was concluded. If such be the case,



the account of their returning east of the Jordan is not in its proper place in the text. It may seem only natural for the history of the conquest itself to be completed fully before any other narratives were introduced; but since the eastern tribes were dismissed from Shiloh and the tribes assembled there for the first time during the casting of the lots for the land, the dismissal of the eastern tribes probably did not occur until after lots had been cast. When the other tribes had received land assigned to them, the eastern tribes were allowed to return to their inheritance east of the Jordan. The narrative is doubtless in chronological order.

2. *What did Moses command them to do?* 22:2

Moses misunderstood the three tribes' reason for asking to settle east of the Jordan. He thought that they were afraid to go into Canaan. Such a fear would have been similar to the one which swept over Israel at Kadesh-Barnea after the sending of the twelve spies (Numbers 13). The eastern tribes explained that they were not afraid to go into Canaan. They were willing to go and to help conquer the land. They only requested to be allowed to settle east of the Jordan when the conquest was concluded. When Moses heard them say they would go and fight, he said they would be free to return home to the territory east of the Jordan. These tribes had done this, and so they were allowed to go to their portions of land.

3. *Where did these tribes get their riches?* 22:8

As Joshua blessed the tribes, he said, "Return with much riches." They had cattle, silver, gold, brass, iron, and very much raiment. It is finally described as "spoil." This spoil would have come to the tribes as they conquered the many cities in Canaan. They were allowed to take spoil of every city except from the city of Jericho. This city with all of its goods was dedicated to the Lord as the firstfruits

of the land of Canaan. After Jericho fell, Israel was free to take spoil from every other city. The eastern tribes received a portion of this booty, and they were allowed to take it home to their possession.

*An Altar Erected At Jordan 22:10-20*

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.

11 And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the 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.

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.

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,

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.

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,

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?

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,

18 But that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord? and it will be, seeing ye rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.

19 Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, 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.

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.

4. *On what shore of Jordan did they build their altar?*  
22:10

Since it is said that they erected the altar when they came unto the borders of Jordan, it is apparent that the altar was erected on the west side of the Jordan. Even though Phinehas and the other Israelites who were with him went "unto the land of Gilead" (verse 15), it still seems apparent that the altar was on the west bank of Jordan. Phinehas and his men would have been obliged to cross the Jordan and enter into the land east of the Jordan in order to hold a conference with the eastern tribes. The altar would have served its ultimate purpose best by being on the west side of the river, for there it would serve as a constant reminder to the western tribes.

5. *Why did the rest of Israel think of going to war?* 22:12

There was no separation of church and state in the days of Joshua. God was a ruler of Israel in a very real

sense. His laws were the laws of the state. He had ordained that there should be only one place of worship (Deuteronomy 12). When the eastern tribes set up another altar besides the one which was at Shiloh, the western tribes naturally supposed they were transgressing God's laws. They banded themselves together as a military force to punish the criminals.

6. *Who was Phinehas?* 22:13

Phinehas was the son of Eleazar, the high priest. He had proved himself to be zealous on behalf of the Lord when he punished those who committed iniquity in the days of Balaam while Israel was in Midian, across the Jordan River from Jericho. This same Phinehas had taken a javelin and slain Cozbi and Zimri (Numbers 25). He is to be commended for his zeal in enforcing the laws of God, but he and those who were with him should have made further inquiry before taking such drastic measures in the matter of the altar erected by the eastern tribes.

7. *Why did ten princes go with Phinehas?* 22:14

The ten princes were selected from the tribes of Israel who lived west of the Jordan. Each was the chief of a house in these western tribes. There were only ten tribes west of the Jordan since the three tribes east of the Jordan had already gone home. There were ten west of the Jordan since another part of the tribe of Manasseh had settled in the western section.

8. *Why was the building of an altar a sin?* 22:16

Phinehas considered the erecting of the altar as a trespass. He compared it to the iniquity which was committed in Peor. He also compared it to the sin of Achan (verses 17, 20). Phinehas believed the erecting of the altar was a direct violation of God's commandment that the people of Israel should bring their burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vows, freewill offerings, and firstlings of their herds and flocks to the one place which

God should select as the center of worship (Deuteronomy 12:6, 7). God had given this commandment in order to prevent Israel from worshipping different gods in many different places in a manner similar to that followed by the Canaanites who lived in the land. Phinehas felt that such a sin should not go unpunished.

9. *What was the iniquity of Peor?* 22:17

The sin which was committed at Peor was of great consequences. Phinehas said that the congregation of Israel was not cleansed from that sin even in his day. On that occasion the people of Moab enticed the Israelites to sacrifice to their god, Chemosh; and lewd women among them enticed the men of Israel to commit fornication (Numbers 25:3, 4, 6). A ringleader in those sins was Zimri, a prince of Simeon. When God punished Israel in those days for those sins, twenty-four thousand Israelites were slain. Most of those must have been from Simeon since they were reduced to 22,200 in the second census from a much larger number of 59,300 in the first census. The short time which elapsed after the sin of Baal-Peor before the second census was not time enough for the tribe to recover from such a catastrophe.

10. *Why remember the sin of Achan?* 22:20

Israel had been given very specific instructions about taking spoils of war as they conquered Palestine. They were to be allowed the taking of spoils from every city except from the city of Jericho. Jericho was the first city they attacked. It was something of a firstfruits of the land to be given completely unto the Lord. As a result, they were expressly commanded not to take any kind of spoil of war from Jericho. When Achan saw a wedge of gold, a Babylonian garment, and some pieces of silver, he coveted these items and stole them. His bold and brazen disobedience of an express commandment of the Lord brought punishment not only upon himself but upon other

members of his household. Phinehas considered the erection of another altar a similar kind of brazen disobedience. He compared what he considered to be the sin of the eastern tribes to the sin of Achan.

*A Reason Given for the Altar 22:21-34*

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,

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,)

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;

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?

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.

26 Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice:

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.

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.

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.

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 of the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.

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.

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.

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.

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.

*11. What was the fear of the eastern tribes? 22:24*

The eastern tribes were afraid they would be forgotten by the rest of Israel. Their inheritance was east

of the Jordan, and the Jordan River formed a very natural boundary between them and the rest of the people. All of the Israelites were expected to attend the three annual feasts at the Tabernacle. There were other occasions when the whole congregation would gather together, and the eastern tribes were afraid that the western tribes would neglect to send a summons to them.

*12. In what way would an altar be a witness? 22:27, 28*

The altar which the eastern tribes erected at the edge of the Jordan was patterned after the brazen altar which stood in front of the Tabernacle. God had instructed the Israelites to make an altar which was five cubits long and five cubits wide. It was also to be three cubits high. Around it was to be a network or a grating. It was to have a ledge on it. Four horns were to be at the four corners of the altar. The altar which the eastern tribes built must have been built according to the instructions given in Exodus 27, and anyone who saw it would know they must have been a part of the nation of Israel or else they would not have had access to these plans. In this way, they identified themselves as being a part of Israel.

*13. Why were the rest of the Israelites pleased with the explanation of the eastern tribes? 22:30*

The western tribes could hardly have had any real desire to wage war against their brethren east of the Jordan, although they were willing to fight them in order to punish those who broke God's laws. They must have been glad when they found they did not have justifiable reasons for starting a civil war. The explanation was plausible. Surely the eastern tribes had no wicked motive in building the altar, and their wanting to be remembered was understandable. All of the leaders of Israel must have heaved a great sigh of relief when they heard the explanation.



14. *What was the meaning of the name given to the altar?*  
22:34

The word, *ed*, means "a witness." The eastern tribes called this altar by that name for it was indeed a witness to their being an integral part of Israel. Joshua used this same word when he erected a stone as a memorial of Israel's making a covenant to serve God faithfully. Of his stone, Joshua said, "Behold, this stone shall be a *witness* to 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" (Joshua 24:27).

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 22

1. Name the three tribes which settled east of the Jordan?
2. From what point were these three tribes dismissed?
3. Where did these three tribes erect an altar?
4. What name was given to the land possessed by the eastern tribes?
5. Whom did the children of Israel send to accost the eastern tribes?
6. How many princes of Israel were with him?
7. What earlier tragedy in Israel did the erection of the altar call to mind?
8. To the sin of what man did they compare this act of the eastern tribes?
9. What name was given to the altar erected by the eastern tribes?
10. What was the meaning of the name given to the altar?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 23

Vv. 1- 5 *A review of Joshua's work.* Joshua 23 is a digest of Joshua's address to the elders and officers of the children of Israel. The address was given sometime after the conquest was

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

finished and the assignments had been made to the various tribes of Israel. The address to this group of representatives of the people forms an introduction to the longer address given to all the Israelites and recorded in the following chapter. The first part of this speech is a resume of Joshua's activity among his people.

Vv. 6-11 *Promises of blessings for obedience.* Joshua was anxious for his people to obey the Lord, and he began his discourse to their leaders by reminding them of the many blessings which would come to them when they obeyed. Joshua especially foresaw the danger of their falling away into idolatry and serving the gods whom the Canaanites served.

Vv. 12-16 *Warnings of punishment for disobedience.* Joshua emphasized the positive by mentioning the blessings first, but he knew the Israelites needed to be warned of the punishments which would come upon them if they disobeyed God. It was just as inevitable evil would befall them when they disobeyed as it was sure that they would be blessed if they were faithful to God. Joshua knew they would lose the land in which they dwelt if they turned away from God.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Forget not His benefits.* A constant reminder of God's goodness is before all when they count the blessings which they have received. Joshua recounted these blessings for his people as an introduction to his exhortation for faithfulness on their part. Many times people turn

their backs on God because they forget His benefits. A little time spent in remembering the good things which befall a Christian will keep him faithful to his Lord. Joshua knew this would be true for his people as well.

2. *One and God make a majority.* Joshua said one man of Israel would be able to chase a thousand enemies (verse 10). He was like Elisha who reminded his servant that they who fought for Israel were more than they who fought for their enemies (II Kings 6:16). If the Israelites in Joshua's day remained faithful, they would know that the Lord fought for them even as Elisha's servant knew that God was fighting for Israel in his day when his eyes were opened and he saw the Lord's hosts on the mountains around Samaria.
3. *The soul that sins shall die.* God had made it clear that the soul who sinned would die. The wages of sin is death and has always been. What was true for an individual was true for a nation. If a nation of individuals sinned against God, they would doom their souls eternally, and they would also bring physical destruction upon their society. Joshua tried to impress this on his people.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### *A Review of Joshua's Work 23:1-5*

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.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, 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:

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.

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.

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.

*1. How much time had elapsed between the settling of the land and Joshua's last address? 23:1*

The Scripture says that a long time had elapsed after the people of Israel had finished their conquest before Joshua gave his address to the leaders. Joshua was at least sixty years of age when he came into the Promised Land, since he was numbered at Sinai among those who were twenty years of age and over. After the people left Sinai, they wandered for forty years in the wilderness; and Joshua would therefore have been at least sixty when he came into Canaan. Caleb said that he was forty years of age when he was sent out as a spy (14:17). We may assume that Joshua was about the same age. Joshua was one hundred and ten years of age when he died. No more than twenty-five years would have elapsed between the end of the conquest and the death of Joshua if Joshua was of the same age as Caleb. Twenty years would have certainly been "a long time."

*2. To what point did Joshua call the leaders? 23:2*

Joshua must have called the leaders to Shiloh. This is where the tribes had assembled when they received their final allotments. His final address was delivered at Shechem, but there is a special mention of their assembling

there in 24:1. Since there is no mention here of their moving, it is assumed his address to the smaller group of leaders was given at Shiloh.

3. *How did Joshua call for all Israel?* 23:3

The address consists of two parts which run parallel to one another so far as the contents are concerned. Part one is verses 2b-13, and part two is verses 14-16. In both parts Joshua commences with a reference to his age and his approaching death. In consequence of this impending event, he felt constrained to remind the people once more of all the great things which the Lord had done for them and to warn them against falling away from the gracious covenant of God. Joshua, in the last act of his life, was treading in the footsteps of Moses, who had concluded his life with the exhortations to the people to be faithful to the Lord (Deuteronomy 1:30). Joshua's address contains reminiscences from the Pentateuch, more especially from Deuteronomy. He had little new to announce to the people, but he wished to impress the old truth upon their minds once more. He called for all Israel by asking their leaders to assemble.

4. *Who were the "officers"?* 23:2

The term *elders* is the general term used to denote all the representatives of the people, who were divided into heads, judges, and officers. The heads were those who stood at the head of the tribes, families, and fathers' houses; and out of their number the most suitable persons were chosen as judges and officers (Deuteronomy 1:15). Some had jurisdiction over thousands, hundreds, and fifties (Exodus 18). Others served in different capacities.

5. *How had Joshua divided the remaining nations by lot?*  
23:4

Joshua had not assigned different tribes to attack separate nations. There is no record that he told Reuben,

for example, to drive out the Ammonites. We find no mention made of his telling Benjamin to drive out the Jebusites. Incidental references are made to certain people such as the Perizzites who lived in the midst of the children of Joseph (17:15). Since he had divided all the remaining territory by lots and these Canaanite nations lived in the territories, it was assumed that the different tribes would drive out those foreign nations which were in the land assigned to them. In this way, it could be said that Joshua had divided by lot the nations which remained.

6. *What general boundaries of the Promised Land did Joshua mention?* 23:4

Joshua gave the eastern boundary as being the Jordan. He called the western boundary "the great sea westward." This was a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. Although Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh lived east of the Jordan, it was reasonable to speak of the Jordan and the land which pertained to it as the eastern boundary. There was no land for them to possess beyond the Mediterranean Sea.

*Promises of Blessings for Obedience* 23:6-11

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;

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:

8 But cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day.

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.

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.

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God.

7. *Was the Pentateuch written in the days of Joshua?*  
23:6

Joshua urged his people to "do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses." The book of the law of Moses is an evident reference to the five books of the Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Moses compiled the writing of the book of the Law and commanded the priests to keep it where it could be read regularly to the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:9, 24). Joshua urged his people to keep this law and not to turn aside from it in either direction—to the right or to the left. Certainly the book was written and was known to the people or this passing reference on the part of Joshua would have had no meaning. Here is good evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

8. *How had God fought for Israel?* 23:3, 10

When Moses and the people of Israel stood at the edge of the Red Sea with the Egyptians behind them and no way of escape to the right or to the left, Moses said, "The Lord shall fight for you" (Exodus 14:14). God did fight for Israel. By His providences the chariot wheels were removed from the chosen chariots of Egypt. The armies of Pharaoh were overthrown in the midst of the sea. When the sun and moon stood still so that the people could avenge themselves upon their enemies, it was said again, "The Lord fought for Israel" (10:14). These people had experienced God's providences on their behalf and knew of the times when God had fought for Israel in the days of their ancestors.

9. *What great nations had been driven out?* 23:9

A list of thirty-one kings whom the Israelites had beaten is given in chapter twelve. The kings beyond the Jordan had also been defeated. Some of these nations were great and powerful nations. Only by the providences of God were the Israelites able to overthrow these kingdoms.

10. *Why say one man could chase a thousand?* 23:10

Joshua was expressing the unusual strength which would come to the Israelites when they followed the Lord. Moses had earlier said that five of them would chase an hundred and an hundred would put ten thousand to flight (Leviticus 26:8). Later Moses had used this very terminology to express the unusual strength which would be Israel's as he said one would chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight (Deuteronomy 32:30). Unusual feats of courage were performed by these Israelites. Shamgar slew six hundred men with an ox goad (Judges 3:31), and Samson slew a thousand men with a new jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:15). One of David's mighty men was famous for his fighting against eight hundred men (II Samuel 23:8). Even though individual feats of this nature can be isolated in the Scripture, Joshua's reference was a general allusion to the fact that they would be able to overcome great odds as they followed the Lord faithfully.

11. *Why did Joshua urge the people to take good heed to themselves?* 23:11

Joshua's exhortation was really quite explicit. A stronger translation of this passage would indicate that he urged them to "guard carefully" their souls. Here was an exhortation that they should love the Lord with all their hearts, souls, and minds. They were to give Him first place in their thoughts and in their devotions. Joshua was most concerned over their spiritual attitudes and made this clear as he gave this exhortation.



*Warnings of Punishments for Disobedience 23:12-16*

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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

12. *What was the special danger posed by the remaining nations? 23:12*

Joshua foresaw the day when the Israelites would intermarry with those among whom they dwelt. When they did this, he knew they could no longer remain a

separate and peculiar people devoted completely to God. There would then be the danger of their making mention of the names of the gods of the Canaanites and swearing by them. Eventually they would serve them and bow down to them (verse 7). Such a state of idolatry would mean that they would perish from off the good land which the Lord their God had given to them. Moses had forbade such a condition of intermarriage as he spoke to the Israelites in his day and said, "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" (Deuteronomy 7:3).

13. *What was "the way of all the earth?"* 23:14

This was another way for Joshua to say that he was nearing the end of his earthly sojourn. The day of his death was at hand in his estimation. He knew that he was old and stricken in years and that his term of service could not be much longer. This fact made it imperative for him to give these final exhortations to the people among whom he had worked and served.

14. *What evil things would the Israelites suffer if they disobeyed God?* 23:15

Moses had warned that God would send a terror, consumption, and burning ague among the people if they disobeyed God (Leviticus 26:16). He further predicted that they would sow their seed in vain. In addition, he foresaw the land being overrun by wild beasts which would rob them of their children, destroy their cattle, make them few in number, and cause their highways to be desolate (Leviticus 26:22). Moses had later pronounced five curses upon the people—in the city, in the field, of basket and store, fruit of body and of land, and increase of kine and flocks. In short, he saw them being completely devoid of God's blessings (Deuteronomy 28:15, 16). Joshua must

have had a similar God-forsaken condition in mind when he warned his people about the results of disobedience. He said that they would be destroyed from off the good land which God had given them.

15. *What covenant had the Lord commanded?* 23:16

The Old Testament was God's covenant with the people of Israel. The epitome of its provisions was in the Ten Commandments. These people had received this covenant at Mount Sinai and had agreed to live by it. When they broke their part of the covenant, God could only punish them for their disobedience. The terrible prospect of their losing the Promised Land was held before them. Joshua wanted to encourage them to be faithful to God's covenant, for this would insure their remaining in the land they had received as an inheritance.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 23

1. What representatives of the people assembled at Joshua's call?
2. What was the eastern border of the Promised Land?
3. What was the western border mentioned by Joshua?
4. To what book of commandments did Joshua make reference?
5. How many men did Joshua say one Israelite would chase?
6. Why were the Israelites unusually strong?
7. To what danger and annoyances did Joshua compare the remaining Canaanites?
8. Had any good thing failed to come to pass for the Israelites?
9. Did Joshua believe the people would be in danger of losing the Promised Land if they disobeyed God?
10. Did Joshua approve of Israelites marrying members of the foreign nations among whom they lived?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 24

- Vv. 1-13 *A reminder of God's blessings.* Joshua began his farewell address by reminding all the children of Israel of the blessings which had been given to them by God in their past history. This was the way in which he began his final address to the elders when they gathered at Shiloh. The review here is much fuller than the review he made as is recorded in chapter twenty-three. In his final farewell address, Joshua went all the way back to the time before the call of Abraham and traced the work of God as He had blessed Israel throughout the years until the time when He gave them the Promised Land. Such a reminder was a forceful way in which to begin his final exhortation for the people to be faithful to God.
- Vv. 14-25 *The people's choice to serve God.* After he had reviewed how richly God had blessed the people, Joshua informed the thousands of Israel that he and his house were going to be faithful to the Lord. He asked them to choose whom they would serve. They could choose to serve the gods of the Amorites—the Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites—among whom they dwelt; or they could serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Lord, who had brought them into Canaan and given them the Promised Land. The people said they would serve the Lord.
- Vv. 26-33 *Joshua's last days and death.* One of Joshua's last acts was to erect a stone under an oak in Shechem and appoint it as a memorial of the

## JOSHUA

fact that Israel had sworn to put away the foreign gods which were among them and to serve the Lord God of Israel. He also wrote his history of these events and added it to the Pentateuch—the Book of the Law of God (verse 26). When Joshua died, he was 110 years of age; and they buried him in his own inheritance, Timnath-serah, within the boundaries of the tribe of Ephraim. The final appendix to his book recorded how the people remained faithful as long as those elders who are contemporary with Joshua were among them. This time reached down to the end of the life of Eleazar, the son of Aaron who was priest in Joshua's days; and a part of Israel's faithfulness was their remembrance of the promise their forefathers had made to Joseph to bury his bones in the Promised Land. They interred his remains in the land given to the tribe of Ephraim, those who descended from Joseph's younger son.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A man chooses his destiny.* Joshua stood before the thousands of Israel and urged them to choose whom they would serve. In the earlier days, some of their ancestors had served foreign gods. This had been true when they dwelt in Mesopotamia before the call of Abraham. Some had also served pagan gods when they were in Egypt. Joshua knew that there would be a constant temptation before these people in his day to serve the gods of the Canaanites. He wanted them to reaffirm their faith in the Lord God of Israel before he came to the end of his brilliant career.

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2. *A city set on a hill.* Jesus said that Christians were like a candle set on a candlestick or a city set on a hill which could not be hid. He compared his followers to the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16). A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Joshua held up his own decision as an example to be followed by all of his contemporaries. He affirmed with positive conviction how he and his house were going to serve the Lord. He hoped that many would follow his leading.
3. *There is rest for the weary.* The final verses of the book of Joshua record the last days and death of Joshua and also make passing reference to the reverent burial of other leaders of Israel. Joshua lived to be 110 years of age and was buried in his own property at Timnath-serah, the town which the Israelites had given him as his inheritance. This was within the borders of the territory given to the children of Ephraim, Joshua's tribe. Eleazar, the high priest during Joshua's time of leadership, also died and was given a reverent burial in the property which pertained to his son, Phinehas. This territory was also in the borders of the territory given to the tribe of Ephraim since many of the sons of Aaron had received their Levitical cities within the borders of this tribe. Joseph had urged the children of Israel to be kind to him, to carry his bones out of Egypt, and to bury them in the Promised Land (Genesis 50:25). The children of Israel had remembered this promise for over 400 years, and they gave a reverent burial to the bones of Joseph. His bones were also buried within the territory assigned to the children of Ephraim, Joseph's younger son. The parcel of ground is further identified as being a part of the land which Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem (Genesis 34).

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

*A Reminder of God's Blessings 24:1-13*

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

6 And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red Sea.

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.

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.

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:



10 But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.

11 And ye 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.

12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.

*1. Why go to Shechem to renew the covenant? 24:1*

Shechem was a place which was sanctified as no other was for such a purpose as this by the most sacred reminiscences from the times of the patriarchs. Joshua therefore summoned all the tribes to Shechem, where Abraham received the first promise from God after his migration into Canaan. Jacob settled here on his return from Mesopotamia. It was here that he purified his house from the strange gods, burying all their idols under the oak (Genesis 33:19; 35:2, 4). Joshua's exhortation to be faithful to the Lord and to purify themselves from all idolatry could not fail to make a deep impression. In the same place the honored patriarch Jacob had done the very same thing. The action meant more in this spot than in any other.

*2. How did Joshua begin his address? 24:2*

Joshua's address contains an expansion of two thoughts. He first of all recalls all the proofs of God's mercy, from the calling of Abraham to that day (verses 2-13). Then because of these divine acts, he calls upon the people to renounce all idolatry and to serve God, the Lord alone

(verses 14, 15). The Lord is described as the "God of Israel" both at the commencement and also at the close of the whole transaction. This is in perfect accordance with the substance and object of the address, which is occupied throughout with the goodness conferred by God upon the nation of Israel.

3. *What "other gods" had Israel's forefathers served? 24:2b*

Nothing definite can be gathered from the expression "other gods," with reference to the gods worshiped by Terah and his family. Nothing further is to be found respecting them through the whole of the Old Testament. We learn from Genesis 31:19, 34, that Laban had *teraphim*, i.e. penates, or household and oracular gods. Some question also whether Abraham was an idolater before his call. This has been answered in different ways, but it cannot be determined with certainty. We may conjecture, however, that he was not deeply sunk in idolatry, though he had not remained entirely free from it in his father's house. Therefore his call is not to be regarded as a reward for his righteousness before God, but as an act of grace.

4. *What is meant by the phrase, "the other side of the flood"? 24:2c*

Evidently Joshua is making reference to the land on the other side of the Euphrates River. This was a line of demarcation and formed a natural boundary line between the territory into which Abraham came when he was called out of Ur of Chaldees. As they were dwelling in Canaan in the days of Joshua, it was natural for him to make reference to the land where the forefathers had lived as land which was "on the other side of the flood."

5. *What difference was made in the inheritances of Esau and Jacob? 24:4*

Jacob had bought Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:29-34). He then deceived Esau and received Isaac's blessing (Genesis 27). In this way, Jacob

became heir of the Promised Land; but Joshua reported how God said He gave Mount Seir to Esau. Mount Seir was south of the Promised Land. The territory extended from the Dead Sea to the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Petra was the most famous city in this territory.

6. *Had any of the people in Joshua's day seen the crossing of the Red Sea?* 24:7

Joshua, himself, was twenty years of age when they left Egypt. He witnessed the miracle at the Red Sea. All of those who were less than sixty years of age when they arrived in Canaan might have witnessed the crossing. At the time they would have been under twenty years of age, but they should have had a vivid remembrance of that great victory. Only those men who were twenty years of age or older when they left Egypt were under the penalty of death which was pronounced upon the Israelites after they listened to the evil report of the ten spies (Numbers 13). Caleb was also spared and would have been another eye-witness to the crossing of the Red Sea. Those who had not seen the event itself would certainly have been thrilled as they heard their elders talk about it. As Joshua recited God's goodness to Israel, it was natural for him to make reference to this outstanding event.

7. *Who were the Amorites?* 24:8

The Amorites who dwelt on the other side of the Jordan were Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan. Both of these strong kings had been beaten in battle as the Israelites fought under the leadership of Moses. Their territory was divided among the three tribes, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. All of Joshua's contemporaries witnessed these great events.

8. *In what way had God refused to hearken to Balaam?* 24:10

Balaam was a prophet who was concerned more about the hire which he would get for his work than for the

truth of his prophecy. God warned him to speak only the things which were revealed to him. At first, God refused to allow him to go with Balak's messengers. As Balaam made his way to meet Balak, God spoke to him in the unusual circumstances of his ass speaking to him. He also confronted him with the Angel of the Lord. All of this was another way of God's throwing an obstacle in Balaam's selfish path. It is fair then to say that God refused to hearken to Balaam.

9. *What was the hornet?* 24:12

As the people of Israel were leaving Egypt, God said, "I will send a hornet before thee which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before thee" (Exodus 23:28). When Moses reviewed the history of the wilderness wanderings, he made reference to the hornet again by saying that God would send a hornet among them until they who were left and hid themselves perished from before Israel (Deuteronomy 7:20). This was a figure of speech by which God referred to the way in which His Spirit would lead and guide the people of Israel. He did indeed fight for Israel.

10. *In what way had Israel been especially blessed?* 24:13

God said He had given them a land for which they had not labored. They had cities which they had not built, and they were allowed to dwell in them. They received the produce of vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted. This was another way of saying the Promised Land was a gift to them. This was a special blessing.

*The People's Choice to Serve God* 24:14-25

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.

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.

16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

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 which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 And the Lord drove 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.

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.

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.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

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.

23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

11. *Were there foreign gods among the Israelites?* 24:14

Joshua was certainly deeply concerned when he urged the Israelites to put away the foreign gods which were among them. When Jacob was on his way back from Haran, he brought his family up to Bethel, and there took the images and idols from among them and buried them. This cleansing of Jacob's family was performed at Shechem; and the idols, the earrings, and every other object of false worship were buried under an oak in Shechem (Genesis 35:4). Although we are not told of their going through a ceremony in the days of Joshua, we presume that there were such objects of worship in Israel at that time and that the people disposed of them when they made the covenant to worship the God of Israel.

12. *What was Joshua's decision?* 24:15

Joshua was crystal clear in his determination to serve the Lord. He put it in a very succinct way—"as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He set his own decision and the decision of his family before the rest of the Israelites in the hope that they would follow his good example and make similar decisions. God had been good to Joshua, and Joshua had no intention of turning his back on God.

13. *What was the decision of the people?* 24:16-18

The people replied that they, too, would serve the Lord. They based this decision on the fact that God had brought them and their fathers out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. They remembered the great signs which had been done in their own times. They were grateful for the preservation of their lives in the long journey which they had taken. They were aware of how it was by God's grace they were delivered out of the hands of their enemies. For these reasons, they cried out that they also would serve the Lord.

14. *Why did Joshua say that the people could not serve God ? 24:19*

Joshua rebuked the people by saying they were not able to serve God. He declared that God was a holy God. He further referred to Him as a jealous God. He said that He would not overlook their sins and their transgressions of His will. Joshua knew his people; he knew they were stiff-necked and hardhearted. He knew their love of sin; and for this reason, he was anxious to chide them in the hope that they would be challenged to a more wholehearted devotion.

*Joshua's Last Days and Death 24:26-33*

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.

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.

28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

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.

30 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

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.

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.

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.

15. *What words did Joshua write in the Book of the Law of God?* 24:26

Joshua certainly wrote down the account of this covenant which the people of Israel had made. This reference may also be a statement of the fact that Joshua wrote the history of which this covenant formed a part. In other words, this is a reference to Joshua's authorship of the book bearing his name. It would be added to the sacred canon, for a book was regarded as a part of the Word of God when it was delivered by an inspired man. It was the inspiration of the book which decided its canonicity. The fact that it was placed with the rest of the sacred writings would indicate the reverence with which it was held by the people of the day.

16. *How old was Joshua when he died?* 24:29

Joshua was 110 years of age when he died. He was among those who were counted at Sinai (Numbers 1). He was also one of the spies who were sent out to go through the length and breadth of the Promised Land (Numbers 13). He must have been a mature man for he was given charge over the armies of Israel when they fought against Amalek before they reached Sinai (Exodus 17). If he was over twenty years of age when they came to Sinai, he was over sixty when they entered into the Promised Land, since they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. We are not told how long it took to conquer the land, and we are not told how long it took for them to make the allotments to the various tribes; but if Joshua



was 110 when he died, he would have had thirty years in which to do this if he were no more than eighty when he entered into the Promised Land.

17. *Where was Timnath-serah?* 24:30

When the land was distributed among the tribes according to its territories, the Israelites gave Joshua an inheritance in the midst of them. This was according to the command of Jehovah. The town was Timnath-serah, in the mountains of Ephraim. He asked for it, and he finished building the city. He dwelt there until the time of his death (see 24:30; Judges 2:9). This was given him "according to the word of the Lord." This does not refer to a divine oracle, but to a promise which Joshua had probably received from God at the same time as Caleb. The promise, however, is not mentioned in the Pentateuch. Timnath-serah, called Timnath-heres in Judges 2:9, must not be confused with Timnah in the tribe of Dan. It has been preserved in the present ruins and foundation walls of a place called Tibneh. This was once a large town about twenty miles to the north of Jerusalem and eight miles to the west of Jiljilia. It really stood upon two mountains containing many caverns which have been used as graves.

18. *Who wrote the last verses of this chapter?* 24:29-33

The last verses of this chapter reach beyond the time of Joshua's death. Someone besides Joshua must have written this appendix to the book of Joshua. The book also reaches down past the time of Eleazar, for the death of Eleazar is recorded in verse 33. Eleazar had been the faithful high priest in Joshua's day. Since the last man to be mentioned is Phinehas, there is some reason for believing he penned these last verses. Phinehas was a faithful defender of God's laws (Numbers 25 and Joshua 22). Although he is never expressly said to have received the Spirit of the Lord, he may have been inspired to write these last verses of Joshua.

19. *Where was Joseph buried?* 24:32

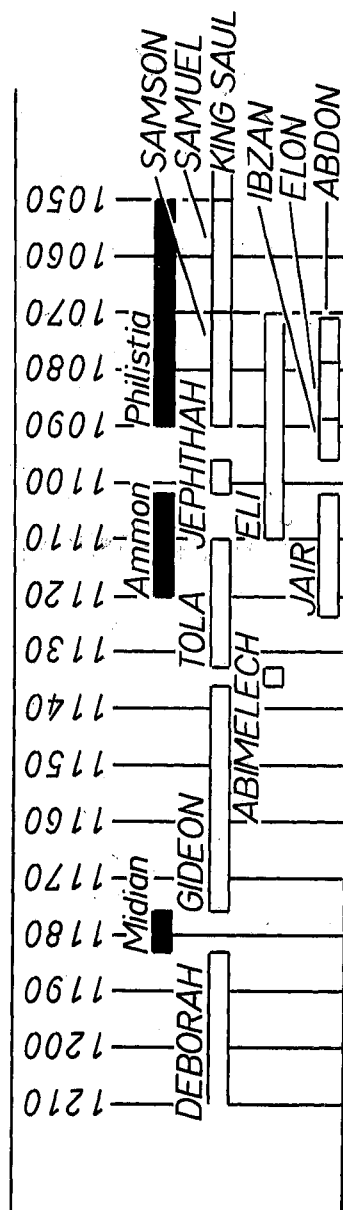
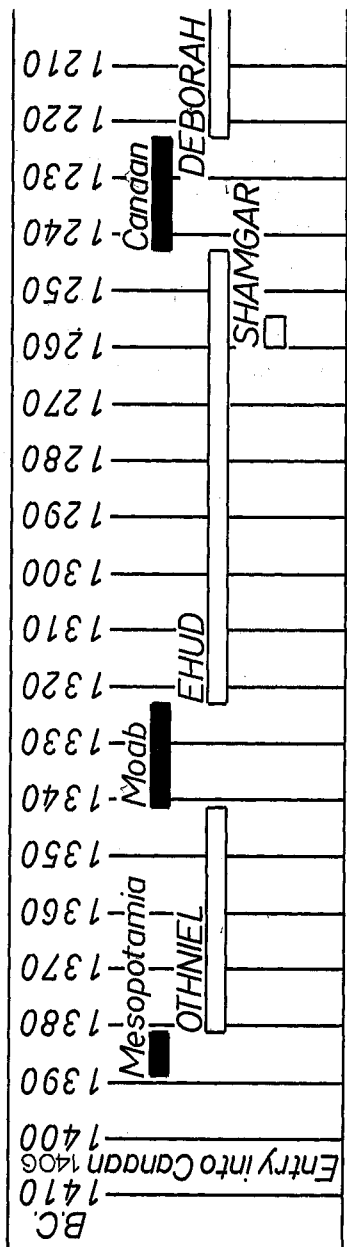
Joseph was buried in a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 34). Joseph's body had been embalmed in Egypt. Before he died, however, he had exacted a promise from his contemporaries that they would not leave his body in Egypt. These Israelites of his day had sworn with an oath that they would take his body with them when they left Egypt (Genesis 50:24, 25). They had kept this promise; and with all due reverence, the body of Joseph was buried in the Promised Land.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 24

1. Where did all Israel gather to hear Joshua's farewell address?
2. What mountain was Esau's possession?
3. Over what people did Balak rule as king?
4. By what figure did God refer to His power among the Israelites?
5. Where did Joshua write the words of Israel's covenant to serve the Lord?
6. What did Joshua set up as a memorial of the covenant?
7. How old was Joshua when he died?
8. Where were Joseph's bones buried?
9. Where was Eleazar buried?
10. Where was Joshua buried?

# THE JUDGES

Oppression   
JUDGESHIP 





Site of Shiloh (Matson Photo Service)

## INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES

The Hebrew name for the book of Judges is *Shophetim*, a Hebrew word meaning judges. When the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language in the second century before Christ, the book was called *Kritai*, a Greek word meaning judges. One is not surprised then to learn that when Jerome translated the Old Testament into Latin he called the book *Liber Judicum*, Latin words meaning Book of Judges. Thus, this book has always borne a name which signified that its theme was the life and times of the judges of Israel.

The Judges of Israel, as a peculiar group of leaders, were God's vice-regents. God, Himself, was the supreme ruler; and the government of their era has well been called a theocracy, a government in which God was the real power. When these men were elevated to their office, they ruled for their lifetimes. As a group, they led Israel in rather unbroken succession from the time of Joshua through the time of Samuel. Individuals prompted by the inward, irresistible impulse of God's Holy Spirit were roused to achieve deliverance for His people. Usually, their rise to power was accompanied by a special call. The people, seeing them endowed with extraordinary courage or strength, accepted them and submitted to their rule. These men, unlike the kings in the surrounding territories and in Israel at a later period, were without pomp, equipage, or emoluments of office. As Jamieson, Fausset and Brown say in their *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, they did not have the power to make laws, for the laws were given by God. They did not have power to explain the laws for that was the task of the priests. On the other hand, they were upholders of the law. They were avengers of all crimes, particularly of idolatry and its attendant vices. They were, generally speaking, great military lead-

## JUDGES

ers; and in them the people of Israel began to find a visible expression of unity which later culminated in their asking for a king.

### DATE

The opening verse of the book makes reference to the death of Joshua, and the contents of the book are accurately dated from a period shortly after the death of Joshua through the time of Samson, the end of whose career is described in chapter sixteen. Chapters seventeen through twenty-one form an appendix and do not carry the reader into any later period of Israel's history. Samson may have been contemporary with Eli; that is, Samson's activity centered in the Philistine plain; and at the same time, Eli may have functioned as a judge in Shiloh while being the high priest.

We have dated the close of Joshua at 1375 B.C. We are also reasonably sure of the dating of Samuel at 1075-1025 B.C. Thus, the period covered by the book of Judges would be something like 300 years.

There are many chronological notes in the book of Judges. All of these added together total 410 years. It is clear even to the superficial reader of Bible history, however, that the book of Judges does not cover this long a period of time. The reference in I Kings 6:1 states that it was only 480 years from the time of the Exodus to the building of the temple. The Israelite children wandered for forty years. Joshua's leadership lasted for at least twenty-five years. After the period of the Judges, Saul reigned for forty years. David ruled a similar length of time. All these eras total at least one hundred forty-five years which must be subtracted from the four hundred eighty years which elapsed between the time of the Exodus and the time of the building of the temple in the fourth year of Solomon's reign.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

If the periods described as times when the land had rest are totaled together along with the number of years during which the judges judged, a total of two hundred ninety-nine years is the result. This includes three years during which Abimelech made an abortive effort to be king. Such a length of time for the period of Judges is also indicated by Jephthah's statement when he chided the Ammonites for making no objection to Israel occupying their territory for three hundred years prior to his time, thus indicating Israel had been in the Promised Land about this long. We, thus, feel we are reasonably accurate in describing the era of the Judges as a three-hundred-year period between 1375 B.C. and 1075 B.C.

Such a chronological conclusion presupposes the judges ruled in a rather continuous succession. Those who do not allow for the judges to rule successively telescope the time by assuming the judges ruled simultaneously. They say that Samson may have been leading the Israelites in his area around the territory of the tribe of Dan while Jephthah was holding the leadership of the tribes in Gilead. Such a position does not take into consideration the oft-repeated statement that these men "judged Israel" (e.g. 12:7, 12:8, 12:11, 12:13, 16:31).

The idea that the Israelites were a quarreling and divided hodgepodge of twelve individual tribes is part and parcel of the idea of an evolutionary development of the nation of Israel and does not take into account any supernatural blessing of Israel which molded them into a unified whole as early as the time of Moses. It seems better, therefore, to hold that the judges ruled successively in a rather orderly fashion.

## THE AUTHOR

Within the book itself no author is named. Liberal critics deny that the book was the work of a single author.

## JUDGES

For example, A. S. Geden, in an article on the book of Judges in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* speaks of the traditional narrative, the moral commentary, and the chronological framework as being separate sources but woven together by a compiler or a reviser who completed the book in the form in which it now exists. With the indefiniteness which is typical of the radical scholar, he concludes very little can be determined concerning the dates at which these processes took place. In other words, there is no positive suggestion made as to the author or the date of writing.

The book of Judges must have been written before David's time, for the author of Judges says Jerusalem was still in the possession of the Jebusites (Judges 1:21). David captured Jerusalem early in his reign as is recorded in II Samuel 5:6 ff., and he made it his capital city. Passages such as 17:6, 18:1, and 21:25 imply a time in the early monarchy when its blessings were fresh in mind.

The reference to the "captivity of the land" (18:30) causes some to believe it was written at the time of the Babylonian Captivity, but a variant reading of this passage indicates it was the captivity of the Ark which was in mind and not the captivity of the land. The Ark was displaced from the time it was captured in the days of Eli until it was brought back to Jerusalem by David (II Samuel 6). It would hardly be possible for the image worship of the Danites to continue through the reigns of David and Solomon. Neither would Jeroboam have allowed the worship of the Danites to continue in Dan after he set up his golden calf in the same place. Surely the "captivity of the land" was a reference to the time when the Philistines held dominion over the Israelites and so subjugated them that "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel" (I Samuel 13:19). The Philistines so held the land of Israel in captivity that the Israelites



were weaponless and were without artisans who could forge spears and swords for them. This condition prevailed through much of the era of the judges and was true especially when Saul began to reign.

Edward J. Young in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* wrote that this leads us to the conclusion that the book was written during the early days of the monarchy. He suggests that it might have been written in the reign of Saul or the early days of David. He further commented that the remarkable unity of the book rules out any special scheme of compilation as proposed by divisive criticism.

M. F. Unger in his *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament* proposed that Samuel may have been the author and compiler. He lists the following reasons for this position:

1. The book exhibits the unity of a single author
2. The author was not in a large measure a compiler.  
(He mentions such evidence as the fact that the author includes Deborah's song and other material which would be a part of Israel's literary heritage)
3. The book shows evidence of coming from the age of Saul (e.g. 1:21)
4. Hebrew tradition holds that Samuel was the author  
(see the Talmud, *Baba Bathra* 14b)

The Hebrew tradition to which Unger makes reference is a statement to the effect that Samuel wrote the book bearing his name, the book of Judges, and the book of Ruth. There is certainly no reason why Samuel could not have written the book of Judges. In the face of the statement to this effect which shows the belief of the Jews of the time and in the absence of any serious objections to his having written it, it seems best to hold that Samuel was the author of these twenty-one chapters.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the book is many-sided. In the first place, it certainly fills the need for carrying forward Israel's history. Without it, we would have very little knowledge of what transpired between the time of Joshua and the time of Samuel. As a result of its being in the canon, we have a continuation of the history of the people after they were settled in the land until the time when the need for a king became paramount in their considerations. When a Christian reads the book, he is impressed with the way in which it underlines the truth that rebellion against God brings punishment, but repentance brings restoration.

## OUTLINE

On the basis of the plan which is evident in the book, the following outline is most often given:

- I. General Introduction 1:1—3:6
- II. Period of the judges 3:7—16:31
- III. Double appendix 17—21
  - A. Idolatry of Dan 17, 18
  - B. Crime at Gibeah 19-21

An alternate outline which gives more detail but presents only a slight variation is as follows:

*Introduction:* General Introduction to the Period of the Judges, 1:1—2:5

- I. The Period of the Judges 2:6—16:31
  - A. General Religious Characterization of the Period 2:6—3:6
  - B. List of the Judges 3:7—16:31
    - 1. Othniel of Judah (3:8-11)
    - 2. Ehud of Benjamin (3:12-30)
    - 3. Shamgar (3:31)
    - 4. Deborah of Ephraim and Barak of Naphtali (4:1—5:31)

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

5. Gideon of Manasseh and Abimelech (6:1—9:57)
  6. Tola of Issachar (10:1, 2)
  7. Jair of Gilead (10:3-5)
  8. Jephthah of Gilead (10:6—12:7)
  9. Ibzan of Zebulun (12:8-10)
  10. Elon of Zebulun (12:11, 12)
  11. Abdon of Ephraim (12:13-15)
  12. Samson of Dan (13:1—16:31)
- II. Double Appendix 17:1—21:25
- A. The Idolatry of Dan (17:1—18:31)
  - B. The Crime at Gibeah and Its Punishment (19:1—21:25)

Even those who do not hold to the authorship of Samuel and in general are of critical background say that Judges is one of the most valuable documents of Hebrew history (e.g. C. H. Brannon, *Introduction to the Bible*, page 43). It is that, and more also. It is an integral part of the precious Word of God. It is an account of some of the greatest heroes of God's dealings with men. Some of the men do not appear as great or as good as one might expect them to be since, as a people, they were guided by God's laws and enriched by His great promises.

Although there are those among them who were drawn away to idolatry, yet the Tabernacle service according to the Law of Moses was kept in existence; and there were many who adhered to it. The judgment passed on the crimes which are recorded is in keeping with the action of a people who were motivated by a high and holy calling.

Some of the men wielded great influence on their contemporaries. For example, in the case of Ehud, it is said that after his victory the land rested eighty years. After Barak's victory, it is said in similar fashion that the land had rest for forty years. It is not certain that these

## JUDGES

men lived this long, much less that they governed that long; but they and others were raised up and animated by the spirit of God to render a particular service when there was an occasion. As a result, the influence of their leadership was felt for the specified length of time.

In the course of their careers, these leaders purged Israel of idolatries. They avenged Israel of her enemies. They championed the cause of righteousness. Therefore, it is clear that during the government of the judges God was in a special manner Israel's king. Those who wish to know God's will for their own lives will do well to study closely the careers of these men. Four of them were of such great stature that they were mentioned in Hebrews 11:32 as being worthy of notice in the roll call of the saints. May each one who fears God live such an exemplary life that his name will be inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life.

## A CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE JUDGES

Framework	Notice or Narrative	Name of Judge, etc.	Tribe or Locality of Judge	Preceding Oppressor, if named	Period of (a) Preceding Oppression (b) Judgeship
2:6,7,8-10, 11-23, 3:1-6	3:7-11	Othniel	Caleb	Cushan	a. 8 b. 40
3:12-15a, 3:29 f.	3:15b-28 See I Chr. 7:10	Ehud	Benjamin	Eglon	a. 18 b. 80
4:1-3, 5:31b	3:31 4:4-5:30a	Shamgar Deborah (Barak)	Benjamin Ephraim Naphtali	Philistines Jabin	a. 20 b. 40
6:1-10 8:28, 33-35	6:11-8:27 9	Gideon, followed by his son Abimelech	Manasseh	Midian	a. 7 b. 40
10:6-18; 12:7	10:1 f. 10:3-5 11:1-12:6	Jair Jephthah	Issachar Gilead Gilead	Ammon	b. 3 b. 23 b. 22 a. 18 b. 6 b. 7
13:1, 15:20 16:31b	12:8-10 12:11-12 12:13-15 13:2-15-19 16	Ibzan Elon Abdon Samson	Bethlehem Zebulun Ephraim Dan	Philistines	b. 10 b. 8 a. 40 b. 20
Total					410 years (a) 111 years (b) 299 years

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 1

- Vv. 1-8 *A summary of the period after Joshua's death.* God's leading Israel to have Judah to begin the conquest is recorded in these verses. Judah began the task of completing the conquest of the land. Such work would include the driving out of the Canaanites who had filtered back into the fortified sites which had been overthrown in the quick campaign led by Joshua. The men of Judah were closely assisted in this work by the men of Simeon, who settled among them.
- Vv. 9-21 *A resume of the activity of the tribe of Judah.* This section includes a review of Caleb's asking for and receiving Hebron as his special inheritance. Since this area was within the midst of the land assigned to the tribe of Judah, it is natural for the conquest to be recounted at this point. Special notice is made of the failure of the tribes to drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem. The site of Jerusalem lay within the boundaries of the tribe of Benjamin, but it was on the border of the land assigned to the tribe of Judah. The Benjaminites, themselves, are especially held responsible for driving out this branch of the Canaanites.
- Vv. 22-29 *Failure of the children of Ephraim.* Ephraim and Manasseh did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in their midst. Mention is made of this failure in the sixteenth chapter of Joshua, and is in contrast to the more effective work which was done by the tribe of Judah.

Vv. 30-36 *The failure of the other tribes.* The tribes of Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan are singled out as having failed to drive out the Canaanites who formerly inhabited the territory which was assigned to them. Such a failure led to these people being snares to the children of Israel; they were as thorns pricking their eyes. They especially presented a temptation to the young men of Israel who married the young women of the pagan tribes who remained in the territory. Eventually they persuaded the Israelites to worship their gods and thus brought the downfall of Israel.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Let the Lord lead.* The children of Israel did well to ask God to direct them in their activity. When one who believes in God begins any activity, he should seek God's guidance. God should be put first at the beginning of every day's activities. He should be put first in giving consideration to any new project. Throughout all of life's activities, the paramount consideration should be the performance of the will of God.
2. *God leads to victory.* Such a statement as the account that "the Lord was with Judah" is followed by the record that "He drove out the inhabitants of the land." The fact that the people of Judah were not able to drive out all of the inhabitants of the mountains was the result of their failure to let the Lord lead all the way. Whenever a person puts his trust completely in the Lord, he finds that the Lord leads to complete victory.
3. *Sin is a reproach to any people.* The Word of God does not draw a curtain over the failure of God's

chosen people, either individually, or collectively as a nation. A large part of Judges One is a record of the failures of the people of Israel to drive out the Canaanites who formerly inhabited the land promised to them. The failure was not in God's ability to help, but it was on account of the sin of the people. As Isaiah said, the Lord's hand was not shortened, that He could not help; His ear was not heavy that He could not hear, but the sins of the people separated them from their God (see Isaiah 59:1 ff.).

## CHAPTER ONE

General Introduction to the Period of the Judges 1:1—2:5

### *Judah and Simeon Capture Adoni-bezek 1:1-7*

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?

2 And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

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.

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.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek 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.

1. *What is the connection between Judges and Joshua?*  
1:1

Opening with the phrase "And it came to pass after the death of Joshua," the book of Judges makes it clear that it follows immediately after the book of Joshua. It was in this same manner that Joshua was related to the Pentateuch, by the statement "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses" (Joshua 1:1). Some of the events in Judges are recapitulations of the events in Joshua, e.g., Caleb's taking Hebron (cf. Joshua 14:6-15; 15:13-19; Judges 1:11-15). Most of it, however, is a continuation of Israel's history from the time of Joshua to the time of Samuel. The narrative begins with a flash-back to the time of Joshua and telescopes in with some of the era of Eli which immediately precedes the time of Samuel, the last of the judges.

2. *How did they ask the Lord?* 1:1b

The high priest inquired of the Lord by using the URIM and the THUMMIM. Joshua was told to make this kind of inquiry through Eleazar the high priest (Numbers 27:21). We may assume that Phinehas, Eleazar's son, succeeded him as high priest and that Israel's leaders made inquiry of the Lord's will through him. If such were not the case, a tribe to lead might have been selected by casting the sacred lot (Joshua 7:13-18; cf. 17:1).

3. *Who went up first among the tribes?* 1:2

The tribes of Israel resolved to continue the war with the Canaanites after Joshua died. In order that they might exterminate them from the land altogether, they wanted to follow God's leading; hence, they asked who should be first to go to battle. Judah was selected and he com-

menced the strife in conjunction with Simeon. They smote the king of Bezek, conquered Jerusalem, Hebron (although Caleb had earlier taken possession of the land), Debir, Zephath, and three of the chief cities of the Philistines. Judah possessed the hill country but was unable to drive out the inhabitants of the plain, just as the Benjaminites were not able to drive the Jebusites out of Jerusalem.

4. *When did these events occur?* 1:3ff

The conquest was made in the days of Joshua. Some of the events described in the first chapter of Judges occurred in the days of Joshua (for example, the conquest of Hebron by Caleb in 1:10-15; cf. Joshua 14:6-15; 15:13-19). Others occurred at a later time. The whole chapter is a summary of the activity which was begun under Joshua's leadership and continued through the succeeding era. It forms a proper introduction to the time of the judges and provides a background against which their careers are outlined. The fact that some of the events happened much earlier than the time under most careful consideration is evidenced by such statements as that in 1:8: "Now the children of Judah *had fought* against Jerusalem, and *had taken* it." Later, in the same chapter, it is said, "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" (verse 21). Under Joshua, this city had been overthrown (Joshua 10). Mention is made again in Judges 1:8 that the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it, setting the city on fire (Judges 1:8). At the same time, the statement made in Judges 1:21 is true. Such a resume of the general activity of the time leaves room for Jerusalem to have been attacked earlier by Joshua, attacked as Judah led in settling her assigned territory, and yet occupied by Canaanites who crept back into the city when it was not occupied by the

Israelites. This is typical of the way in which the various accounts of military campaigns and early attempts at settlement were made prior to the time of the judges.

5. *Why is Simeon called Judah's brother?* 1:3

Simeon is called Judah's brother, not because Simeon and Judah were both sons of Jacob by the same mother, but because Simeon's territory lay within the territory of Judah (Joshua 19:1 ff.). Simeon was more closely connected with Judah than any of the other tribes. Simeon was really absorbed by Judah and lost his identity. Such a condition was predicted by Jacob, who said of Simeon, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7).

6. *Why had Adoni-bezek not joined the southern coalition?* 1:5

The fact that Adoni-bezek had not joined Adonizedek and the other kings of the South to fight against Joshua when the Israelites first came into the land is an indication that this king's power had begun to decline at the time of the Israelite invasion. If he had conquered seventy kings in his time, he had overthrown more kings than Joshua did in all the land of Canaan. Bezek is a city whose location has not been positively ascertained; but a probable identification has been made with the modern Khirbet Bezka, near Gezer, at the edge of the Shephelah, just west of Jerusalem overlooking the Maritime Plain and the Road of the Kings.

7. *Why did they cut off his thumbs and great toes?* 1:6, 7

A man maimed was not good for fighting. When his thumb was amputated, a man could not hold a spear or sword effectively. Neither could he handle a bow and arrow with dexterity. Likewise, without his large toes on his feet, he could not run swiftly, nor jump obstacles put in his way. Such treatment seems torturous by Christian standards, but the Israelites only treated him in the same

way as he had handled the seventy kings who were dependent upon him for their sustenance. It was certainly less torturous than the treatment given conquered peoples by pagan kings.

*Conquests of Judah 1:8-10*

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.

9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.

10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

8. *What were "the hill country," "the South," and "the lowland"?* 1:9

These were the main geographical divisions of Palestine. Much of Palestine is quite hilly. Mt. Carmel arises at the Mediterranean Sea and stretches from a point near the Bay of Acre in a southeasterly direction to the center of the land. The center itself is often described as Mount Ephraim. To the south lay the "hill country of Judah." All of this could properly be called "hill country." "The South" was a designation of the area south of Hebron, and this territory stretched past Beersheba and reached to the wilderness of Paran, the extreme southern border of the country. It is often called the *negeb*. Along the Mediterranean Sea stretched the Maritime Plain—the Philistine Plain and the Plain of Sharon. The Jordan Valley was a part of the Ghor, a deep declivity which terminated in the area round the Dead Sea, the lowest place on Earth. All of these areas were grouped under the heading, "the lowland."

9. *When was Hebron taken? 1:10*

Caleb took Hebron before Joshua died (see Joshua 14:6-15 cf. Joshua 15:16-19). The notice is repeated here. This first chapter of Judges is a typical summary of the conquest of the land, most of which was accomplished under Joshua's leadership. As time elapsed after the major battles of conquest, some of the Canaanite tribes drifted back into towns which Israel had burned but had not inhabited immediately. It thus became necessary for many of the sites to be retaken (e.g. Jerusalem). Since this is a summary account of conquest and settlement, it is natural to mention such early assaults as that of Caleb while describing continuing efforts to occupy the territory.

*Othniel Conquers Debir and Receives Achsah 1:11-15*

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher:

12 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

13 And Othni-el the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

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?

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.

*The Extent of the Conquests of Judah and Benjamin  
1:16-21*

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the chil-

dren of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

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.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

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.

10. *What city is called the "city of the palm trees"?* 1:16

This name was given to the city of Jericho (see Judges 3:13; Deuteronomy 34:3; II Chronicles 28:15). Strabo, Clericus, and others suppose that this is a reference to some other town in the desert of Arabia, but without substantial grounds. When Jesus went up from Jericho to Jerusalem, crowds followed Him; and on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they threw palm branches along the roadway (John 12:13).

11. *Who were the Kenites?* 1:16

The Kenites were descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses. They were probably a branch of the Kenites mentioned in Genesis 15:19 along with the other tribes of Canaan, which had separated from the other

members of its own tribe before the time of Moses and removed to the land of Midian, where Moses met with a hospitable reception from their chief, Reuel, on his flight from Egypt. These people had gone along with the Israelites to Canaan at the request of Moses (Numbers 10:29 ff.). When the Israelites advanced into Canaan itself, they had probably remained as nomads in the neighborhood of the Jordan near Jericho, without taking any part in the wars of Joshua; but when the tribes of Judah had driven out the Canaanites from Hebron, Debir, and the neighborhood, after the death of Joshua, they went into the desert of Judah with the Judeans and settled on the border of the steppes of the Negeb.

12. *Where were Arad and Hormah?* 1:16, 17

*Hormah* was the chief town of a Canaanitish king in the south of Palestine (Joshua 12:14). Near here the Israelites were discomfited by the Amalekites when against the advice of Moses they attempted to enter Canaan by that route (Numbers 14:45; cf. 21:1-3; Deuteronomy 1:44). Hormah was afterward taken by Joshua and assigned to Judah (Joshua 15:30; but it finally fell to Simeon 19:4; I Chronicles 4:30). Hormah has not been positively identified, though Tell-es-seba, about three miles east of Beersheba is a likely location (see Unger's *Bible Dictionary*, p. 449). *Arad* was a Canaanite city of the southern-most borders of Palestine, whose inhabitants drove back the Israelites while they were trying to enter Canaan from Kadesh (Numbers 21:2; 33:40), but were finally subdued by Joshua (Joshua 12:14; Judges 1:16). It lay twenty miles south of Hebron, and is now called Tell Arad (see Unger, *op cit.*, p. 77). Considerable excavations have been undertaken at Tell Arad, and evidences of Canaanite civilization are extensive. Nearby is a large settlement of modern Israel which keeps alive the ancient Biblical name.

13. *Was Jerusalem occupied by Israelites in the day of the judges? 1:21*

After defeating Adoni-bezek, Judah and Simeon went against Jerusalem, conquered this city, and set the city on fire. Joshua had already slain the king of Jerusalem and his four allies after the battle of Gibeon (Joshua 10:3, 18-26), but had not conquered his capital. Even after Judah and Simeon smote the city, Jerusalem did not come into the sole and permanent possession of the Israelites until David made it his capital (II Samuel 5:6 ff.). When this chapter of Judges was written, the site was occupied by that group of Canaanites known as Jebusites. The necessity for such repeated attempts to conquer a single site illustrates how the Canaanites infiltrated back into the midst of the Israelites whenever Israel did not exterminate these enemies or occupy immediately the citadels taken from them.

*Conquest of Other Tribes 1:22-36*

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the Lord was with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el (Now the name of the city before was Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy.

25 And when he showed 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.

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.

27 Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the in-



habitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.

29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became tributaries.

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:

32 But the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: for they did not drive them out.

33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

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.

36 And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim, from the rock, and upward.

*14. What is known of the history of Bethel? 1:22, 23*

The children of Israel would be especially anxious to possess this site; for it was here that God appeared to the patriarch, Jacob, when he fled from the presence of his

brother, Esau. The town came into such significant prominence in the later history of Israel that it attained the same importance in many respects in relation to the northern tribes, as that which Jerusalem attained in relation to the southern. Bethel was a name given to the site by Jacob (Genesis 28:19), and this name signified to Israel that it was the "house of God." Luz was the name by which the Canaanites identified the place. The men of Bethel had assisted the men of Ai in resisting Israel's armies led by Joshua (Joshua 8:17), but no specific reference is made to the capture of Bethel in Joshua's day. The account here describes how this important site came into the possession of Israel.

15. *Did the other tribes drive the Canaanites from their land?* 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34

Some of them did; some of them did not. Ephraim followed the good example of Judah and drove the Canaanites from their hill-country; but we read of Manasseh that they "did not drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean and its towns . . ." (1:27 ff.). God had told them that those who remained would be as thorns in their sides and that their gods would be a snare unto the people, and so did the events turn out. Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan are singled out as tribes who failed to exterminate completely the Canaanites whose land they inherited. Nothing is said of failure in this respect on the part of Benjamin, except in regard to the Jebusites in Jerusalem (1:21). Neither is an appraisal given of the work of Reuben, Gad or Issachar.

16. *What kind of tribute was exacted?* 1:28, 30, 33, 35

The men became subject to taskwork. This was the way in which the children of Joseph treated the Canaanites whom they were not able to drive out of their territory (Joshua 17:13). In similar fashion, Israel made the Gibeonites do servile work when these Canaanites tricked the

people into making a peace treaty with them. At that time, Joshua declared, "Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondsmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God" (Joshua 9:23). Such must have been the fate of the other Canaanites whom the Israelites did not exterminate but whom they were able to subjugate.

17. *Which tribe was especially oppressed by the Canaanites?* 1:34-36

Dan was forced up into the mountains by the Amorites who dwelt in their land. Such pressure on the part of the Amorites induced a portion of the Danites to emigrate and seek an inheritance in the northern part of Palestine where an earlier conquest had been made (cf. Judges 18; Joshua 19:47). Dan's territory lay on the west of the land given to the children of Benjamin. It also was between Judah on the south and Ephraim on the north. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea. In such a position, it was the very heart of the territory occupied by the Philistines. This particular group of Canaanites were perennial enemies of Israel and waged warfare that was unusually fierce. The fact that Dan was especially oppressed by these Canaanites provides a background for a better understanding of the career of Samson, who was from the tribe of Dan.

18. *What was the general boundary of the territory held by the Amorites?* 1:34-36

Special reference is made to the places where the Amorites dwelt in force. They were in the territory of Dan and forced this tribe up into the hill country. This area was along the Mediterranean Sea and lay in the midst of the land assigned to Ephraim on the north and Judah on the south. These Amorites, a particular group of the Canaanites, also dwelt in Mount Heres in Aijalon and in Shaalabim. Shaalabim and Aijalon are points mentioned

in the territory assigned to the tribe of Dan, and the mention of these points gives an idea of the citadels which were held by the Amorites. Although these Canaanites were able to maintain control in these areas, the people of Ephraim prevailed against them as they assisted their brethren, the Danites; and these Amorites were made subject to taskwork. Another area where the Amorites prevailed was in the south, since the ascent of Akkrabbim, mentioned also in Joshua 15:3, denotes the sharply projecting line of cliffs which intersected the Ghor below the Dead Sea. These cliffs formed the southern boundary of the Promised Land (cf. Numbers 34:4 and Joshua 15:2, 3). The rock mentioned has many times been taken as a reference to Petra, but it is better considered as a reference to the rock which was smitten when Israel needed water (Numbers 20:8, 10). These Amorites also extended their territory beyond this point to the north. The fact that the Amorites were allowed to hold these strong points indicates the weakness of the children of Israel as they failed to fulfill God's will for them completely.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 1

1. Which tribe took the lead in driving out the Canaanites?
2. Who went with this tribe?
3. What was the name of the king who had cut off the great toes and thumbs of seventy other kings?
4. What city in the midst of Benjamin and Judah was held by the Jebusites?
5. What famous city did the children of Joseph take?
6. How many cities did Manasseh fail to occupy?
7. What famous city did Ephraim fail to occupy?
8. How did Israel treat the Canaanites whom they failed to drive out?

# THE EARLIER JUDGES

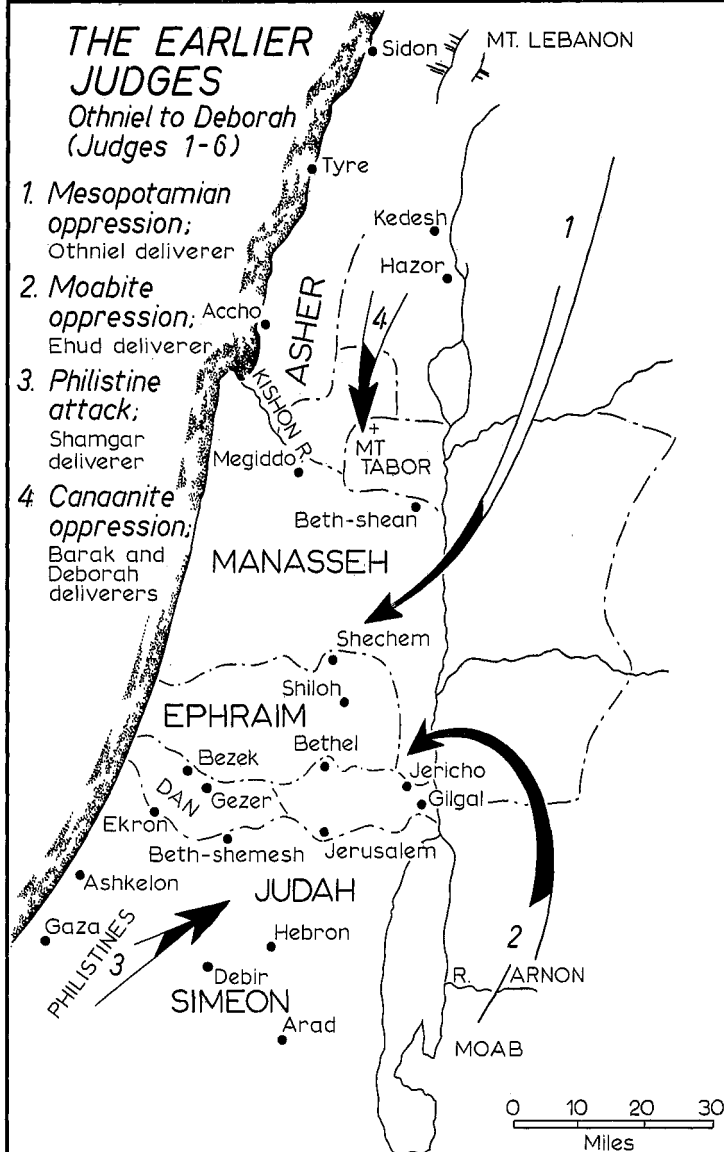
*Othniel to Deborah*  
(Judges 1-6)

1. *Mesopotamian oppression;*  
Othniel deliverer

2. *Moabite oppression;*  
Ehud deliverer

3. *Philistine attack;*  
Shamgar deliverer

4. *Canaanite oppression;*  
Barak and Deborah deliverers





Ruins of Ancient Jericho—of Joshua's Day (Matson Photo Service)

9. What tribe was oppressed by the Canaanites who dwelt among them?
10. What part of its allotted land did this tribe occupy?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1- 5 *The assembly at Bochim.* The people of Israel were met by the angel of the Lord at Bochim. They were rebuked for their wicked ways, and they wept sorely as their sins were brought to their attention. For this reason, the place received the name *Bochim* which means "weeping." Along life's pathway, God's people often come to places of weeping, but "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Corinthians 7:10).
- Vv. 6-10 *A recollection of Joshua's death.* Although it was stated that the conquest led by Judah began after Joshua's death, reference is made in this second chapter of the death of Joshua. The book of Judges is introduced by a general resume of activities which surrounded the death of Joshua, and this important event is recalled again at this point.
- Vv. 11-15 *The apostasy of the people.* Israel rebelled against God. They turned from the worship of the one true and living God to a worship of the gods of the Canaanites who dwelt around them. These pagan nations had both male and female deities, and Israel forsook the Lord to serve these false gods. As a result, we read, "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel" (verse 14). He delivered them into the hands of the enemies round about them, and this

## JUDGES

formed the background out of which came the judges to champion righteousness and to deliver the people from those who oppressed them.

Vv. 16-23 *The rise of the judges.* When Israel sinned, God did not leave them without any help. These judges were not men who sat on benches in courts of law, but they were men who challenged the people to reach the ideals which had been set before them in the laws of the Old Testament. They punished the evil doers and led the people of Israel in war against their foes. They were a group of leaders, peculiarly equipped, to rule Israel during the period from the era of Joshua until the monarchy was established under Saul.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Our days are full of labor and strife.* The Psalmist declared that even though our years were extended beyond the threescore and ten until they reached four-score years, yet would their strength be labor and sorrow (Psalms 90:10). Jesus found life on earth to be filled with tears. He wept over Jerusalem and at the tomb of Lazarus. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was in agony. Such was the lot of the Israelites, especially as they sinned and rebelled against God. Such is the lot of Christians, but they do not sorrow as those who have no hope.
2. *Sinners in the hands of an angry God.* When it is said that "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel" (verse 14), attention is called to the fact that God does not always allow men to continue in sin without punishment. It may be true that a sinner will escape the



punishment for his sin through many years, but eventually he will be called to give an account of his deeds done in the flesh whether they be good or evil. It is stated that Jonathan Edwards, a preacher in New England in the early days of the history of the United States of America, spoke so clearly and described so vividly the punishment of sinners in the hands of an angry God that he was able to persuade many souls to turn from their waywardness to the ways of the Lord. The example of Israel's being punished in the days of the judges should make it clear that no nation can long escape the penalties of sin when its people are lost in this sin.

3. *The Lord is full of mercy.* "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The God of the Old Testament is not different from the God of the New Testament. Even though the Lord's anger was hot against Israel, He did not forsake them. He raised up judges who delivered them out of the hands of those who spoiled them. It is said, "the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (verse 18). In His infinite mercy, God has provided for all to be saved if they believe on His Son.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Angel of the Lord Rebukes Israel 2:1-5*

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 swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

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?

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.

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.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.

1. *Who is the "angel of Jehovah"? 2:1*

The angel of Jehovah is not a prophet, a messenger, or some other earthly servant of the Lord, either Phinehas or Joshua, as the Targums, Rabbins, and others assume. Rather, the angel of the Lord is a visible manifestation of God Himself, not in the fullness of His being, but in one aspect of His person. No angel mentioned in the historical books is ever said to have addressed the whole nation or to have passed from one place to another. The prophets always distinguish between themselves and Jehovah, by introducing their words with the declaration "thus saith Jehovah." In his address the angel of the Lord identifies himself with Jehovah (cf. Joshua 5:14; 6:2).

2. *Where was Bochim? 2:1, 5*

Bochim was evidently near Bethel, in the hill country of Ephraim. The situation of this place is altogether unknown today. The rendering of the LXX, *epi ton Klauthmona kai epi Baithel kai epi ton oikon Israel*, gives no clue whatsoever. *Ton Klauthmona* merely arises from a confusion of *bochim* with *bebaim* in II Samuel 5:23, which the LXX also rendered *Klauthmon*. *Epi ton Baithel . . .* is an arbitrary interpolation of the translators themselves, who supposed *bochim* to be in the neighborhood of Bethel.

This was merely because they thought of *Allon bachuth*, the oak of weeping, at Bethel which is mentioned in Genesis 35:8.

3. *In what way had Israel failed to obey?* 2:2

God had ordered the people to make no league with the inhabitants of the land into which they came. In the days of Moses, He had said, "thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them" (Deuteronomy 7:2). Israel had been tricked into making a league with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), and whenever a tribe of Israel was unable to drive out the inhabitants living in the land which was assigned to them, they made them to be tributaries—they made some kind of arrangement for these people to live among them and pay tribute to them. They also were commanded to throw down the altars of these people. Through Moses, God had especially commanded the Israelites to "overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place" (Deuteronomy 12:3). This Israel had failed to do. In fact, she, herself, had turned to worship the Baalim and Ashtaroth.

4. *What was Israel's punishment?* 2:3

God said that because Israel failed to obey Him completely, He would not drive out the nations before them. He left the nations to be as thorns in their sides. He further stated that since they had not overthrown their altars these pagan gods would be a snare to Israel. Ultimately, these people in their false worship brought the downfall of Israel.

5. *What was the reaction of the people?* 2:4, 5

The people realized God had spoken the truth about them. As a result, they lifted up their voice and wept. Their weeping was of such nature that it gave the name

Bochim to the place . The word, *Bochim*, means "weepers." At that time, they also sacrificed there to the Lord. They accepted the Lord's punishment and turned to Him for help.

### General Religious Characterization of the Period 2:6—3:6

#### *The Death of Joshua 2:6-10*

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

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.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all the 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.

#### 6. *When had Joshua let the people go? 2:6*

Joshua had dismissed the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites from Shiloh when the period of the conquest was ended. He allowed them to go back to the land which had been promised to them by Moses (Joshua 22). He then called the elders of Israel to him at Shiloh and delivered the charge which is recorded in Joshua 23. Finally, he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem. He called for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their

officers. On that occasion, he delivered his famous challenge and urged them to choose whom they would serve. After this thrilling event, it is recorded that "Joshua sent the people away, every man unto his inheritance" (Joshua 24:28). This introduction to the book of Judges harks back to that meeting and sets the stage for the situation which demanded the raising up of the judges.

7. *In what sense did they serve God?* 2:7.

They served God most of all, but also followed pagan superstitions. They had expressly failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land and thus failed to serve the Lord completely by obeying this commandment which He had given them. They also had failed to throw down the altars of the Canaanites into whose land they had come. Generally speaking, however, they had served God. This syncretism continued to plague the people of Israel when the Northern Kingdom was finally carried into captivity by the Assyrians. The prophet recorded, . . . "they did after their former manner. So these nations feared Jehovah, and served their graven images, their children likewise, and their children's children, as did their fathers, so do they unto this day" (II Kings 17:40, 41).

8. *What was the exact site of Joshua's grave?* 2:9

In Unger's *Bible Dictionary* are notes to the effect that *heres* of Timnath-heres is "Serah" spelled backwards. It is located twelve miles from Lydda. No place by this name appears on maps, and the spot which Unger favors is presently called Tibnah. Dr. Eli Smith, as reported in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, suggested the site be identified with ruins of a place some twenty miles northwest from Jerusalem. At this point, there are, in a higher hill opposite, sepulchers hewn out of the rock equal in size and decoration to the tombs of the kings at Jerusalem. Since the site is evidently lost, we have also lost any identification of the tomb of Joshua.

9. *Why did the younger generation not know the Lord?*  
2:10

The younger generation did not know the Lord because they chose not to follow in the footsteps of their fathers. They certainly knew who the Lord was. They knew of His wonderful works, but they were like the rebellious sons of Eli, who despised the Lord's offerings and lived in a sinful way (I Samuel 2:13). They had heard how the Lord worked wonders on behalf of Israel, but they chose not to let these lead them to faith in Him.

*Israel's Apostasy 2:11-15*

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

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.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

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.

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.

10. *What were Baalim?* 2:11 cf. 3:7

They were Canaanite gods, including Dagon, Baal-berith, Baal-zebul, and others mentioned specifically. The word *Baalim* is a transliteration of a plural form of *Baal*.

Such a reference suggests the Israelites had not only forsaken God, but they had embraced a multitude of pagan deities. Such was the heinousness of their sin.

11. *What was the nature of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth?* 2:13

In this case the singular *Baal* is connected with the plural *Ashtaroth*, because the male deities of all the Canaanitish nations, and those that bordered upon Canaan, were in their nature one and the same deity, viz. *Baal*, a sun-god. *Baal*, as such was the vehicle and source of physical life and of the generative and reproductive power of nature.

*Ashtaroth*, from the singular (*Ashtoreth*), which only occurs in I Kings 11:5, 33, and II Kings 23:13, in connection with the Sidonian (*Astharte*), was the general name used to denote the leading female deity of the Canaanitish tribes. She was a moon-goddess, who was worshiped as the feminine principle of nature embodied in the pure moonlight and its influence upon terrestrial life. She corresponded to the Greek Aphrodite, whose celebrated temple at Askalon is described in *Herodotos* 1, 105. In 3:7, (*Asheroth*) is used as equivalent to *Ashtaroth*, which is used here (see 10:6; I Samuel 7:4; 12:10). The name *Asheroth* was transferred to the deity itself from the idols of this goddess which generally consisted of wooden columns, and are called ("Asherim") in Exodus 34:13. (See also Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3; 16:21). On the other hand, the word *Ashtoreth* is without any traceable etymology in the Semitic dialects and was probably derived from Upper Asia, being connected with a Persian word signifying "a star."

12. *When had God said that He would be against Israel?* 2:15

Moses had especially warned the people against falling away from the Lord. He told them that if they turned

their backs on Him they would suffer, although He held out to them many blessings if they obeyed God. Moses also told them how disobedience would bring an equal number of curses (see Leviticus 26). He had repeatedly warned them in this manner. His last speeches were especially filled with statements about how God would be against them if they turned away from Him (see Deuteronomy 28). The theme of Joshua's addresses was of similar nature. In his farewell address, he had warned them to be faithful to God. He told his people that when they turned their backs on Him, God would be against them (see Joshua 23, 24). It is an everlasting principle which all nations need to learn that God will be against them when they turn away from following Him.

*13. What action did God take? 2:14, 15*

God allowed the enemies of Israel to overcome them. As the Scripture records, "there were spoilers that spoiled them." God "sold them into the hands of their enemies." This was evidenced as they were no longer able to win victories in the field of battle. They were no longer able to overcome the temptations which were presented to them by the surrounding pagan nations. Everything Israel tried to do seemed to fail.

*Ministry of the Judges 2:16-23*

16 Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

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.



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.

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.

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;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

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.

23 Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

#### 14. *Who were the judges?* 2:16

Judges who governed Israel were not men who presided over courts of law. They did not go about attired in long, black robes sitting on what we call "benches." They did not pound gavels to demand order in court-rooms. Rather, these men were men who were filled with the Spirit of God. In almost every instance, it is stated that the Spirit of God came upon these men. Aroused as they were, when they witnessed the depressed state of their country, they achieved deliverance. They continued in office as defenders of religion and avengers of crimes.

The people, when they saw that God's Spirit was upon them, received them as God's men for the hour. They submitted to their sway. Such a condition resulted in the land having rest. It is stated, however, that in general the people were still rebellious. "They would not hearken unto their judges" (verse 17). Conditions continued to deteriorate, and the people then asked for a king.

15. *Were the judges local magistrates?* 2:17, 18

Edersheim in the work *Israel in Canaan* (p. 107) says that the judges ruled only over one or several of the tribes, to whom they brought special deliverance. Accordingly, he felt that the history of some of the judges overlaps others. Such a conclusion seems to fly in the face of the oft-repeated statement found in the account of several of the judges, such as these: "Jephthah judged Israel six years (12:7) . . . and after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel (12:8), . . . after him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years" (12:11). Notice that in each case it is stated that the man judged Israel, not a particular tribe.

16. *In what sense did God repent?* 2:18

God was grieved in His heart when He saw the rebellious ways of the people of Israel. This same kind of statement was made in the days of Noah when we read, "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Genesis 6:6). God had not sinned. He was not repenting in the same way in which a man repents of his wickedness. This is an anthropomorphic statement—the putting of God's thoughts and actions in words which describe similar thoughts and actions on the part of man. God's repentance is similar to man's in the sense that it caused Him grief, but it is dissimilar inasmuch as God had no sin for which to grieve.

17. *What final judgment did God render on Israel?* 2:21-23

God decided not to drive out any more of the nations which were left in Israel at the time of the death of Joshua. He had been patient with the people. He had given them express commandments to obey, and they had failed to keep them. In a sense, His Spirit was no longer striving with them (see Genesis 6:3). Israel needed to learn how the king's business demanded haste. They should have fought with alacrity to drive out all the Canaanites so that the Promised Land might be theirs and theirs alone.

18. *Was the suspension of extermination a change of plan?* 2:20-23

The thought expressed here was that Jehovah would not exterminate the Canaanites before Israel any more, to try them whether they would keep His commandments. He had previously caused the people whom He brought out of Egypt to wander in the wilderness for forty years with the very same intention (Deuteronomy 8:2). Such action is not at variance with the design of God, expressed in Exodus 23:29, 30, and Deuteronomy 7:22, not to exterminate all the Canaanites all at once, lest the land should become waste, and the wild beasts multiply therein, nor yet with the motive assigned in 3:1, 2. The determination not to exterminate the Canaanites in one single year was a different thing from the purpose of God to suspend their gradual extermination altogether. The former purpose had immediate regard to the well-being of Israel; the latter, on the contrary, was primarily intended as a chastisement for its transgression of the covenant. Even this chastisement, however, was intended to lead the rebellious nation to repentance and promote its prosperity by a true conversion to the Lord. Had Israel not forsaken the Lord its God so soon after Joshua's death the Lord would have exterminated the Canaanites who were left in the land much sooner than He did.

## JUDGES

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. Where did the angel of the Lord appear?
2. Where had His early appearance been made?
3. What is the meaning of the name given to the place where the angel appeared?
4. How old was Joshua when he died?
5. Where was Joshua buried?
6. What was the name given to the male gods whom Israel served?
7. What was the name of the female goddesses whom Israel served?
8. What was the name of the leaders whom God gave Israel?
9. Did all the people always listen to the judges?
10. Why did God leave some of the Canaanites among the Israelites?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1-7 *A list of the remaining Canaanites.* Chapter three opens with a listing of the groups of the Canaanites left in the land. Special notice is made of the five lords of the Philistines, since these were the perennial enemies of Israel. Notice is also made of the Sidonians who lived at the north boundary of the land, as well as the Hivites who centered around the Lebanon mountains. Throughout the land were scattered the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These were the pagan peoples among whom the Israelites made marriages and whose gods they served.
- Vv. 8-11 *The career of Othniel.* The first judge was a man from the tribe of Judah. His career is summarized in these verses. Notice is made of

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the enemy who oppressed Israel prior to his time and from whom he brought deliverance for his people. His era is described as extending over a forty-year period.

- Vv. 12-31 *The careers of Ehud and Shamgar.* All but one of the verses describe the career of Ehud. The last verse of this section is devoted to the mention of Shamgar, who came after Ehud. Such a notice makes it clear that Shamgar and Ehud did not serve contemporaneously. Shamgar succeeded Ehud, and it seems that such was the case with most of the other judges.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *They shall learn war no more.* Isaiah foresaw the day when the nations would not learn war any more (Isaiah 2:4). In the days of the judges of Israel, the people were at war rather constantly. They were unfaithful to the Lord and brought distress upon themselves. Their enemies overpowered them and their foes beset them. In the depths of their needs, judges were raised up from among them to deliver them, but their lot was one of constant tension. In the United States of America, it seems that every generation has had to suffer through some major conflict—World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the war in Viet Nam have followed one another in close succession. It is little wonder that people long for the time when nations shall not lift up sword against nation (Isaiah 2:4a).
2. *History teaches a lesson.* A wit has said that the only thing people learn from history is that they don't learn anything from history. He meant to imply that people did not profit by the examples of others who went before them. If people did profit from the experiences

of their predecessors, they would see how the people of Israel brought distress upon themselves, and how they were blessed when they turned to the Lord. Othniel delivered the people from their enemies, and the land had rest, but then they turned back into sin. Ehud delivered them and gave them some sense of direction; but once again they were wayward. Eglon, king of Moab, oppressed them. Shamgar delivered them from the Philistines, but they still failed to see that their own iniquities were bringing distress upon them. If they had learned anything from history, they would have learned to walk with the Lord. If men today learned from history, they would live righteous lives.

3. *All is not fair in war.* Ehud was a champion, and led his people against Eglon, the king of Moab. He does not warrant as much consideration as some of the other judges, however; and perhaps one reason is that his deliverance was largely wrought through deception. Deborah, for example, is much more widely known and respected for the leadership which she gave to Israel. Even Samson, with all his weakness, has found a larger place in the consideration of Bible students. Ehud's example would be much stronger if he had not won by deception.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Nations Left to Test Israel 3:1-6*

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;

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;

3 Namely, five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

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.

5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

*1. How was Israel to learn to make war? 3:1*

Learning war is equivalent to learning to make war upon the nations of Canaan. Joshua and the Israelites of his time had not overcome these nations by their own human power or by earthly weapons, but by the miraculous help of their God who had smitten and destroyed the Canaanites before the Israelites. The omnipotent help of the Lord, however, was only granted to Joshua and the whole nation, on condition that they adhered firmly to the law of God (Joshua 1:7) and faithfully observed the covenant of the Lord. The transgression of that covenant, even by Achan, caused the defeat of Israel before the Canaanites (Joshua 7). The generations that followed Joshua had forgotten this lesson, and consequently they did not understand how to make war. To impress this truth upon them, the Lord had left the Canaanites in the land. Necessity teaches a man to pray. The distress into which the

Israelites were brought by the remaining Canaanites was a chastisement from God, through which the Lord desired to lead back the rebellious to Himself.

2. *What five lords of the Philistines oppressed Israel?* 3:3

These kings are rulers of the city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath; and they are named in Joshua 13:3. The five cities over which they ruled were known as the Philistine Pentapolis. They were important throughout the times of the judges and over into the time of David. If one were to pick any certain nation as an enemy of Israel, the Philistines would probably be the choice; and the rulers of these five cities were the leaders of the Philistines. They played a large role in the defeat of Samson, as they bribed Delilah to learn his secret (16:5, 8).

3. *What divisions of the Canaanites are noticed?* 3:5

The Canaanites were all descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, but they were divided into many families. The Hittites were descendants of Heth. The Amorites were those who lived in cities, and may be traced back to Amor. The Perizzites were also villagers. The Hivites were a particular branch of the Canaanites who lived in the north near Mount Lebanon from Baal-hermon to Hamath (verse 3). The Gibeonites were also called Hivites (Joshua 9). The Jebusites were a branch of the Canaanites who lived in Jebus, the location which later became known as Jerusalem. All of these were groups of Canaanites who lived in the land which had been promised to the Israelites.

4. *What were the groves?* 3:7

For "groves," some texts read, "Wooden Images." This word is translated "Asheroth" in the American Standard Version. Many of the images of pagan gods were set up in groves on high places. To these spots the Canaanites would gather; and undoubtedly they invited their Israelite neighbors and captors to worship with them. The fact



that it is stated that Israel served the groves, suggests that the people were in spiritual bondage in this idolatrous worship.

List of the Judges 3:8—16:31

*Othniel Judges and Delivers Israel 3:8-11*

8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

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.

10 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

5. *Who was Cushman-rishathaim?* 3:8

Cushan-rishathaim was the king of Mesopotamia. All that we know about this king is what is recorded here. The name is more than likely a title which was given to him by the Israelites. *Rishathaim* means "double wickedness." Cushan may be a derivative of Cush, signifying that the man was a Cushite. The rulers of Babylon from 1518-1273 B.C. were Arabs, but the Arabs of the time may have included not only Shemites of the tribe of Joktan or Ishmael, but Cushites as well. The invasion of Canaan by this Mesopotamian king has a historical analogy in the campaign of the allied kings who came with Chedorloamer in the time of Abraham (Genesis 14).

6. *Who was Othniel?* 3:9

Othniel was the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. His tribe was Judah. Later Biblical history reveals he had a son named Hathath (I Chronicles 4:13). Heldai, a Netophathite, is also described as being of the family of Othniel (I Chronicles 27:15). Othniel had conquered Kiriath-sepher, later known as Debir, in the territory of Judah in the days of Joshua. As a result, he was given the daughter of Caleb, Achsah, as his wife (Joshua 15:17, Judges 1:13). Josephus in *Antiquities* (V. vi, 3) says Othniel had an admonition from God not to overlook the Israelites in their distress. Undoubtedly, he was stirred by the circumstance of these people and, as Josephus said, endeavored boldly to gain them their liberty. The particular problem in Othniel's day was the oppression of Cushan-rishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. Josephus said one of Othniel's first strokes was to attack the garrison which Cushan had set over them. When the people saw he was successful in his first attempt, they were willing to join battle with the Assyrians, and thus they drove them out entirely. He held sway in Israel for forty years.

7. *What was the Spirit of the Lord?* 3:9-11

The Spirit of God is the spiritual principle of life in the world of nature and man; and in man it is the principle both of the natural life which we receive through birth and also of the spiritual life which we receive through regeneration. In this sense the expressions "Spirit of God" (Elohim) and "Spirit of the Lord" (Jehovah) are interchanged even in Genesis 1:2, compared with Genesis 6:3, and so throughout all the books of the Old Testament. The former denotes the Divine Spirit generally in its supernatural causality and power. The latter signifies the same Spirit in its operations upon human life and history in the working out of the plan of salvation. The recipients and bearers of this Spirit were thereby endowed with the

power to perform miraculous deeds, in which the Spirit of God which came upon them manifested itself generally in the ability to prophesy (I Samuel 10:10; 19:20, 23; I Chronicles 12:18; II Chronicles 20:14; 24:20). His working is seen also in the power to work miracles or to accomplish deeds which surpassed the courage and strength of the natural man. The latter was more especially the case with the judges. We are hardly at liberty to split up the different powers of the Spirit of God and to restrict its operations upon the judges to the spirit of strength and bravery alone. The judges not only attacked the enemy courageously and with success, but they also judged the nation. For this the spirit of wisdom and understanding was indispensably necessary. They put down idolatry (2:18, 19), which they could not have done without the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. We can make these observations:

1. The influence came straight from above
  2. It was not necessarily a sanctifying influence
  3. Not the same as the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit
  4. Gifts were miraculous, rather than gracious
  8. *How are the chronological notes to be understood?*
- 3:11

All the chronological notes in the book of Judges indicate a period of 410 years. It has been supposed that the rule of several judges was contemporaneous, not successive. Therefore the total period during which the judges ruled Israel would be cut down accordingly. It is evident that this was not the thought of the writer. The reader of the Biblical narrative will note that it is stated in the case of the judges' rule that they ruled over "Israel." No intimation is made of taking "Israel" as partial or limited in sense. The best way to work out the chronological

problem is to subtract the periods of oppression as having occurred during the time of some of the different judges. Adding up the total periods of rule of the judges, one finds the period must have been at least 299 years in length. If Abimelech's usurpation is ignored, then a total of 296 years is achieved; and this resultant number is very near the total which the statement in I Kings 6:1 suggests.

*Ehud Delivers Israel from Moab 3:12-30*

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.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

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.

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.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

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.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlor, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

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.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him, and locked them.

24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlor were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.

25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened not the doors of the parlor; therefore they took a key, and opened them; and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.

26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.

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.

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.

29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all lusty, and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man.

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

9. *What was the extent of the second oppression?* 3:13

Eglon, king of Moab, secured the help of the Ammonites and the Amalekites. They smote "Israel," an indication of the fact that the oppression was not against Benjamin alone, although Jericho, the city of palm trees, was first taken. The oppression lasted for eighteen years, and during much of this time Ehud must have been attempting to rally Israel. Israel's weakness, of course, arose from her rebellious ways; but when the people repented and sought God's forgiveness, they received strength to overthrow their oppressors.

10. *Who was Ehud?* 3:15

Ehud was of the tribe of Benjamin. He is described as being a son of Gera (II Samuel 16:5; 19:16). Josephus (*Antiquities*; V, iv, 2, 3) said he was a man of great courage, of a very strong body, and was fit for hard labor. In process of time, he is described as having become well acquainted with Eglon, the king of Moab, who was oppressing Israel in his day. He obtained his favor and worked his way into his confidence. By this manner, it is said he was trusted by those who were in attendance of the king. A great deal of detail is given in the secular account of Josephus, which is absent from the Bible. For example, it is said Ehud came to Eglon in the summer at the middle of the day when the guards were lethargic on account of the heat, and some of them had gone to dinner. It is even said he told the king he had a dream to impart to him by the command of God. This startling announcement caused the king to stand up from being seated on his throne, and thus he presented himself as a large target for Ehud's thrust. Although considerable detail is given in the Biblical account, Josephus' account is still fuller. For instance, he says the attendants did not go into the king's parlor until towards evening and this long delay gave Ehud a great

advantage. He also says the king's death threw the court into great disorder and many of the attendants fled toward Moab in order to save themselves. By that time, the Israelites had seized the ford of the Jordan and slew many of them; and this bold stroke was the most outstanding deed performed by Ehud, although Josephus calls him a man worthy of commendation even besides what he deserved for the slaying of Eglon.

11. *What was the advantage of being left-handed?* 3:15

It helped him in his deception. Benjamin was famous for its left-handed warriors. When war broke out among the tribes over the unpunished crime committed at Gibeah, Benjamin counted "seven hundred chosen men left-handed." Every one could sling stones at an hair breadth and not miss (Judges 20:16). Why there should be so many men of such similar nature is nowhere explained, but this unusual characteristic was of some importance in the case of Ehud. By extending his right hand in a normal greeting, he was able to conceal the sword grasped tightly in his more dexterous left hand. In this way he took his enemy by surprise and slew him.

12. *What tribes followed Ehud?* 3:15

Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh were in the most advantageous position to give him assistance; but when Eglon oppressed the people, it is recorded that "the children of Israel" cried unto the Lord (verse 15). When Ehud rallied his people, he was in Mount Ephraim, a territory in the midst of Ephraim and Manasseh. Since he was from the tribe of Benjamin himself, it was to be expected that these people would follow him; but once again the narrative says, "the children of Israel" went down with him (verse 27). Such a reference indicates that all the tribes were united behind this second judge.

*Shamgar Delivers Israel 3:31*

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.

*13. Who was Shamgar? 3:31*

Shamgar was of the tribe of Benjamin. We are not told that he was of the family of Ehud, but since he was from the same tribe, it is apparent that the leadership of Israel in this era centered in this tribe. Nothing much is recorded of his career. We are not told how long he prevailed as a judge, and this has led many to believe that his judgeship is a part of the eighty years mentioned in verse 30. It is not said that Ehud judged for eighty years, but that "the land had rest fourscore years." Probably the deliverance wrought by Ehud began an era of peace which continued through the time of Shamgar. The most outstanding deed performed by Shamgar was his killing six hundred Philistines, using an ox goad as his weapon. The enemy of this time was the Philistines, who lived on the west border of Palestine, thus indicating Israel was beset not only by those living across the Jordan, such as Moab and Ammon, but also by the Philistines on the west and others in different directions. Whenever the people weakened themselves by their sins, their enemies on all sides oppressed them.

*14. In what time was this slaying? 3:31*

It was probably in the springtime when oxen were plowing in the field since an ox goad was the weapon mentioned. Warfare was waged in what seems to us today a very peculiar way. Kings would not go to battle in the wintertime, even though winter weather was not particularly cold. Wintertime brought many rains, and it was not a time for living in the fields. After the rainy



season ended along towards the spring equinox, the kings would go to battle against each other. Such must have been the time when Ehud brought this deliverance.

15. *In what part of the land did this take place?* 3:31

The Philistines lived along the west coast of Israel's borders, and the slaying no doubt occurred there. No place is mentioned, of course, to identify the field of battle; but Shamgar's deliverance was evidently an attempt to extend the territory possessed by the Israelites. The maritime plain which was occupied by the Philistines was very fertile, and it would have meant a great deal to Israel to be able to till the fields there. Since there is no particular mention of a conquest on the part of the Philistines, it seems better to think of this battle as having occurred in the western territory.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. How many lords led the Philistines?
2. Where did the Hivites dwell?
3. Who was the oppressor of Israel in the days of the first judge?
4. Who was the first judge?
5. Of what tribe was he a member?
6. Who was the second judge of Israel?
7. What king oppressed Israel in his day?
8. Of what country was he the ruler?
9. Who was the third judge?
10. Who were the oppressors in his day?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 4

- Vv. 1- 9 *The rise of Deborah and Barak.* Deborah was a prophetess. As a woman, she demurred to lead Israel without the assistance of some capable man. Barak, of Zebulun, came to her

## JUDGES

assistance. Together they wrought deliverance against Jabin, king of Hazor, who was oppressing Israel in their day.

Vv. 10-17 *The battle with Sisera.* Sisera was the captain of the Canaanite army under Jabin, king of Hazor. He had nine hundred chariots of iron under his command. This superior equipment for warfare struck terror into the hearts of the warriors of Israel, since most of them were without any particular military training and largely without military equipment.

Vv. 18-24 *The death of Sisera.* Jael, wife of Heber, the Kenite, caught Sisera off-guard as he accepted her offer of hospitality and lay asleep in her tent. Without the usual weapons of war, she was able to slay the captain of the Canaanite army, who had struck terror into the hearts of the thousands of Israel through many years. This bold stroke signaled the beginning of a series of victories which ultimately resulted in the driving of Jabin away from the borders of Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Who can find a worthy woman?* This was the question of Solomon in Proverbs 31:10. The rise of Deborah, the prophetess, to a place of leadership in Israel typifies the place of importance played by women of every age. No nation can rise any higher than the women in her midst. No church is any stronger than those good women who train up children in the way that they ought to go. No home is any better than the mothers who rock the cradles within their walls. God

created woman as a helpmeet for man, and worthy women have played this role well throughout the centuries.

2. *This is the day!* Deborah challenged Barak by saying, "Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand" (verse 14). The Apostle Paul cried out: "Now is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). Those who serve God must never lose their sense of urgency, for His work must be done while it is day; the night comes when no man can work.
3. *Prosperous hands prevail.* The original text of this passage is written in a very significant way. A literal translation would be something to the effect that the hand of the sons of Israel "going, went, and was hard" against Jabin, king of the Canaanites. There is no suggestion that the hands of the Israelites were rich, the usual connotation of prosperity. The Israelites had a will to work and to fight. Their hands were busy—"they put their hands to the plow." They were unified in their purpose, and God blessed them. They won a significant victory over their enemies to the north.

#### Deborah and Barak Delivered Israel 4:1—5:31

##### *The Rise of Deborah 4:1-9*

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead.

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.

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.

4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-*naphtali*, 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*?

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.

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.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell *Sisera* into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to *Kedesh*.

1. *What evil did Israel do after Ebud was dead?* 4:1

In the absence of any mention of a specified type of evil, we conclude that the Israelites continued to worship the Baalim and Ashtaroth. They undoubtedly continued to intermarry among these pagan peoples and were led deeper and deeper into the slough of syncretistic practices. They relaxed their efforts to subdue their enemies and to drive out the Canaanites who lived in the land. As a result, they were easy preys for the Canaanites.

2. *Who was Jabin?* 4:2, 3, (cf. *Joshua* 11:1, 4)

*Joshua* fought against a king by that name near the same site in his day. *Jabin* may have been a standing title

given to the ruler of this area. Many of the kings of the surrounding areas had titles which were given to successive rulers. For example, the kings in Egypt were called Pharaohs. At least two kings in Judah's territory bore the title, Adoni, or "lord"—Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, and Adoni-bezek, ruler in Bezek. We are not surprised then to read about a Jabin in the days of Joshua, and another at this later date.

3. *Where was Hazor?* 4:2

Hazor was a chief city of north Palestine. It was situated near Lake Huleh. It is known primarily as the seat of Jabin, this powerful Canaanitish king. He was the one who led in the northern coalition as the kings attacked Joshua (Joshua 11:1 ff.). The Bible narrative says Hazor stood on a "tell" (Joshua 11:13), but the surrounding territory was flat, and suitable for the use of chariots. Nine hundred of these were under the command of Sisera in the days of Deborah and Barak. Hazor had been assigned to the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:36) and remained in their possession after Jabin was driven out.

4. *What is the meaning of "sold"?* 4:2

God delivered them to their enemies. This kind of terminology suggests God's putting a price on the people of Israel, but in actuality their being delivered into the hands of their enemies was a direct result of their "selling" themselves into the worship of false gods. They "sold" themselves into slavery to the idolatrous practices of the Canaanite peoples, among whom they made marriages and whose pagan gods they revered.

5. *Who was Deborah?* 4:4

Deborah has been called "the Sibyl of Mount Ephraim." She was an Ephraimite woman, and like Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Huldah (II Kings 22:14), she rose to a place of leadership and respect among the people of Israel. Her song, which is recorded in Judges Five, is one

of the great songs of triumph preserved for us in the Word of God. Since her utterances show an insight into the affairs of men which is above the normal, we believe she was inspired of God; and her song of victory is often compared with the odes of Miriam (Exodus 15), Hannah (I Samuel 2) and Mary (Luke 1).

6. *Why was a woman in authority?* 4:4

She was a "prophetess," one evidently enjoying the charismatic gift. In other words, God had chosen her. We are also led to believe there was a lack of men to take the leadership. Even Barak was willing to lead only when he was summoned by Deborah and challenged by her to take immediate action. In the beginning God made woman to be a helpmeet for man. Woman was not given the preeminence by nature; but when men fail to lead in the cause of righteousness, women are certainly within their rights to stand fast in their convictions and to challenge others to join them.

7. *What judging did she do, and where?* 4:5

Her judging was done in the hill country of Ephraim over all Israel. We are led to believe her influence was felt in all Israel because the statement is made that "the children of Israel" came up to her for judgment. We are further led in this direction because of the fact of her calling Barak who was a resident of the tribe of Naphtali, the northernmost of Israel's tribe. If her influence had been only local, she would hardly have been able to summon Barak from the north; nor would it be recorded that "the children of Israel" came up to her for judgment. From her vantage point in the hill country north of Jerusalem, she was able to reach north, east, south, and west as she championed the cause of righteousness. The reading of the text does not suggest that she rode in a circuit as Samuel did (I Samuel 7:15-17). Instead of moving about

from place to place, she remained quietly at home; and the children of Israel sought out her wisdom. They recognized that the Spirit of God was upon her and that as a prophetess she was able to help them to know the will of God for their lives. Her "court" was a palm tree which stood between Ramah and Bethel, little more than ten miles north of Jerusalem.

8. *Why call the soldiers from Naphtali and Zebulun?* 4:6

They were the closest to the site of the battle. These were not the only tribes who assisted in the battle. In her song Deborah makes mention of Benjamin, Machir (Manasseh), Zebulun, and Issachar (Judges 5:14, 15). She evidently summoned all of the tribes because she chided those who lived beyond the Jordan for not coming. She also rebuked Dan and Asher for not assisting (Judges 5:16, 17). Deborah must have known that Barak was a righteous and capable man. She wanted his assistance. His being of the tribe of Naphtali naturally led to the most direct appeal being made to his tribe and their neighbors, Zebulun (4:6).

9. *Where were the river Kishon and mount Tabor?* 4:6, 7

The Kishon River ran along the foot of Mount Carmel. Mount Tabor was at the east end of the Plain of Jezreel. The word Kishon means "bending" or "winding." The river is also described as the waters of Megiddo (Judges 5:19). This stream is a torrent; that is, it rises and runs fast in the rainy, winter season. The river takes its rise near Mount Tabor, and runs in a northeasterly direction through the plains of Esdraelon, emptying into the Mediterranean Sea near the base of Mount Carmel. There are two channels of the stream which unite just a few miles north of Megiddo. At this point the stream is deep and miry, and the ground for some distance on each side is low and marshy. During the winter it is difficult to ford

the Kishon, and sometimes after a heavy rain it is impassable. The modern name *Nabr el Mukatta* signifies "the river of slaughter." Probably this name arose from the slaying of the priests of Baal in the days of Elijah which occurred here (I Kings 18:40) as well as from the battle fought here in the days of Deborah.

*Barak's Aid to Deborah 4:10-16*

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.

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 Zaanaïm, which is by Kedesh.

12 And they showed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

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.

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.

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.

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.



*10. From where had Heber come? 4:11*

Heber was one of the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law. They had come to Canaan with Israel and settled first in Judah, whence some evidently migrated to the north. Heber had left the main body of his people and had traveled quite a distance to take up his residence at Zaanaim, a town near Kadesh. Kadesh was a city of refuge, but there is no indication that Heber had fled for refuge to this point. His home was near the home of Barak, and he was sympathetic with the cause of the Israelites as they fought against Jabin.

*11. Why flee on foot? 4:15*

The chariots were hampered. In the battle the chariots may have bogged down in the marshy land which surrounded the river, making them ineffective. Furthermore, as the battle was going against the Canaanites, Sisera probably felt he should escape alone and hide among the hills which were on all sides of the valley. He, thus, made his way out of the area and came to the home of Heber. Naturally, a man in a chariot would be much more conspicuous than an individual walking alone through the fields and forests of the countryside.

*The Death of Sisera 4:17-24*

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.

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.

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.

20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No.

21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a 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.

22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples.

23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

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.

*12. What was Jael's motive? 4:17*

Jael wanted to aid Israel's cause. Jael was not proposing any lewd act on the part of Sisera. When she invited him into her tent, she was not trying to propose any indecent act on her part. She did have in mind evidently that she would be able to bring about the capture of the enemy captain. Such courageous feats are accomplished often by women who are aroused over injustice and oppression brought on their communities by harsh rulers. Jael has won a place in the hearts of righteous people through the centuries as they have read of her being moved to slay the enemy captain.

*13. What kind of a bottle contained the milk? 4:19*

This very interesting incidental reference to the way in which milk was kept is unique in the Scripture. The bottle was undoubtedly either some kind of a jug made of

clay, or a pouch made from the skin of an animal. This was a very gracious act of hospitality. Sisera had asked only for a little water to drink. He was thirsty as he had fled from the battle, and Jael had given him more than he had asked. She offered him milk which would give him strength as well as slake his thirst.

14. *What kind of a nail was used?* 4:21

Since the Canaanites were in possession of chariots of iron, Jael would undoubtedly have had possession of a nail of iron. Some feel that a wooden tent peg was used. In any case, it was of large size because she was able to drive it not only through Sisera's head but into the ground beneath his head. Such pegs were necessary to support the tents pitched by nomadic people. Fierce winds would flatten their places of abode if the cords were not held taut by pegs or "nails" driven firmly into the earth.

15. *In what way was Jabin subdued?* 4:23

The Scripture says that God subdued Jabin that day. God fought for Israel as has been said in many passages of Scripture. At the same time, it is recorded that the hand of the children of Israel was hard against Jabin. They pursued him until they had utterly destroyed him. His chariots of iron were not enough to bring him victory as he fought against the Lord's people. The smashing blow dealt him in this battle broke the hard hand of oppression in which he had held Israel.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 4

1. Who oppressed Israel in Deborah's day?
2. Where was his capital?
3. Over what people did he rule?
4. Who was his captain?
5. Between what two cities was Deborah's home?
6. Who helped Deborah?

## JUDGES

7. In which tribe was his home?
8. Near what river was the battle fought?
9. What was the name of the woman who killed the enemy captain?
10. Who was her husband?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 5

(Song of Deborah and Barak)

Vv. 1-7 *Deborah's recognition as a prophetess.* In the song ascribed to her and Barak, Deborah rehearses the history of the people of Israel after they came into Canaan. She went back to Sinai which was the place where the Ten Commandments were given. From that day forward God had led them until her day. She made immediate reference to the judgeship of Shamgar (verse six) and described the terrible condition which had prevailed. This deep distress into which Israel had fallen called out to Deborah for rectification.

Vv. 8-18 *The muster of the tribes.* Deborah went on to describe how various tribes had rallied to her assistance as she saw the things which needed to be straightened out in Israel. Some of the tribes had refused to come to her aid, and she rebuked them for their hesitancy. She especially singled out Meroz for a curse (verse 23).

Vv. 19-31 *The battle against Jabin.* With some detail this poetic recitation describes the fall of the Canaanites before the Israelites. Deborah and Barak had sung this as a paean. For the time being out of the conflict came victory and

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

moral purification. The inspiring genius of it all was a woman in Israel, the prophetess Deborah, who was assisted by Barak. The two, led by the Holy Spirit, left this ancient song as a reminder of the great victory which God wrought in Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God provides the leaders.* The histories of many nations are replete with eras when national fortunes fell to great depths. Those nations which survived generally rallied behind leaders who arose seemingly just for the occasion. The hand of God's providence can be seen in many of these occurrences, but it is no more clearly seen than in the instances of great crises in the history of Israel. God infused His Spirit into great men and women at crucial times to guide the destinies of Israel. Deborah was such a leader. She asked for the assistance of Barak, and the man from Naphtali stood by her in the time of national crisis.
2. *There is a moment to decide.* The song writer has said that once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide. It is then that the strong man chooses the truth whether it be popular or not; the coward turns aside. In Deborah's days there were several tribes singled out for special recognition because they had gladly answered the call to arms. Other tribes had hesitated, and they were rebuked.
3. *Those who love God are outstanding.* The final verse of the song of Deborah and Barak is in the form of a prayer. The prayer climaxed the recitation of all that had transpired as Israel was brought to the place where she faced a strong Canaanite king in war. When the

victory was won, Deborah prayed for all of Israel's enemies to perish as the Canaanites under Jabin had perished. She also prayed for God to cause all those who loved Him to shine as the sun. Daniel said, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

## CHAPTER FIVE

*The Song of Deborah and Barak 5:1-31*

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

- 2 Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel,  
when the people willingly offered themselves.
- 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.
- 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.
- 5 The mountains melted from before the Lord,  
even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.
- 6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,  
in the days of Jael,  
the highways were unoccupied,  
and the travelers walked through byways.
- 7 The inhabitants of the villages ceased,  
they ceased in Israel,  
until that I Deborah arose,  
that I arose a mother in Israel.
- 8 They chose new gods;  
then was war in the gates:

- was there a shield or spear seen  
among forty thousand in Israel?
- 9 My heart is toward the governors of Israel,  
that offered themselves willingly among the people.  
Bless ye the Lord.
- 10 Speak, ye that ride on white asses,  
ye that sit in judgment,  
and walk by the way.
- 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.
- 12 Awake, awake, Deborah:  
awake, awake, utter a song:  
arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive,  
thou son of Abinoam.
- 13 Then he made him that remaineth have dominion  
over the nobles among the people:  
the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.
- 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.
- 15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;  
even Issachar, and also Barak:  
he was sent on foot into the valley.  
For the divisions of Reuben  
there were great thoughts of heart.

- 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.
- 17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan:  
and why did Dan remain in ships?  
Asher continued on the seashore,  
and abode in his breaches.
- 18 Zebulun and Naphtali were a people  
that jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high  
places of the field.
- 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.
- 20 They fought from heaven;  
the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
- 21 The river of Kishon swept them away,  
that ancient river, the river Kishon.  
O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.
- 22 Then were the horsehoofs broken  
by the means of the prancings,  
the prancings of their mighty ones.
- 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.
- 24 Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber  
the Kenite be;  
blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
- 25 He asked water, and she gave him milk;  
she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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?
- 29 Her wise ladies answered her,  
yea, she returned answer to herself,
- 30 Have they not sped? have they not divided the  
prey;  
to every man a damsel or two;  
to Sisera a prey of divers colors,  
a prey of divers colors of needlework,  
of divers colors of needlework on both sides,  
meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?
- 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.

1. *When had God avenged Israel?* 5:2

God had avenged Israel of her adversaries whenever they unjustly attacked His people. He gave them victory over the Amalekites under Joshua in the days immediately after they left Egypt (Exodus 17). He had driven out the Canaanites who were in the land which had been promised to Abraham and his descendants (Joshua 12). Since the great victory over Jabin, king of Hazor, was especially recent and Deborah and Barak were connected

with this victory, reference must be made to this event. The American Standard Version translates the first half of the verse differently. This translation makes no reference of God's avenging Israel, but thanks God because the leaders took the lead in Israel.

2. *When had God marched out of the field of Edom?*  
5:4

The children of Israel had come from the south into the Promised Land. They had asked for the privilege of a passage through Edom, but the king had denied their request (Numbers 20:14-21). For this reason, Israel had been forced to march around Edom, but nevertheless her entry was made from that direction and Deborah is making reference to this part of the wilderness wandering. God had led the people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. As His people marched, it could be said that God marched out of the land of Edom.

3. *What were the dangers in the days of Shamgar?*  
5:5, 6, 11

In the days of Shamgar, the third judge of Israel (3:31), the highways were unoccupied. Travelers were forced to walk through the byways. An alternate translation in the American Standard Version makes reference to the caravans having ceased. The people who traveled went by crooked ways. Such a condition must have been forced upon Israel by the Philistines who oppressed their land in the days of Shamgar. In verse eleven, Deborah and Barak make reference to the noise of the archers. The sounds of war must have been heard throughout the land. In verse eight, she asks if there was a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel. Such a question must have been prompted by the absence of weapons of war. During the days of the Philistine oppression, the Israelites were not allowed to own spears and swords. They had no black-

smiths among them. Whenever they wanted an agricultural tool sharpened, they were forced to go to the Philistines for this service (I Samuel 13:19-21). We are indebted to the song of Deborah and Barak for this additional information about the conditions in Israel in the times of Shamgar, whose career is only briefly mentioned in chapter three.

4. *What was Israel's greatest sin?* 5:8

The people of Israel "chose new gods." As a result, there was "war in the gates." The first commandment was a prohibition against Israel's making any other gods. God said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). He had strictly forbidden them to leave pagan altars standing in Israel after they conquered the land. They were told to cut down the groves where the pagan Canaanites worshiped. He made every effort to prevent their falling into idolatry. Time and time again, however, it is recorded that Israel served "Baalim and Ashtaroth." This sin led to many other sins, and her unfaithfulness to God brought war on the land.

5. *How had Deborah reacted to the political and social conditions in her day?* 5:9

Deborah's heart went out to the leaders of the people of Israel. She described them as those who offered themselves willingly among the people. She must have encouraged them to stand up for their convictions as she said, "Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way" (5:10). She looked forward to the time when the people would be free from the fear of war and would be able to rehearse freely how God had delivered His people. When peace prevailed, she said the people would "go down to the gates" (5:11). They would not be afraid to walk in the streets and to converse freely together.

6. *What was Barak's "captivity"?* 5:12

Deborah encouraged Barak to lead his captivity captive. The American Standard Version makes reference to his leading away his captives. Since Jabin was king of the Canaanites in Hazor and Barak was from the tribe of Naphtali, both were in the northern part of Palestine. Undoubtedly, Jabin had attacked these neighboring tribes most severely. Many of the men of Naphtali had probably been taken captive by this Canaanite king. Deborah encouraged Barak to fight valiantly in order to gain the release of his fellow tribes-people who were prisoners of war in the hands of Jabin.

7. *Whom did God raise up?* 5:13

As always in the history of God's people, there remains a few who are courageous and willing to jeopardize their lives for the truth. Deborah declared that this righteous remnant provided the leadership. She described a leader of the day as "him that remaineth." God gave such a man dominion and leadership among the nobles of the people. In the King James translation, we read, "the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty." The American Standard Version describes the Lord's coming down for Deborah against the mighty. Deborah, herself, was one of few who had the courage to stand up. She was among those who "remained."

8. *What tribes helped Deborah and Barak?* 5:14, 15

In this song, special notice is made of the men of Ephraim, the people of Benjamin, those of Machir, and them of Zebulun. Mention is also made of the tribe of Issachar, and later reference gives praise to the tribe of Naphtali (5:18). Since Deborah was a member of the tribe of Ephraim, and Barak was from Zebulun, one might expect that these two tribes would be involved in this conflict, but it is significant that these other tribes from both

sides of the Jordan joined with their two leaders to drive the Canaanites out of their borders. Certainly, here is an instance where a leader had influence over nearly all Israel; and such evidence would make it extremely difficult to view the judges as ruling over small segments of the land and living all at the same time.

9. *Did Reuben help Deborah?* 5:15, 16

The men of Reuben evidently did not come out to battle with Deborah. Mention is made only of their great resolves of heart and their searchings of heart. Such references would indicate that the tribe was divided and in its indecision lost the opportunity to join in the victorious cause. They are chided for "abiding among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks." Probably they did not help Deborah in her campaign.

10. *What tribes did not help against Jabin?* 5:17

The song says Gilead abode beyond the Jordan. Such a reference would indicate that the men of Gad did not assist. The tribe of Gad was east of the Jordan and apparently joined Reuben in withholding support. Dan is also mentioned as one who remained in his ships: Dan was located on the western border and had shoreline along the Mediterranean Sea. Evidently these people did not come up from the west coast to join in the battle with Deborah and Barak. Asher, another tribe which was close to the scene of battle, is described as one who "continued on the sea shore, and abode in his creeks" (verse 17). Such divided loyalty on the part of the tribes of Israel was unthinkable to Deborah and Barak. They rebuked these tribes for their refusal to join in the battle.

11. *Where was the battle fought?* 5:18, 19

The battle was fought in the heights of the Carmel range which ran in a southeasterly direction from the Mediterranean seacoast. Two very important heights were

mentioned—Taanach and Megiddo. These citadels commanded a view of the valley to the north and east. They were in the mountains where Israel could set up a line of defense in an effort to stop the invasion of Jabin from the north. Solomon later had a fortress at Megiddo and Taanach, and both Megiddo and Taanach have been recently excavated.

*12. How had the stars fought against Sisera? 5:20*

Deborah knew God had fought for His people. She was like the psalmist who said he would lift up his eyes unto the hills, for he knew his help came from the Lord (Psalms 121:1, 2). Deborah would hardly depend upon some astrologer to tell her what the fate of God's people might be. She knew that if they were faithful to the Lord, He would bless them. In this effort, they had been victorious; and she knew that He who put the stars in place had ordered the battle against the Canaanites.

*13. What was the curse of Meroz? 5:23*

The people who lived in the community of Meroz were cursed. This is a place in northern Palestine, now identified with Khirbet Marus, which is some seven and one-half miles south of Kedesh in Naphtali. Kedesh was a city of refuge and mention is made of this locality in Joshua 21:32 and again in Joshua 20:7. Since they were in the very area which lost most by Jabin's invasion and gained most by Israel's victory, they were singled out for a curse delivered by the angel of the Lord because they did not come into the battle.

*14. How did Deborah describe Sisera's death? 5:27*

In one of the most interesting arrangements of Hebrew words and couplets in this poem, she cried out, "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." This is an excellent example of the parallelism which is found

in Hebrew poetry. There is no end rhyme, nor is there meter. There is a repetition of ideas in words that are similar or words that are identical. A thought is repeated for emphasis. Sisera was destroyed by Jael, and Deborah celebrated the event with this repetitive refrain.

15. *Why did Sisera's mother think he was late in returning?* 5:28-30

Sisera's mother is described in a very picturesque way in this song. She is viewed as having been waiting at the lattice work of her window. She misses her son's usual victorious return. She listens in vain for the sound of the wheels of his chariots as triumphant entry is made back into the Canaanite city. The ladies in waiting answered by saying they are busy dividing the spoils of war. She agreed to this answer herself, thinking it must be true that they were dividing the captive maidens among themselves, parceling out the cloaks of brightly colored needlework, and enjoying the fruits of victory.

16. *How long did Deborah's influence continue?* 5:31

It is said that the land had rest for forty years. This was undoubtedly a reference to the fact that under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, Jabin, king of Hazor, was defeated. Following this defeat, peace came to Israel and continued for the time mentioned. Deborah's prayer was for all great crises to turn out as well for Israel. She prayed for those who loved the Lord to shine as the sun.

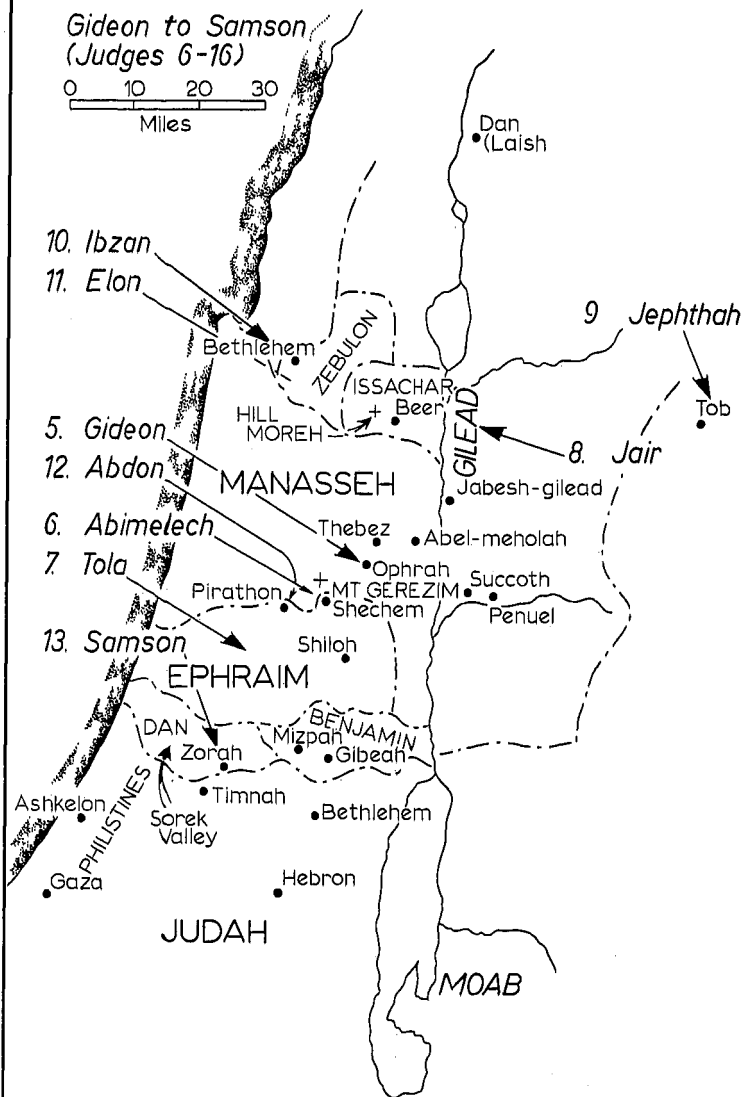
## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 5

1. Who composed the song?
2. Who was judge when the highways were unoccupied?
3. Did Ephraim help Deborah?
4. Did Benjamin help?
5. Of what tribe was Barak a member?
6. By what river were the enemies swept away?

# THE LATER JUDGES

Gideon to Samson  
(Judges 6-16)

0 10 20 30  
Miles







General View of Ashkelon (Matson Photo Service)

## JUDGES

7. What community was especially cursed?
8. To whom did Deborah give credit for killing Sisera?
9. Who was waiting for Sisera's return?
10. How long did Deborah judge?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 6

Vv. 1-10 *The oppression of the Midianites.* This is the fourth oppression. The first oppression was under Cushan-Rishathaim and the people of Mesopotamia. The second oppression was that of Eglon, king of Moab, who led the people of Transjordan to suppress the Israelites. The third oppression had been under Jabin, king of Hazor, who led the northern Canaanites against Israel. This kind of listing, of course, omits the Philistines under Shamgar, but this oppression is hardly described, being only mentioned in Judges 3:31. This oppression of the Midianites was brought on from the same causes—the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Vv. 11-26 *Call and commission of Gideon.* The call of Gideon is not as well known as the calls of Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah; but Gideon's call is similar in many respects. He was reluctant when God came to him and gave him the challenge of leading the people of Israel. The call came in a very clear and unusual way, and Gideon finally accepted when he received assurance of God's presence with him.

Vv. 27-40 *Gideon's fleece.* Gideon destroyed Baal's altars according to God's instructions. Still he wasn't convinced that God would be with him in the

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

great task of delivering Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. He asked God for two signs, both involving the dew of heaven and a fleece of wool. Through these rather unusual instruments, God made known His strength and assured Gideon of His abiding presence.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God gives daily bread.* Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." When men turn their backs on God, they may suffer physically as well as spiritually. Israel sinned, and the Midianites destroyed the increase of the land. Some think it was during this terrible famine that Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Israel and went to Moab. Even a strong, young man like Gideon was forced to hide in a wine press in order to thresh enough grain to subsist.
2. *Why?* Gideon asked, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" (verse 13). We ask why sin continues to run wild. We ask why we suffer in war. We ask why illness strikes us or death comes to break our family circle. Still we believe all things work together for good (Romans 8:28).
3. *God gives us signs.* Gideon wanted a sign. God was patient and gave him two signs. The Jews in Jesus' day asked Him for a sign, and He said an evil and adulterous generation asked for a sign. He further stated that no sign would be given it except the sign of Jonah (Matthew 16:1, 4). Still Jesus is willing for those who faithfully trust Him to have signs. He said that there would be certain signs of His coming again (Matthew 24:3 ff.).

## CHAPTER SIX

Gideon of Manasseh and Abimelech 6:1—9:57

*Midian Oppresses Israel 6:1-10*

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.

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 strongholds.

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;

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.

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.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites,

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;

9 And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land;

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.

*1. Who were the Midianites? 6:1*

The descendants of Midian, son of Abraham and Keturah, were called Midianites. Abraham had six sons by Keturah—Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Ishbak, Shuah, and Midian. Midian, himself had five sons—Ephah, Epher, Henoch, Abida, and Eldaah (cf. Genesis 25:2, 4; I Chronicles 1:32 ff.). When Abraham made provisions for his heirs, he gave gifts to Midian and sent him along with Ishmael to the east country, away from Isaac (Genesis 25:6). The Midianites were defeated by the Moabites and the Edomites under Hadad (Genesis 36:35; I Chronicles 1:46). It was the Midianites who appeared as merchantmen traveling from Gilead to Egypt and bought Joseph from his wicked brothers (Genesis 37:25 ff.). When Moses fled from Egypt, he found refuge with Jethro, a Midianite leader; and a Midianite served as a guide before the traveling thousands of Israel through the wilderness wandering (Exodus 2:15, 21; also 4:19, and Numbers 10:29 ff.). The Midianites joined the Moabites in asking Balaam for a curse, and Israel punished them (Numbers 22:4-7; 25:15, 17; 31:2 ff.). No boundaries can be assigned to the "land of Midian." It included territory on the west as well as on the east of the Gulf of 'Akaba. Generally speaking, it lay between Edom and Paran (I Kings 11:18); but in the days of the judges their district seems to have extended northward to the land of Gilead which lay east of the territory settled by the tribes of Israel. A trace of the ancient name is found in the modern name of Madyan, a place mentioned by some Arab geographers. It has a plentiful supply of water and lies east of the Gulf of 'Akaba, some miles from the coast, almost opposite the point of the Sinaitic peninsula. Since the Midianites were nomadic, their land can hardly be limited to this area.

2. *Where did the Israelites hide?* 6:2

The Midianites were so numerous and their flocks and herds were so large that they literally brought a scorched-earth policy to Israel. This forced the Israelites to find refuge from their oppressors in dens, caves, and strongholds. They were like some of the more modern Arabs who fled from the invading armies of Israel, taking refuge in rock-hewn tombs. During the six-day war of 1967, one young Arab man told of how he and his family hid in a cave near their village of Deir Dibwan; and for two days they were without food. They had expected the armies to move quickly through their territory and had taken food supplies for only a short time. They had enough water to last them throughout the six-day period, but they ran out of food on the fourth day.

3. *Where was Gaza?* 6:4

Gaza was on the Mediterranean seacoast. It was directly west of a point about half way down on the length of the Dead Sea. Gaza would thus be located in the territory which was assigned to Judah and Simeon and was in the south part of the Promised Land. Since Manasseh was towards the north, this gives us some kind of an idea of the extensive devastation brought on Israel by the Midianites. Gaza would be some seventy-five miles from the heart of the land assigned to the tribe of Midian.

4. *Why did the Midianites have tents and camels?* 6:5

Since the Midianites were a nomadic people without a specific territory in which to settle, they moved their families, flocks, herds, and droves from place to place. In the time of Gideon, they were described as "grasshoppers without number." The people were without number, and the camels were equally numerous. Between themselves and the animals, the Midianites ate up all the grain of Canaan, leaving the hapless Israelites in dire straits. Many

commentators believe this was the era during which Elim-elech and Naomi fled from Bethlehem to Moab because "there was a famine in the land" (Ruth 1:1).

5. *Why did God send a prophet?* 6:8

God sent a prophet to warn Eli when he failed to rebuke his wicked sons (I Samuel 2:27). Unnamed prophets make frequent appearances in the Scripture narrative to anoint kings (II Kings 9:4 ff.), to pronounce judgment on wicked rulers (I Kings 21:21-24), or to challenge a nation (I Kings 13). Many of these prophets banded together under the leadership of Samuel, and throughout the succeeding years the schools of the prophets play an important part in the national life of Israel.

*The Call of Gideon 6:11-35*

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.

12 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

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.

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?

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.

16 And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

23 And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

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:

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.

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.

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.

29 And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

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.

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.

32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.

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.

34 But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

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.

6. *Why did God send an angel?* 6:11

God spake in times past in divers portions and in sundry manners as it is said in the opening verses of the first chapter of the book of Hebrews. The Word was spoken by men and by angels. On different occasions a different kind of messenger was demanded. In the Greek language, it is hard to determine whether it was a messenger of God or an angel, for the root word is the same; but in this case, it is clear from the Hebrew text that both a prophet and an angel were sent to bring God's call to Gideon.

7. *Where was Ophrah?* 6:11

There are two places by this name. One in Benjamin (Joshua 18:23) lies five miles east of Bethel, and is now called *et-Taiyibeh*. This is a small village standing on a conical hill and contains many ancient ruins. It is presently a Christian village. Jesus retired to this obscure place after the miracle of raising Lazarus (John 11:54). The place which was connected with Gideon, however, was in the tribe of Manasseh, and is mentioned here and in Judges 8:27. This was the place where Gideon was buried. It is believed that the reference to Aphrah in the prophecy of Miçah (Micah 1:10) is a reference to the same spot.

8. *Why was Gideon in the winepress?* 6:11

He was hiding grain from the enemy by putting it in the winepress, a cistern-like opening in the ground. The American Standard Version says that Gideon was in the winepress. Whether he was in it or by it, he was certainly hiding the grain from the oppressing Midianites. This verb, expressing the idea of hiding, is one which also might be translated to give the idea of causing something to flee. Since the winepress was carved out of stone, it was usually underground. Normally, two cistern-like areas were carved out, one slightly below the other. In the upper one, a man would tread out the grapes and as the liquid

rose to a certain height, it would enter a drain which flowed to the lower vat where the wine could be stored. Many of these were large enough for a man to hide in, and Gideon was probably down in the winepress with some kind of brush or other material covering the entrance to hide him completely from the enemies.

9. *Who was Gideon?* 6:11b

Gideon was the youngest son of Joash of the clan of Abiezer of the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 26:30, Joshua 17:1-2, I Chronicles 7:14-19). His home was at Ophrah, but his family was an obscure one. He became a chief leader of Manasseh and is the fifth recorded judge of Israel. His father was an idolater. Sacrifices to Baal were made among the entire clan, but Gideon held this worship in contempt. The oppressors in his days were the Midianites under Zebah and Zalmunna, their two greatest chiefs; and they were accompanied by other wild tribes of the eastern desert. These men came first as marauders and pillagers at harvest time, but later took forcible possession of the lands and inflicted permanent injury and loss, especially upon Manasseh and Ephraim. Gideon was especially called of God for the need of the hour. It is possible that he had distinguished himself already by some resistance (6:12), but he received a divine commission to be leader over all Israel. One cannot explain his rise to the place of leadership because he brooded over the death of some of his people (8:18), nor could patriotic impulses dwelling within him account for his rise. It is also apparent that he was not leader by popular demand (cf. 6:15, 17, 19 ff.). His career can only be explained as one views him being moved by the Spirit of God.

10. *Why did Gideon ask for a sign?* 6:17

Gideon's asking for a sign shows he was not aspiring to a place of leadership among his people. He had been driven to a very low estate as he beat out his wheat in a

winepress and hid it from the Midianites. His human frailty cried out for some kind of assurance of God's divine call. It is easy to understand how he would be reluctant to take the leadership against such overwhelming numbers of marauding peoples, and the assurance given him by God must have increased his courage immensely. Although Jesus refused to give signs to the unbelieving Jewish leaders of His day (Matthew 16:1 ff.), He did honor the request of His disciples for an understanding of the signs which would herald His second coming (Matthew 24:3).

11. *Who was the angel of the Lord?* 6:20-22

The angel of the Lord had appeared many times in the history of Israel prior to the time of Gideon. Jacob had wrestled with this angel (Genesis 32:24 ff.). It was the angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). This same angel had confronted Joshua before the people of Israel crossed Jordan to attack Jericho (Joshua 5:13 ff.). At Bochim it was the angel of the Lord who rebuked the people of Israel on account of their failure to drive out the Canaanites (Judges 2:1 ff.). When Gideon saw him, he cried, "Alas, O Lord Jehovah, for as much as I have seen the angel of Jehovah face to face." He had seen one aspect of God's being; and he felt undone, as did Isaiah when he saw his vision of the Lord high and lifted up (Isaiah 6).

12. *What was the design of the altar?* 6:24

It was a memorial. Although Gideon made his offering before the Lord, he was not usurping the place of a priest; and he had no intention of establishing another center of worship in Ophrah. His father had an altar dedicated to Baal, but Gideon's altar was more like the altar erected by the Transjordan tribes who wanted a witness to the fact that they were a part of the nation of Israel. They erected an altar for a memorial in the edge

of the Jordan when Joshua dismissed them and allowed them to go to their homes (Joshua 22).

13. *What was the meaning of the name given to Gideon's altar?* 6:24b

Gideon called his altar by the name Jehovah-shalom. This means "the Lord is peace." Although Gideon was called to go to war against the Midianites, he still looked to the Lord as the one who could give peace. It is evident from this verse that the memorial altar which Gideon erected in Ophrah was still standing in the days when the book was written. If we are accurate in dating the book from the time of Saul, it had stood through the periods of the remaining judges and still proclaimed that the Lord is peace to all who heard its testimony.

14. *What was Gideon's first assigned task?* 6:25

The first thing God asked Gideon to do was to throw down the altar of Baal which his father had erected. At the same time, he was told to cut down the grove, or the Asherah, which was by it. Sometimes it is necessary for the ground to be cleared before a profitable crop can be planted. A man must take out of his heart the evil things which hinder his work before he can begin to do the good work of God. Such was the case with Gideon. It was necessary for his father's house to be put in order before he was ready to accomplish God's will for his life.

15. *How were the altars distinguished?* 6:26

The altar for worshiping God was orderly. Such a suggestion leaves the impression that there was a great deal of disorder about the altar to Baal. Pagan worship often was indecent and disorderly. The Apostle Paul was afraid that this kind of condition would prevail in the worship among the Christians and for that reason gave the final injunction when he wrote to them saying, "but let all things be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians

14:40). At the very least, this reference in Judges suggests that Gideon was to take the materials which were used in the altar to Baal in order to have what he needed to erect the altar to God.

16. *Why did they accuse Gideon?* 6:29

He had a reputation for fighting for truth. Gideon had been forced to tear down the altar under the cover of night. He knew the men of the city would oppose him if they found him destroying their place of worship. We do not know that the men of the city knew of Gideon's commission of the Lord; but when they saw their altar had been destroyed, they immediately pointed a finger of accusation towards Gideon. Such action indicates their recognition of him as a righteous man. He must have been one who did not worship at the altar.

17. *Why did Joash defend Gideon?* 6:31

His son's action stimulated the father to take a stand. Since Baal had not struck Gideon dead when Gideon destroyed his altar, Joash knew that Baal was no god at all. His eyes were opened by this bold action on the part of his son, and he immediately arose to defend his son. Probably Joash knew of Israel's earlier glorious history, and his conscience must have hurt him on occasions as he fell into this pagan worship. When this crisis came into his family's life, he chose to stand with the truth.

18. *Why call Gideon Jerub-baal?* 6:32

The word, Jerub-baal, means "let Baal contend." Joash had said that if Baal was a god he would fight for himself. He chided the men of Ophrah by asking them if they were going to fight for Baal. They evidently caught the meaning of Joash's words and thought it a fitting name to give to Gideon. Gideon was a man who reminded them how it was unnecessary for them to defend the false god. If he were really a god he would defend himself.

19. *Where was the valley of Jezreel?* 6:33

It was in Issachar, near Mt. Tabor and Mt. Carmel. The Greek word for Jezreel is Esdraelon. It is also known as the great plain of Josephus, and sometimes is called the valley of Megiddo. The plain is very rich in soil and lies on the top of a volcanic basalt, but there is little evidence of inhabited villages being built within its boundaries. Generally speaking, it is triangular, 18 x 15 x 12 miles. A great number of important battles were fought on its soil. As has been said, warriors from every nation have pitched their tent in the plains of Jezreel. Names such as those of Deborah, Barak, Gideon, Josiah, Holofernes, Vespasian, the Crusaders, Saracens, Turks, French, and General Allenby give a hint of the events which made the valley memorable. In general, we can describe it as being bounded by three mountains—Mount Gilboa, Mount Tabor, and Mount Carmel.

20. *Who was Abiezer?* 6:34

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet. It is said then that Abiezer was gathered together after him. Abiezer was the eldest son of Gilead (Joshua 17:2). This family settled first of all on the east of Jordan, but must have changed their residence to Ophrah in Manasseh on the west side of Jordan. Gideon was of this family; and when it is said that Abiezer was gathered together after him, the meaning is that his own family followed him in his work for the Lord.

21. *Why wasn't the tribe of Issachar included?* 6:35

The battle was fought in their territory, so they were already invaded. Issachar had inherited the fertile land of Jezreel, and they surely would have wanted to defend it. Since there is no rebuke of their failing to follow Gideon, we suppose that they joined Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Manasseh in the battles. All these tribes were in the

northern part of Israel and were most directly affected by the terrible onslaught of the Midianites.

*Gideon's Signs 6:36-40*

36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

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.

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.

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.

40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

*22. Why wish for so many signs? 6:36-40*

It was the weakness of his flesh which prompted him to ask for so many signs. God had already answered Gideon's request to receive his present. At that time an angel of the Lord touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes which he presented. Fire came up out of the rock and consumed the flesh and cakes. He had then received courage to tear down the altar of Baal. As he entered into the fuller task of driving the Midianites from the land, he asked for additional assurance that God was with him. When he put the fleece out and asked that there be water on the fleece only and none on the ground, he may have thought all the water was soaked up by the fleece.



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

When he put the fleece out the second time, he asked God to leave the fleece dry and have water around. The second sign would have seemed more unnatural, thus requiring what would have been considered more definitely a supernatural act on the part of God. God did not fail Gideon, and he received the assurance he wanted before he went into the battle.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 6

1. Who were the oppressors mentioned in Judges 6?
2. What was the name of the judge raised up?
3. Of what tribe was he a member?
4. Who was his father?
5. What did this judge offer on the altar?
6. By what other name was this judge known?
7. Who joined the foes of Israel in the second invasion mentioned?
8. Where was the battle pitched?
9. What other tribes joined in the battle?
10. How much water was wrung from the fleece used in the first sign?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 7

Vv. 1- 8 *Selection of Gideon's three hundred.* Gideon started out with thirty-two thousand men in his army. When he allowed everyone who was fearful to return, twenty-two thousand turned back. God indicated this was still too large a force. He devised a test whereby Gideon took with him the men who lapped the water as dogs lap it. These men were prepared for battle, and with these chosen three hundred Gideon drove out the Midianites.

## JUDGES

Vv. 9-18 *The enemy soldier's dream.* Gideon overheard an enemy soldier telling of his dream. The interpretation was clear to the enemy warrior—God was going to deliver the Midianites into the hand of Gideon. Such a revelation must have struck fear in the hearts of the Midianites; and at the same time, it must have given courage to Gideon.

Vv. 19-25 *Israel's rout of the Midianites.* The Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the East had gathered themselves together to war against Israel. By the use of a divided force and by giving the impression they had surrounded the enemy, Gideon and his men were able to defeat the oppressing forces completely.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Many are called; few are chosen.* Gideon started out with thirty-two thousand. Twenty-two thousand were allowed to return when they indicated they were afraid. The remaining ten thousand were reduced to three hundred by a test which God directed. It does not matter to the Lord whether He saves by few or by many. In like manner, not every soldier who enlists in the army of the Lord will receive the crown of life. Many are called, but few are chosen.
2. *God speaks in different ways.* The opening verse of the book of Hebrews declares God spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets in divers portions and sundry manners (Hebrews 1:1). The dream of the enemy soldier must have been revealed and interpreted largely for Gideon's benefit, but the effect would have

been great on the enemy as well. Those who heard it must have been gripped by fear and left with little courage to fight. God has spoken primarily to us through His Son by the written Word. At the same time, the heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork (Psalms 19:1). When God speaks to our hearts, we should be quick to obey.

3. *For God and for His people.* The Midianite soldier declared that the meaning of his dream dealt with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. He knew that Gideon was God's man. If a victory were achieved it would be to the glory of God, but it would also bring recognition to Gideon. What is done today in the church should be done for the glory of God, but victory will also bring glory to His church and to His people.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Gideon's Men Reduced to Three Hundred 7:1-14*

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host:

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.

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 seaside for multitude.

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.

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.

*1. Where were the Well of Harod and the Hill of Moreh?*

7:1

The Well of Harod is at the foot of Mount Gilboa. The Hill of Moreh is in the valley of Jezreel. Today a fine spring of water flows from the base of a hill and through an area which has been made into a recreational park for the benefit of the present-day inhabitants of the land. The valley is fertile and is tilled extensively. In the modern times, and in the times of Gideon, it was a place well suited for the pitching of a battle. Water was available for the troops, and the terrain was such as could be traversed easily by the troops.

*2. Why did God want to reduce the number of soldiers?*

7:2

If the battle seemed to be won in a natural way, the people would say they had won the victory by their own power. After the number was reduced and they faced overwhelming odds, they knew God had given them the victory. In such a case they would praise God instead of taking credit for themselves. We are not told how many soldiers gathered under the banner of the Midianites, but they were joined by the Amalekites and the children of the East. There should be no doubt, however, that Israel faced overwhelming odds when she put only three hundred men in the field.

3. *Was it a usual custom to allow soldiers to leave the army?* 7:3

Any faint-hearted man was sent home. The Law said, "What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return to his house, lest his brother's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deuteronomy 20:8). This is the provision which was given to Israel by Moses concerning times when the people would go out to battle. The morale of the army would thus be high, and in reality the army was left as a group of volunteers. If cowards were allowed to stay in the army, they would encourage others to be fainthearted.

4. *To what water did they go?* 7:4

Gideon went to the waters flowing out from the Well of Harod. Even today the water flows into a large pool where people can bathe. It then drains out into a stream which flows through the valley of Jezreel, providing water for extensive plant life—trees, cereal and grain crops, and grasses. In fact, it is one of the most verdant, well-watered, and fertile areas of northern Israel.

5. *Why did Gideon take those who lapped?* 7:7

They were ready for battle and on guard. Those who were less alert must have put their faces down into the water so that they were unable to keep their eyes on the enemy. Some may have enjoyed the refreshing stream so much that they stayed too long, washing and splashing, and in general, giving in to the desires of the flesh for the enjoyment of the stream. These were certainly unfit for the battle which lay ahead of Israel. Only those who took just a bit of water in their hands, raised it to their mouths, and lapped it as a dog laps water were ready for the battle. These were the men whom God designated as the ones to fight the Midianites. They were only three hundred in number.

6. *What victuals did the people take?* 7:8

The 300 kept the military equipment of the 9,700. The trumpets of the full army were taken so that Gideon could give the impression of a much larger force. They also took the necessary provisions from those who were turned back from the battle. They would thus have all the necessary supplies without having to forage for food. In this manner, they were free to give their undivided attention to the battle.

7. *Was Gideon afraid?* 7:10

God knew Gideon was facing overwhelming odds. He was thus willing for Gideon to be as well prepared as possible for the great task of ridding Israel of the devastating oppressors. Gideon had asked for repeated signs which gave him the necessary assurance to begin his work. In this instance, he was told that he might take his servant with him and go down to hear the interpretation of a dream which God was sending to an enemy soldier. Gideon impresses us as a man who would obey God's will implicitly, but he was a man who wanted to be as fully prepared and as completely confident as possible.

8. *Why was Gideon encouraged by a soldier's dream?*  
7:13-15

The dream was of a very unusual nature. A barley cake was seen rolling down a hill. It rolled through the enemy camp and flattened a soldier's tent. The soldier knew what it meant. Evidently both the dream and the interpretation were given by God. It signified clearly to the soldier that God was going to defeat the armies of the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the East at the hands of Gideon, a man who was threshing grain to make cakes when God called him to be a judge.

*The Lamps and the Pitchers 7:15-23*

15 And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshiped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

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.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

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.

19 So Gideon, and the three 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.

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.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

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 Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Mannasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.



9. *Why did Gideon divide his force?* 7:16

It was military strategy. It would be very unusual for three hundred men to have three hundred trumpets and three hundred torches. Such large numbers of this kind of equipment would indicate a much larger force. The great cry, the divided force, completely surrounding the enemy, and the many lights confused the Midianites. They believed that they were surrounded. In their confusion, they fled before a much smaller number of soldiers. They were so surprised and bewildered that they attacked each other thinking they were smiting the Israelites. God granted Israel a complete victory.

10. *Where were the trumpets and pitchers obtained?* 7:16

These were normal for an army of 10,000. These were the normal supplies for the commissary or kitchen crew of the army. No doubt, these were humble, earthen pitchers used for holding liquids of various natures. The trumpets would have been in the hands of those who signaled the marching of the army. The noise, the lights, and the divided attack routed the Midianites.

11. *What was the meaning of Gideon's battle cry?* 7:18

The word for *sword* does not appear in this verse, but it is in verse 14 and it appears again in verse 20. The main idea of the cry was that the victory would be to the glory of God. In addition, Gideon would gain the respect of the men of Israel and strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. Gideon was God's inspired leader and deliverer of the people of Israel. Only by God's power was Gideon able to win a war against the much larger force of the Midianites. God was working a mighty deliverance by a man who was following God's guidance. It was most appropriate for the soldiers to adopt this battle cry.

12. *How were the articles used?* 7:20

The lights were kept in the pitchers until they were exposed by breaking the pitchers. The trumpets were

blown to indicate how many companies of soldiers were in the camp. In addition, the noise would be tremendous, striking terror into the hearts of the opposing soldiers, and at the same time, encouraging the army of Gideon.

13. *What additional factor affected the result of the battle?*  
7:22

In the midst of the confusion, the Midianites, 'Amalekites, and the children of the East attacked one another. As the verse says, "And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow." The Israelites had lights, but the enemies were fighting in darkness. The enemy was expecting many more soldiers than those bearing the lights and the trumpets and thought surely some of their own fellows were Israelites. As a result the victory was completely Israel's.

14. *What tribes rallied to Gideon's aid?* 7:23

The men of Israel out of the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh joined in the pursuit of the Midianites. Gideon also called men from the tribe of Ephraim to take the fords of the Jordan so that the Midianites would not be able to get across into the Transjordan area, from which they had come. Issachar was directly involved in the war since the battle was fought in her territory, and it may be presumed that they were also rallying to assist since there is no word to the contrary. Their tribes were in the northern part of Israel, and there is no mention of the tribes beyond the Jordan or the southern tribes coming to fight in the battle.

### *Gideon's Victory 7:24-25*

24 And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

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.

15. *What were the waters of Beth-barah?* 7:24

The name Beth-barah is a compound of two Hebrew words, *beth* and *barah*, and it means "house of the ford." Presumably, these fords were the outlets of the streams which ran down from the mountains of Ephraim in the vicinity of Beth-shan, where Gideon won his victory. It was at this place that Jacob crossed the Jordan on his return from Haran, and it was here that Jephtha slew the Ephraimites in a later episode. Van de Velde identified this spot as the crossing of the Jordan, which is on the road from Nablus in Israel to Es Salt in Jordan.

16. *What were the "Rock of Oreb" and the "Winepress of Zeeb?"* 7:25

They were west of Jordan where Ephraim possessed the fords. The winepress was probably in the vicinity. These locations were so named because Zeeb and Oreb were slain there. These memorials were probably well known in the days when Judges was written. The land of Israel abounds in rocks, stones, winepresses, altars, and other reminders of the way in which God blessed His people. These two memorials were of that nature.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 7

1. What was Gideon's other name?
2. Where was the army of Israel when they fought Midian?
3. How many soldiers did Gideon have at the outset of the battle?

## JUDGES

4. How many were fearful and returned home?
5. To what number was the army finally reduced?
6. What was the name of Gideon's servant?
7. What was destroyed by the barley cake in the soldier's dream?
8. What was the battle cry of the soldiers of Israel?
9. What were the names of the two princes of Midian slain by Gideon's men?
10. What other people were with the Midianites in the battle?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 8

- Vv. 1-9 *Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites.* The men of Ephraim asked why they had not been called to help in the beginning of the battle. Since they had rendered valuable service in holding the fords of the Jordan, Gideon complimented them; and their anger subsided. The men in Succoth and the men in Penuel, sites beyond the Jordan, refused to aid Gideon; and he threatened them as he continued his pursuit of the fleeing armies of Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the East.
- Vv. 10-21 *The slaughter of the armies of Midian.* The two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, were caught in Transjordan and put to death. The men who had refused to aid Gideon's cause were punished. Spoils of war were obtained, and Gideon returned to his home in victory.
- Vv. 22-35 *Israel's continued idolatry.* Gideon asked for the gold of the spoils to be given to him. He made an ephod of it. Whether it was worn or not has not been made clear, but one thing

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

is clear—Israel turned the ephod into an idol. Not only did they give worship to this object, but they turned their backs on God after Gideon's death and worshiped the Baalim, especially Baal-berith.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Faint, yet pursuing*" 8:4b. Gideon's three hundred men had routed the armies of the Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the East; but they did not stop with an initial victory. They pursued the men across Jordan. Their condition is described tersely in the words, "faint, yet pursuing." Such is often the case with Christian soldiers. We are told that we shall reap if we do not faint (Galatians 6:9). We are encouraged to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58), even though we may be faint while pursuing.
2. "*The Lord shall rule over you*" 8:23. Gideon's reply to those who wanted him to rule over them shows that he believed all powers are ordained of God. There is no power, but what has been ordained of Him (Romans 13:1). The government in Gideon's day was truly a theocracy, and God was not ready for the people to have a king. Later, He selected a man after his own heart to rule over them. Earlier in the days of Saul, the people wanted a king "like all the other nations" (I Samuel 8:5, 20). Such a reason was invalid. God's people are to be separate; He is to rule over them.
3. *The sin of ingratitude.* Many sins are entered against the record of the people of Israel. It was especially regrettable that they should not show kindness to the house of Gideon according to all the goodness which he had

shown to Israel. The sin of ingratitude is one of mankind's worst crimes. The people of Israel should have shown more respect to the memory of their great judge than to turn their backs on the ways in which he had led them.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Gideon Captures and Slays Midian's Kings 8:1-28*

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.

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?

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.

4 And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them.

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.

6 And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?

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 briers.

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.

9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.

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 a hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

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.

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.

13 And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up,

14 And caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even three score and seventeen men.

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?

16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.)

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.

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.

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.



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.

1. *What was the complaint of the men of Ephraim?* 8:1

The men of Ephraim spoke sharply to Gideon because he had not called them at first when he went out to attack the Midianites. Gideon had been assisted by men out of Naphtali and Asher, as well as those of his own tribe, Manasseh. Issachar was involved since it was in their territory that the Midianites had encamped. Manasseh was Gideon's own tribe, and it is said that his own family of Abiezer followed him. The other two tribes, Asher and Naphtali, were neighbors to the north and west and might have been expected to participate in the battle. When Gideon needed help to guard the fords of the Jordan, however, he finally asked Ephraim to assist (7:24). The men of Ephraim evidently felt they were an important tribe and should have been called earlier.

2. *What was the meaning of Gideon's answer?* 8:2

They had won honor by what they had done. The help which Ephraim gave was sorely needed and came at a crucial time. Gideon told them that their assistance was of even greater importance than the work he had done. He made this clear through a figure which was meaningful to the men of his day. He compared the full bunches of grapes which would have been gathered in Manasseh to the few remaining bunches which may have been left on the vines in Ephraim. He said that the gleanings in Ephraim were better than the main crop in Manasseh. In other words, the things left over in Ephraim were better than the main part of Manasseh. This lofty view of the goodness of Ephraim seemed to satisfy those who had chided him.

3. *Where was Succoth?* 8:5

Succoth is the place where Jacob built booths of tree branches, grasses, and reeds when he returned from Haran. The name, *Succoth*, (Genesis 33:17) means "booths." A ruin, named Sakut, lies ten miles south of Beisan, on the west bank of the Jordan; but this is on the wrong side, for Succoth belonged to Gad (Joshua 13:27). The name may have been transferred across the river and Succoth should be located east of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok River.

4. *Where was Penuel?* 8:9

Jacob gave this name to the place where he wrestled with the angel (Genesis 32:30). The word means "the face of God" for Jacob thought he had seen God face to face. No mention is made of the place from the time when Jacob was there until the time when Gideon asked for help from the men who lived there. This spot is on the north bank of the Jabbok River since Jacob waited there alone after having sent the rest of the people across the river when he returned from Haran.

5. *Where was Karkor?* 8:10

Karkor was the place where Gideon surprised the two kings of the Midianites, Zebah and Zalmunna, who felt that they were safe with their army and out of the reach of Gideon. The place is not identified with certainty, but it must have been somewhere on the Mishor or Plain of Gilead. There is a tableland which rises east of the Jordan and is oftentimes referred to as the highlands of Gilead and Moab. A reference is made in Joshua 13:9 to the plain of Medeba. The Revised Version speaks of this as being the tableland. Some suggest that it corresponds to Karkar mentioned by Shalmaneser II, but this place is identified only as being south of Hamath. It is clear from the narrative that the Karkar here was east of the Jordan.

6. *Where were Nobah and Jogbehah?* 8:11

This site was one fortified and occupied by the tribe of Gad (Numbers 32:35). A spot four miles north of Amman in Jordan is now called Jebeiha, and some think this is the spot where Gideon finally defeated the Midianite kings. A passage in the Pentateuch says Nobah, the Manassite, "went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name" (Numbers 32:42). Ancient Kenath is represented by the modern Kanawat, where there are traces of the architectural magnificence which Rome lavished on her colonies. The tanks, bridges, and many houses here are solidly built. Some do not think this site is the one where Gideon finally defeated a band of the Midianites because it is not especially close to Jogbehah, but no other site with a name resembling this has yet been discovered.

7. *What is the meaning of "taught"?* 8:16

He "disciplined" them. When he asked them for help, they refused. At that time, he threatened, therefore, to tear their flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. When he came back, he caught a young man from their number. He gave him information which enabled him to carry out his threat. He taught them with "thorns of the wilderness and briers." Evidently he carried out some kind of corporal punishment. There is no mention here of his slaying these men, but he did slay some of the men of Penuel.

8. *When were Gideon's brothers slain?* 8:18, 19

They were probably slain in battle. The Midianites had oppressed the people of Israel for a long time before Gideon arose to avenge Israel of her adversaries. He made inquiry about the activities of the Midianites in his territory and especially at the battle of Mount Tabor. When the Midianites described those whom they had slain on this occasion, he knew they were his own people. Since they

had admitted their killing of these men, he deemed the kings of Midian worthy of death. Since his own son, Jether, was so young that he refused to carry out his father's order to kill them, Gideon, himself, slew the kings.

9. *Why did Israel want Gideon to rule over them?* 8:22

Later on, the people of Israel came to Samuel and asked him to appoint a king over them. At that time, they said they wanted a king similar to those who ruled over all the other nations. God had warned them in Deuteronomy 17 that they should not put a king over them as other nations had, but that he was to be a man carefully chosen. In one of his speeches Samuel also indicated that the people of Israel had wanted a king to deliver them from the oppressing Ammonites. In the account in Judges Israel appears to have confidence in Gideon. They wanted him to rule over them since he was a man in whom the Spirit of God dwelt. It is also possible they feared the constantly recurring attacks from the surrounding peoples, and thus felt they needed a king.

10. *Why did Gideon refuse to be a king?* 8:23

The government of the times has been called a theocracy. It was a government in which God was the omnipotent power. Such a form of government brought the people into a very close relationship to God. If they had a king who sat on a throne and he symbolized the highest power among them, they would be more likely to forget that God was their ruler. On this occasion, Gideon said, "the Lord shall rule over you."

11. *Why did Gideon call the Midianites Ishmaelites?* 8:24

The Midianites were descendants of Midian, who was a son of Abraham by Keturah. The Ishmaelites were descendants of Ishmael, who was a son of Abraham by Hagar. Since both groups of people were direct descendants of sons of Abraham, they were very closely related. Both were nomadic tribes and both engaged in commerce. When

Joseph was sold by his evil brethren, the Midianites and Ishmaelites were identified (Genesis 37:28): "There passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver." Throughout the years, these people were looked upon as being rather identical.

12. *How much was the value of the gold earrings?* 8:26

The Scripture says the weight of the golden earrings which the people gave to him was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold. The word, *shekels*, does not appear in the original text. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* indicates that a gold shekel was worth about ten dollars. Since this volume was copyrighted in 1939, we get an idea of the worth of a dollar at that particular time. In any time, seventeen thousand dollars is a sizable amount of money, and this is the value which would be placed on the earrings which were surrendered. The ephod which was made from the gold must have been of value similar to that of some of the great crowns prepared for heads of states in modern European countries.

13. *Why were there so many ornaments?* 8:26b

It was typical of these Oriental nomads to measure their worth by the number of jewels of silver and gold which they possessed. They did not stop to own land and build houses. They did not count their net worth in flocks and herds alone. Even those droves of camels were adorned by the chains which they put around their necks; and in every case, they displayed their wealth through the gold and the silver which they owned.

14. *How did he make an ephod?* 8:27

The ephod was a royal and priestly garment and he evidently formed one in the fashion of a coat of mail. It is not stated that he wore this ephod. It is possible he did wear it since other notable figures wore such garments (II Samuel 6:14). If he did not wear it, it must have

stood in some prominent place where people could admire it and remember the victory which had been won.

*Gideon's Children; His Death 8:29-32*

29 And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

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.

*15. Why does the narrator mention Abimelech? 8:31*

Abimelech was the son of Gideon and his concubine who dwelt in Shechem. Since most of the history recorded in chapter nine deals with Abimelech's abortive attempt to be king over Israel, mention is made of him at this point. The closing verses of chapter eight are a summary of the closing days of the life of Gideon and make special reference of his family. He had seventy sons, and it is not clear whether Abimelech is counted among the seventy or is in addition to them. At any rate, special mention is made of him because of the importance of his role in later history.

*16. What is said of the character of Gideon? 8:29-32*

He was a good and venerable leader. We are told specifically that he did not erect a palace but went and dwelt in his own house. Mention is made of his seventy sons and his many wives. Special note is also made of Abimelech, the son of Gideon by a concubine in Shechem. We are finally told that he died in a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash, his father, in their home Ophrah, a settlement of the Abiezrites.

*Israel Turns from God 8:33-35*

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 Baal-berith their god.

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:

35 Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel.

17. *What was Baal-berith and where was his temple? 8:33*

Baal-berith was the god of Berith, where his temple was located. He was worshiped in Shechem, where the covenant was made. After Gideon died, the Israelites turned their back on God. They worshiped many false gods, but they evidently made Baal-berith their chief god. The word signifies the "covenant Baal." In Judges 9:46 the name is changed to El-berith, "the covenant god." The covenant was an agreement made by the god with his worshipers and Baal-berith was probably known among the Canaanites as a covenant-keeping god. The form of worship must have been vile, as the people went "whoring after Baalim."

18. *What was the special notice made of Israel's attitude toward Gideon? 8:35*

The children of Israel not only forgot their covenant with Jehovah who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side; but in addition to this, they also forgot the good work of Gideon. They should have remembered how good Gideon had been to them and been faithful to the ways in which he had taught them to go. When men turn their backs on righteousness, their lives

## JUDGES

are out of harmony both with God and with man. They lower their standards of morals and ethics as well as lose their reverence for that which is holy.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 8

1. What tribe chided Gideon for failing to call them at first?
2. What two kings of Midian did Gideon defeat?
3. What two cities east of Jordan refused to help Gideon?
4. How many Midianites remained with their kings?
5. How many had already been slain?
6. Who was Gideon's oldest son?
7. What did the men of Israel want Gideon to do for them?
8. What did Gideon make of the gold spoils of war?
9. How many sons did Gideon have?
10. What was the name of the false god Israel worshiped after Gideon died?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 9

Vv. 1-6 *Abimelech made king.* Gideon refused the office when the people of Israel came to him and offered to make him their king. At that time, he said God was to be their ruler. Gideon's son, Abimelech, born of a concubine of Gideon's, accepted the opportunity to usurp the role of leadership in Israel. He slew the seventy sons of Gideon so that no one could dispute his being Gideon's sole heir. It was an abortive attempt to establish a monarchy in Israel and was ill-fated.

Vv. 7-21 *Jotham's fable.* Jotham told a story in the form of a fable which illustrated the folly of the people in making Abimelech their king.



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

He pronounced judgment on them, and then ran away to hide to escape the fate of the other sons of Gideon. He was the sole survivor out of a total of seventy sons whom Abimelech had tried to exterminate. Jotham was Gideon's youngest son, and had been hid from the slaughter performed by Abimelech.

Vv. 22-41 *Gaal's plot against Abimelech.* The wicked men of Shechem who had accepted Abimelech's proud offer to be their king soon tired of his rule. They entered into a plot with Gaal, who had challenged them to overthrow the government of Abimelech.

Vv. 42-49 *The slaughter of the Shechemites.* The men who revolted against Abimelech in Shechem found refuge in the house of Baal-berith. Abimelech led in the cutting down of branches of trees, and all who were with him followed his leadership as they set fire to the tower where the Shechemites had hid. In this way, they destroyed the thousand men and women.

Vv. 50-57 *The death of Abimelech.* Abimelech fled to Thebez. At this citadel a woman cast a piece of a millstone off the top of the tower and struck Abimelech on the head. Mortally wounded, he called for his armourbearer to slay him so that it would not be recorded that a woman had killed him.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Love is not puffed up.* Abimelech was not a man who loved his people. He loved himself. He was puffed up in his own conceit; and like the brier of the fable, he considered himself to be worthy of ruling over his

fellows. Gideon, Abimelech's father, had demonstrated more love for his people as he had refused to take the exalted office of king over Israel.

2. *Uneasy is the head that wears the crown.* Any person in a place of leadership is constantly a target for the attacks of those whom he attempts to lead. A king is quickly toppled from his throne by a rebellious people. For that reason, it has been said again and again that the head is uneasy that wears the crown. This is especially true when the crown has been secured by foul means. For this reason, we are not surprised to read that the men and women of Shechem soon turned their backs on Abimelech and that the people of Thebez finally slew the short-lived king of Israel.
3. *Vengeance belongs to God.* The Apostle Paul urged the Christians in Rome not to avenge themselves. At that time, he stated a principle which was laid down in the Law where it is written, "Vengeance belongeth to me; I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Deuteronomy 32:35). Jotham did not try to organize a military force to oppress his wicked brother, Abimelech. He stated an eternal truth in the form of a fable and prayed that Abimelech and the Shechemites would come to destruction by the hand of God. This did occur, and the truth which Jotham had espoused was vindicated.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Abimelech Made King 9:1-6*

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,

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.

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.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

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.

*1. Who was Abimelech? 9:1*

Abimelech was the son of Gideon and the grandson of Joash. He was born to Gideon and a concubine of Gideon's who lived in Shechem. He was thus of the family of Manasseh and pressed his claim to a place of leadership on the basis of being a son of Gideon. Although his father had declined to fill the office of king over Israel, he coveted the office, first winning the support of the members of his mother's family, and then murdering all the sons of his father to protect his claim to the inheritance of Gideon.

*2. Why did he go to Shechem? 9:1b*

His mother was Gideon's concubine. She was also called a handmaid (9:18). A concubine was a woman

with whom the man cohabited lawfully. She apparently enjoyed no other connubial right but that of cohabitation until the time of the Law when her state was protected by laws and regulations (Exodus 21:7-9 and Deuteronomy 21:10-14). The old Jewish rabbis differ as to what constitutes concubinage; some regard its distinguishing feature as the absence of the betrothing ceremonies and of the dowry. In Roman times, concubinage was an allowed custom. It was sometimes referred to as a marriage of conscience. It was not God's intention from the beginning that man should have more than one wife; but some of the patriarchs, including Abraham and Jacob, had these handmaids, or concubines. Abimelech's mother was Gideon's concubine in Shechem.

3. *Why did the men of Shechem follow Abimelech?* 9:3

Abimelech had very cunningly approached his relatives in Shechem. They are called "his mother's brethren" (9:1). These men evidently had a mistaken idea of the nature of the judgeship in Israel; for Abimelech approached them by suggesting he should succeed his father, Gideon, in the place of leadership. There is nothing in any of the narrative of the book of Judges to indicate that the office of judge was hereditary. Nevertheless, fooled by Abimelech as they were, these men who were relatives of Abimelech persuaded the other men of Shechem to allow Abimelech to take the leadership over them.

4. *Why did they give him seventy pieces of silver?* 9:4

These dishonorable men of Shechem supported Abimelech's campaign by providing seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, their pagan god. With this money, Abimelech was able to hire vain and wicked men who would follow him. Since there were seventy sons of Gideon, we are left to suppose Abimelech was paid one piece of silver each for the sons of Gideon whom he killed.

5. *Which son of Gideon escaped?* 9:5

Jotham, the youngest of Gideon's sons, escaped by hiding from Abimelech's assassins. We learn that Jether was Gideon's oldest son (8:20), and Jotham and Jether are the only other sons named here except Abimelech himself. Gideon's sons were many, being seventy in number; and they would doubtless have been a blessing to the people of Israel if they had been allowed to live. Abimelech's purge was similar to the attempt of Athaliah to rid Judah of any heir to the throne in Jerusalem (II Kings 11:1).

*Jotham Rebukes the Shechemites* 9:7-21

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.

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.

9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

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?

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

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?

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us.

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.

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;

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

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;)

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:

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.

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

#### 6. *Where was Mount Gerizim?* 9:7

Mount Gerizim was the more southern of the two mountains between which Shechem was snuggled. The northern mountain was named Mount Ebal. Here the people of Israel under Joshua gathered for the reading of the Law and the hearing of the blessings and of the cursings (Joshua 8). Alexander the Great gave Sanballat the privilege of building a temple on Mount Gerizim. From the top of this mountain, the traveler receives one of the finest views in Palestine. Snowcapped Mount Hermon is

on the northern horizon, the Mediterranean Sea is visible to the west, and the highlands of Gilead appear like a dark blue band below the horizon on the east.

7. *What was the point of Jotham's fable?* 9:7-21

The fable tells of the kingship of the trees, which, after being declined by all useful plants, was finally offered to the bramble. The latter, inflated by its unexpected dignity, pompously offers its "shade" to its faithful subjects, while threatening all traitors with punishment (brambles carry forest fires). This was the manner of an oriental monarch assuming the throne. Having thus parodied the relationship of the worthless Abimelech to the Shechemites, Jotham sarcastically wished both parties happiness in their bargain, which ended in destruction for all concerned.

8. *Where was Beer?* 9:21

The word, *beer*, means "well" in Hebrew and signifies a place where water is available. Such a place is mentioned in Numbers 21:16-18 as a spot east of the Jordan River. There is also a Beeroth mentioned in Joshua 9:17. If we are correct in identifying Beer with Beeroth, it would lie some eight miles north of Jerusalem, along the main road north. Usually the word *beer* is compounded with another word, as in Beersheba and Beerlahairoi (Genesis 21:31; Genesis 16:14).

*The Conspiracy of Gaal* 9:22-49

22 When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

30 And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

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.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

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.



34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

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.

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.

37 And Gaal spoke again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

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.

39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate.

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

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.

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.

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.

46 And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into a hold of the house of the god Berith.

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe 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.

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.

9. *Why did God send an evil spirit?* 9:23

God allowed Satan to try Job (Job 1), and in the days of Abimelech He allowed an evil spirit to come between Abimelech and his wicked colleagues. God, Himself, is not the author of evil. He does not tempt any man to sin; and He, Himself, is not tempted with evil. Men are drawn away by their own lusts; and lust, when it conceives, brings forth sin. These evil-minded men were full of evil passions and lusts. These lusts erupted in a rebellion which brought death and destruction on all concerned. God allowed this evil spirit to come between Abimelech and those with whom he had been associated in order that He might avenge the wicked deeds done against the house of Gideon.

10. *Why did the men rob travelers?* 9:25

These liers-in-wait may have been trying to catch Abimelech himself. Abimelech was told about these culprits. More than likely, however, these highway robbers were set to discredit the government of Abimelech. The people would become uneasy when it was unsafe to travel. They would look for new leadership to rid their country of this threat. In this way, those who opposed Abimelech hoped to depose him.

11. *Who was Gaal?* 9:26

Gaal is described as a son of Ebed. The word *ebed* means servant. He may have been a man of common birth. He was evidently not of the descendants of Gideon in any way. Some manuscripts have a different Hebrew word which is transliterated as *eber*. *Eber* is known as the father of the Jews, the one giving them the name of Hebrews; but the greater weight of evidence is for the leaving of the word *ebed*. He appears to be a brigand who was ready to sell his services to the highest bidder.

12. *Who was Hamor?* 9:28

Hamor is known as the father of Shechem (Genesis 33:19). It was this man who arranged for the marriage of his son with Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. The point made by Gaal is that the family of Abimelech is an outside family. The real heritage of these people was rooted in Canaanitish origins. Gaal appears to have encouraged the old line family of Shechem to rise up against Abimelech, a late-comer, who was thrust upon the scene in Shechem by Gideon's cohabiting with his concubine who lived there.

13. *Who was Zebul?* 9:30

Zebul is described in various ways in this passage of the book of Judges. The name itself signifies one who is exalted. He is called the ruler of the city in this verse. This phrase in the Hebrew is translated as the governor of

the city in I Kings 22:26 and elsewhere. We might describe him as the *mukhtar*, the commandant of the town. He is also called the *pakidh*, "officer" or "deputy" of Abimelech. Zebul exercised rule for Abimelech in Shechem since Abimelech lived in Arumah (verse 41). Gaal's appeal was for the people of Shechem to throw off the yoke of Abimelech and his deputy. He urged them to elect someone of their own rank to be their leader. Undoubtedly, he was hoping they would make him the new captain.

14. *Where was Meonenim?* 9:37

In some versions this proper name is translated and indicates an oak of a diviner or soothsayer. Undoubtedly, it was a place which had received a name because of some wizard having lived there. It helped the people to identify the location of those who were attacking the city since a part of them came down the valley in the middle of the land. The rest of them came from a different direction. It was necessary for those who defended the city to make preparations to meet both parties.

15. *Where was Arumah?* 9:41

Arumah must have been a spot in the neighborhood of Shechem. Eusebius suggested that it was Rouma, which was named Remphis in his day; but this site is in the neighborhood of Lydda and quite far distant and rather inaccessible to Shechem. The root of the word is the same one which is elsewhere translated as height and would signify a city built on a high place which would be easy to defend. Since there are two great heights, Ebal and Gerizim, in the immediate vicinity of Shechem and others are not far distant, Abimelech may have chosen to reside on one of these, Arumah, while leaving the government of the community of Shechem in the hands of Zebul, his deputy.

16. *What was Abimelech's strategy?* 9:43, 44

Abimelech divided his forces into three companies. Some of them were to attack those who were in the city, and others were to cut off the men of Shechem who were in the field. They waited until the people in Shechem went out into the field. This reference implies that the people were going out to work in their crops and not to go to battle against Abimelech. Some of Abimelech's army would cut off those who were outside the city; still others would take their station by the city gate to stop the retreat of the Shechemites as they sought to return into their city. Thus, they were able to fall upon all who were in the field and slay them. When Abimelech had fought against the city all day, he took it; and when he had slain all the people in it, he destroyed the city. To show his indignation for the city, he spread salt throughout it. Such an act was symbolic and signified that the city was to be barren.

17. *Who was the god Berith?* 9:46

Berith was a god of the covenant. The people of Shechem had sold themselves to the service of this false god. When Abimelech took the city, the people fled to the temple of this god; probably not so much to defend themselves as to seek sanctuary there. They must have felt Abimelech would not attack a holy place, but Abimelech did not allow this to stop him. He cut down branches of trees and commanded his soldiers to do the same. When they had laid these against the stronghold of the temple area, they set fire to it. In this way, they destroyed about a thousand men and women of Shechem and made their victory complete.

18. *Where was Mount Zalmon?* 9:48

Mount Zalmon was the height where Abimelech and his followers gathered wood with which they burned down the stronghold of the house of Baal-berith. The mountain

was not far from the city, therefore, but there is no name of the place surviving today in the vicinity. Some commentators suggest that the modern Aramaic name of Mount Ebal, es-Sulemiyeh, may be a derivative of the ancient name of Zalmon. Mount Ebal is just north of the valley in which this settlement of Shechem lies, and it would be natural for Abimelech and his people to go to that height in order to lie in wait over the city. The name occurs again in Psalms 68:14.

*Death of Abimelech 9:50-57*

50 Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

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.

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.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to break his skull.

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 young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

56 Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:

57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

19. *Why did Abimelech go to Thebez?* 9:50

Thebez was a place thirteen miles north and east of Shechem, now called Tubas. It was situated on a gentle hill, surrounded by large groves of olives and well cultivated fields. The city must have refused to submit to the rule of Abimelech; because after he had reduced Shechem to ruins, he turned his attention towards the people of this city. It was here that he found a strong tower into which all of the inhabitants had gathered for safety, climbing even to the roof of the tower. In the flush of victory, Abimelech threw caution away, and a woman cast a piece of upper millstone upon his head.

20. *What was a millstone?* 9:53

Generally, the upper millstone was a round stone. It is called *lapis vector* in Latin. Jesus said that it was better for a man to have a millstone to be tied around his neck and be cast into the sea rather than that he cause one of His followers to stumble (Luke 17:2). This was Jesus' way of saying that having a millstone around one's neck was certain destruction if he were cast into the sea. Millstones were very heavy. Even a piece of one was sufficient to crush the skull of the ignominious Abimelech.

21. *What was the curse of Jotham?* 9:57

When Jotham gave his fable before the people of Shechem, he said that if the people had been sincere and just in their dealings with Jerubbaal, then the house of Abimelech should stand as a beneficent monarchy. If, on the other hand, they had been unjust in allowing him to hire vain fellows and kill all of Gideon's descendants except himself, Jotham prayed that fire would come to devour the men of Shechem and Abimelech. Abimelech set fire to the city of Shechem and the stronghold at Thebez. In the process, however, Abimelech, himself, met his death. Thus, the prayer of Jotham was answered. His prayer

## JUDGES

was a prediction which he evidently made in the form of a curse, contingent upon the will of God.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 9

1. Where did Abimelech's mother live?
2. How many sons of Gideon did Abimelech slay?
3. What was the name of the one son who escaped?
4. What tree was first asked to rule over the trees in the fable?
5. What other tree was asked to be the ruler?
6. What kind of a plant was the third to be asked?
7. To what plant was Abimelech compared in the fable?
8. Who led the men of Shechem in their revolt against Abimelech?
9. What was the name of the god in whose house the men of Shechem hid?
10. How many men and women were killed when the tower of Shechem was burned?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 10

- Vv. 1- 2 *The judgeship of Tola.* The career of Tola is described very briefly. He was of the tribe of Issachar. His era was one of twenty-three years in length. Nothing much is recorded about him except for the unusual fact of his dwelling in Shamir which was in Mount Ephraim although he was from a different tribe.
- Vv. 3- 5 *The judgeship of Jair.* Jair was a Gileadite. This kind of identification indicates he lived east of the Jordan. His judgeship was one of twenty-two years in length, and his family was deemed worthy of special notice. His thirty sons each had an ass colt upon which he



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

rode, and their jurisdiction was over thirty cities. For that reason, this area was known as Havoth-jair even until the time of the writing of the book.

- Vv. 6-9 *Apostasy and servitude.* The children of Israel continued on the course which they had followed throughout the preceding years. God was good to them and gave them leaders, but they rejected His mercies. They turned away to serve pagan gods. As a result, the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and the Philistines were allowed to dominate them. In addition, the Ammonites invaded their territory, and Israel was "sore distressed" (verse 9).
- Vv. 10-18 *The repentance of Israel.* In their sore distress Israelites turned back to God. God reminded them of their past history, the times when He had delivered them from those who oppressed them. The children of Israel realized this and made a confession of their sin. They brought forth fruit meet for repentance, as John the Baptist urged people in his day to do (Matthew 3:8), and began to search for a man who could lead them to fight against their oppressors.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Evil companions corrupt good manners.* Pagan nations on every side presented temptations to Israel. The Philistines on the west were worshipers of a god called Dagon as we learn in the history recorded in the Books of Samuel. The Ammonites, the Moabites, the Assyrians, and the Zidonians all had different gods to whom they gave worship. These are all lumped together

## JUDGES

into the two words, Baalim and Ashtaroth. Some of these gods are known by different names in later periods; Chemosh was the god of the Moabites; Molech was known as the god of the Ammonites. All of these were an abomination to the children of Israel and a violation of the First Commandment given to Israel whereby they were enjoined to have no other gods before them. It was because of this sore temptation which these people would pose to Israel that God had ordered their extermination. The cup of iniquity of the Amorite was full, and they were to be driven out of the land. Christians today find temptations befall them when they continue to live in an exceedingly sinful environment without the strength which fellowship with other Christians brings.

2. *We have sinned!* These are perhaps the hardest words for a man to utter. It is easy to blame others for sins which we have committed. In the Garden of Eden, Eve said the serpent had beguiled her; Adam said that the woman whom God had given to be with him had encouraged him to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:12, 13). From the beginning of man's history he has always found excuses for his sinful ways. Only when the person cries out in a full confession of faith, "I have sinned," is he in a position to receive fully God's forgiving grace. The people of Israel came to this realization and cried out, "We have sinned" (verse 15).
3. *Fruit meet for repentance.* John the Baptist called for the Jews of his day to bring forth fruit meet for repentance (Matthew 3:8). The repeated cries of Israel as they said they were sinful may leave the reader with the impression they only talked about their repentance. In this case, however, they put away the strange gods

from among them. They did something about their sin: they got rid of the images which they had set up as objects of worship. Whenever a man repents, he should not only express sorrow for his sin but should manifest such a reformation of character as to make clear his sincerity.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *Tola and Jair Judge Israel 10:1-5*

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.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

3 And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

#### *1. Who was Tola? 10:1*

Tola is described as the son of Puah. Nothing more is known of this man. He evidently made his home in the hill country of Ephraim in a village called Shamir. Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years and then was buried in the inheritance of his father in Shamir. In his case there is no indication of the people seeking out a leader. On the contrary, it is said that after Abimelech Tola arose to defend Israel. This man must have seen the conditions which prevailed in his beloved homeland and his righteous soul became vexed within him. In an effort to change the situation, he offered himself as a champion for his people.

2. *Where was Tola's home?* 10:2

The town of Shamir was a location in the mountains of Ephraim. It was a different place from the Shamir in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 15:48), but its exact situation is still unknown. It may have been actually in the territory of Issachar; or since Issachar and Ephraim bordered each other, Tola may have chosen to live outside the boundaries of his own territory in a town which was a part of the inheritance of Ephraim, their neighbors to the south.

3. *Who was Jair?* 10:3, 4

Jair was a Gileadite. He is the first of the judges to have a residence east of the Jordan, and this seems to be one of the most significant things about him. In addition, we learn an interesting detail about his family. He had thirty sons, and each had an ass colt on which he rode. These men also each possessed a city, and the group of cities and the territory in which they were situated became known as Havoth-jair. The fact that it is said the land was known as Havoth-jair is not a contradiction of the fact that in the time of Moses the Manassite, Jair, gave the name of Havoth-jair to the towns of Bashan which had been conquered by him (Numbers 32:41 and Deuteronomy 3:14). It is not stated here that the thirty cities which belonged to the sons of Jair received this name for the first time from the judge, Jair, but simply that this name was brought into use again. It was applied to these cities in a peculiar sense.

4. *Can we locate Camon today?* 10:5

After Jair judged Israel for twenty-two years, he died and was buried in Camon. Josephus (*Antiquities*, V, i, 6) describes it as a city of Gilead. This is probably because of his assuming that it would not be likely for Jair, the Gileadite who possessed so many cities in Gilead, to be buried outside Gilead. Keil and Delitzsch in their *Biblical*

*Commentary on the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, say that Jair was probably from the tribe of Issachar. They base this on the assumption that he followed Tola in the judgeship, and Tola was from Issachar. Other commentators, however, take a more likely view that Camon is on the east of the Jordan, and Jair was not only buried in Gilead but lived there.

Jephthah of Gilead 10:6—12:7

*Israel Humiliated 10:6-18*

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

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.

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.

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.

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.

5. *What kinds of gods did the surrounding nations serve?*  
10:6

Once again, the pagan gods of Israel's neighbors are grouped under the heading of Baalim and Ashtaroth. Baalim is the masculine plural form of Baal and stands for all the male deities which these people worshiped. Ashtaroth is the feminine plural form of the root for the name of the goddess Astarte and signifies a host of female deities whom Israel's neighbors worshiped. The Assyrians, the Zidonians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Philistines all had their favorite gods and goddesses. Some were national deities; some were symbols of fertility; and the multiplicity indicates the unending deviations and per-

versions into which men fall when they turn their backs from the revealed way of God.

6. *Who oppressed Israel in these days ? 10:7-9*

The Philistines living along the west coast of Palestine are singled out for notice as leaders in the attacking and oppressing of Israel. They were not alone in their harassment of God's people. The Ammonites who lived on the extreme eastern border across the Jordan River are also mentioned as those who troubled Israel in this time of apostasy. These two nations brought trouble out of which God delivered Israel under the hands of two of the best known judges, Jephthah and Samson. As a result, this passage of Scripture forms something of an introduction to the forthcoming judges. It is noted especially that the oppression of the Ammonites was so severe that they did not confine their attacks to the tribes living east of the Jordan, but crossed over the Jordan River to fight against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim. Beset on the east and on the west, Israel was really sore distressed.

7. *When had Israel been delivered from the Sidonians?*  
10:12

God reminded Israel of her past glorious history. The glory had been theirs because God Himself had delivered them from their many oppressors. They well knew how they had been brought out of Egypt and delivered from the slavery in Egypt. The Amorites were the Canaanites, and under Joshua they had been victorious over thrity-one different kings of the Canaanites. The Ammonites had oppressed Israel along with the Moabites in the time of Ehud (3:12 ff.). The Philistines had been vanquished by Shamgar (3:31). The Amalekites had attacked Israel at Horeb (Exodus 17:8 ff.) and God had wrought a great victory as the people were first led to battle by Joshua. The Midianites were the oppressors whom Gideon had driven

out of the land (Judges 6, 7). We never read specifically of the Israelites having been attacked by the Sidonians. This is probably a reference to the war which was brought on by the northern Canaanites under Jabin, since Sidon appears to have had some kind of principality or protectorate over the northern Canaanites (Judges 18:7, 28). Deborah and Barak had brought deliverance on one occasion from these people, and earlier Joshua had defeated the northern coalition of kings who attacked from the same area.

8. *Why was Israel told to go and cry to other gods? 10:14*

When God saw that the people of Israel had turned their backs on Him, He chided them for serving other gods. At the same time he reminded them that He had cared for them as a father cares for his children. In sarcasm He told them to, "Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (verse 14). This kind of an injunction put Israel's condition in the kind of perspective which they could understand. They knew, when they stopped and thought about it, that no other god could deliver them. They had forsaken God, and God was forsaking them.

9. *What was the meaning of Israel's confession? 10:15*

When the children of Israel realized the desperate plight into which they had fallen, they made a confession of their sin. In the simplest terms they couched it by saying only, "We have sinned." At the same time they threw themselves completely upon the mercy of God. They asked Him to do unto them whatever seemed good unto Him. Their only petition was that God would deliver them from the oppressors who were besieging them.

10. *Why was God's soul grieved? 10:16*

The people of Israel tore down the idols which they had erected. They changed their ways and began to wor-



ship God in the manner which He had prescribed. When God saw this kind of complete about-face on the part of His people, it is said, "His soul is grieved for the misery of Israel." Their misery was not only the oppression brought on them by the Philistines and the Ammonites, but it was a misery of soul which had brought about their repentance. Of course, this kind of statement is anthropomorphic. The writer has put God's feelings in the form of men's feelings. After all, man is made in the image of God; and he can understand his Maker best when God's ways are described in man's language.

*11. Where was Israel's camp? 10:17*

The Ammonites assembled in the part of Gilead which they had possessed. The Israelites assembled and encamped at Mizpeh. This cannot be the Mizpeh of Samuel of a later time (I Samuel 7:12, 16), but was probably Ramath-mizpeh (Joshua 13:26; 20:8). This spot was on the site of the modern *Es salt*. This was the Mizpeh which commemorated the parting of Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:49).

*12. Why did Israel look for someone to begin the fight? 10:18*

It was imperative for the Israelites to assemble in order to challenge the Ammonites, who had gathered in Gilead. At the same time, they were not prepared for battle; because they did not have a recognized leader. When Tola judged, it was said that he arose to defend Israel (10:1); but in this case there was no one to rise to the occasion. It was necessary for the people through their recognized leaders, their princes, to select one to be their captain or head. Until they had such a recognized leader, it was impossible for them to make a united effort against their oppressors.

## JUDGES

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 10

1. Who was the seventh judge?
2. Of what tribe was he a member?
3. How long did he judge Israel?
4. Who was the eighth judge?
5. Where did he live?
6. What five countries or cities had false gods whom Israel worshiped?
7. Into whose hands did God sell Israel?
8. What three tribes were attacked by Israel's enemies?
9. From what seven groups of people had God already delivered Israel?
10. What people brought the oppression to its height in the days after Jair?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 11

Vv. 1-11 *Jephthah made leader in Gilead.* Jephthah was a mighty man of valour, but he was an outcast from his family since he was born of a harlot. When the Ammonites oppressed the people, they turned in desperation to him to give them the necessary leadership. Since the people had assembled and were looking for a leader as described in chapter ten, it is apparent they were in urgent need. The fact that the people chose him and that Jephthah agreed to lead them is not as important as the fact that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (verse 29).

Vv. 12-28 *Jephthah's attempt at negotiations.* Jephthah demonstrates rather full knowledge of Israel's past history, and he sent to the king of the children of Ammon to ask what possible reason they had for attacking Israel. He reminded

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the Ammonites that the Israelites had lived in the land for three hundred years, and surely they had made clear their claim to the land which was promised to their forefathers. The Ammonites, themselves, were descendants of Lot through his incestuous union with his daughter, and Israel had not attacked them when they came up through the territory under the leadership of Moses. Neither had there been any other time when Israel had shown ill will towards the Ammonites. Jephthah, therefore, asked the Ammonites to leave Israel alone.

Vv. 29-40 *Jephthah's vow*. The notes in Scofield's Bible entitle this section, "Jephthah's awful vow." Such a heading begs the question in regard to the nature of his vow. Did Jephthah have in mind the making of a human sacrifice? Did God grant him a victory knowing that he intended to make a human sacrifice? Did Jephthah actually sacrifice his daughter? The Scripture says, "Jephthah did according to his vow" (verse 39), whatever that was.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Necessity is the mother of invention*. The men of Gilead would have nothing to do with Jephthah until necessity forced them to such deep distress that they were driven to seek him to be their leader. From being an outcast, he arose to be head over his people. Such is often the case in modern civil and military government. In extreme cases, proud men have been forced to swallow their pride and to do what the necessity of the situation demands.

2. *The Judge be judge (verse 27)*. Jephthah felt his case was right in the eyes of God. He pled with the Ammonites to see the verdict of history when he was convinced that the children of Ammon were not fighting a *bellum justum*. Since they were not justified in going to war against Israel, he urged them to drop their military strategy and to leave Israel alone. Armed as Jephthah was with the conviction that God would prove him right, he had a courage that he would not otherwise have possessed.
3. *"Pay thy vows unto the most High" (Psalms 50:14b)*. A separate listing of guidelines is given for the performance of vows in Leviticus 27. God did not require the Israelites to make vows; but when they made vows, they were expected to keep them. Jephthah performed his vow—whatever that vow may have been. He had vowed that he would give to God whatever came from his house when he returned after his victorious battle against the Ammonites. All who vow houses, lands, personal properties, talent, or treasure to God should be as careful to fulfill those vows as was Jephthah.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *Jephthah Delivers Israel 11:1-28*

Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

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.

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.

4 And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.

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:

6 And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.

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 unto me now when ye are in distress?

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.

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?

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

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.

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?

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.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

15 And said unto him, Thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:

16 But when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red Sea, and came to Kadesh;

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

22 And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.

23 So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?

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.

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.

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 did ye not recover them within that time?

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.

28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto the words of Jephthah which he sent him.

1. *Who was Jephthah?* 11:1

Jephthah was the son of a man named Gilead who lived in a territory by the same name. His mother was an *ishah zonah*, a harlot. The same kind of a word is used in the Hebrew language to describe Rahab, who spared the spies in Joshua's day (Joshua 2:1). Since he was of a different mother, his half-brothers drove him out of the land where they lived. There in Gilead he and his followers lived a life of free-booters. At the same time, he is described as a mighty man of valour. This same phrase is used by the angel of the Lord in his address to Gideon (6:12).

2. *Why was Jephthah driven away from his brothers?* 11:2

Jephthah's half-brothers did not want the inheritance of their father to be marred by the claims which might be made to it on the behalf of a son born to a wife of low estate. Abimelech, who was a son of Gideon by a concubine in Shechem, had already brought evil days upon the Israelites; and some of the Israelites may have resented

anyone who was of such parentage. We often see such ostracization of one who is not exactly of the same parentage as the rest of the members of a family. Jealousy arises among members of such families. Some are haughty and feel they are superior to others. Those who are despised are then either forced out of the family circle or they have to avoid the bad treatment they have received.

3. *Where was Jephthah's home? 11:3*

Jephthah went and lived in the land of Tob. Dr. William Smith in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* concludes that Tob was somewhere in Hauran but is unable to give any further identification of the spot. The Hebrew words for "land of Tob" might have been translated as "a good land." In I Maccabees 5:13, we find a reference to the land of Tubias, whence Jews numbering about one thousand men arose and were slain by their enemies. Their wives and children were carried into captivity. Reference is made in later Jewish writings to the land of Tob in such a way as to place it on the plateau east of the Sea of Galilee.

4. *When was Israel attacked by Ammon? 11:4*

The note is made that it came to pass in process of time an attack was made by Ammon on Israel. This attack was summarized in chapter ten when the children of Israel turned their backs on God and began to serve the Baalim and Ashtaroth. God sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of Ammon. Such vexation had continued over a period of time. Eighteen years of trouble with Ammon were suffered by the children of Israel (10:8).

5. *Why did the elders of Gilead look for Jephthah? 11:5, 6*

The elders of Gilead went to the land of Tob to find Jephthah. He had been driven out from among them by his half-brothers; but when they needed someone to go to



war on their behalf, they recognized Jephthah as being a mighty man of valour. He also had a group of men who are described as vain men (verse 3). These accompanied him. As the elders of Gilead approached him, they asked him to be their captain. Joshua had men who are called captains of the men of war (Joshua 10:24), and the same word is used in the original text there as in this passage. However, it appears the elders of Gilead really needed someone to be commander-in-chief.

6. *What office did Jephthah want to occupy?* 11:9

Jephthah did not ask them if he could be their captain; he asked the elders of Gilead if he could be their "head." It is apparent that he wanted to be the ruler—the man in authority. He wanted to be recognized as more than a fighter. He wanted to be considered a leader and accepted in their society. Such a position was occupied by the judges; and since the men of Israel accepted Jephthah as their "head," he has found his place among the judges of Israel.

7. *In what way did Jephthah "utter all his words before the Lord?"* 11:10, 11

The elders called God to be their witness as they agreed that Jephthah should be their captain and head. Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead upon being assured of their good faith in this matter. The people then made him "head and captain" and at that time it is said that Jephthah "uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh." There must have been some kind of an inauguration of Jephthah. The service was a religious service and corresponds closely to such times as the anointing of Saul (I Samuel 10:1) and David (I Samuel 16:1 ff.).

8. *Why did Jephthah send messengers to the king of Ammon?* 11:12

Jephthah did not want to fight the children of Ammon. When the Israelites had come out of Egyptian

bondage, they had been instructed not to attack Moab or Ammon (Deuteronomy 2:9, 19). These people were the descendants of Lot by his incestuous union with his daughters (Genesis 19), and God had instructed the Israelites that the land which had been possessed by the Ammonites and Moabites was not a part of the Promised Land. These people had lived more or less in peace for three hundred years, and Jephthah did not believe they had any just cause for going to war.

9. *What reason did the king of Ammon give for his attack on Israel? 11:13*

The king of the Ammonites told Jephthah's messengers that he was attacking Israel because Israel had taken away his land. He wanted the lands restored again peaceably. The land which is in question is described as being the land which lay between the Arnon and Jabbok Rivers on the east side of the Jordan. This was the territory assigned to the tribes of Reuben and Gad by Moses. It was this land which had been settled by these people after they were dismissed from Shiloh in the days of Joshua.

10. *What answer did Jephthah give to the king of Ammon? 11:15-23*

Jephthah showed a very good knowledge of the history of the people of Israel. He reminded the king of Ammon that Israel had not disturbed the territory. They had heeded the warning of the king of Edom and had gone around the territory of the Edomites. At that time, they were also in communication with the king of Moab, and there was no attempt to fight any of these peoples. Sihon, king of the Amorites, had possessed some of this land. Since he blocked Israel's way, he was attacked. The land which he had possessed was then taken by the Israelites. None of this land, however, was in the possession of the Ammonites when the Israelites came into the area.

11. *Whom did Jephthah mention as the god of the Ammonites?* 11:24

Evidently the Ammonites had not continued in the fear of Jehovah the God of Israel. Although Lot had accompanied Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldees, he was separated from Abraham. His separation led him to reside in Sodom and Gomorrah, the wicked cities which God destroyed. Along the way sometime, his descendants had taken up the worship of Chemosh; and Jephthah recognizes that these are not followers of the true and living God.

12. *How long did Jephthah say Israel had been in the land?* 11:26

Jephthah said that Israel had been there three hundred years. This is about the same length of time which is indicated in the chronological notes found in the book of Judges if consideration is given only to the times when the land had rest or the span of time during which a leader judged. The book of Judges was preceded by the forty years wandering in the wilderness and the era of Joshua. Jephthah, himself, is followed by Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. If the periods of these final judges are added to the time indicated for the preceding judges, the entire span of judges fits well into the chronological note of I Kings 6:1; which says that the temple of Solomon was built four hundred and eighty years after the exodus. Likewise, an equal period of time is indicated by adding the period of wandering to the total length of time of the preceding judges. For these reasons, we feel it is best to regard these judges as ruling successively and the periods of oppression as overlapping with the times which are assigned to the various judges or times when the land had rest.

*Jephthah's Vow 11:29-31*

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.

30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

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.

*13. In what way did the Spirit of the Lord come upon Jephthah? 11:29*

Jephthah was not only sought by the elders of Gilead, but his position of leadership was attested by his receiving charismatic gifts. He was not only willing to be the captain of the people, but he appears to have been led by the Spirit of the Lord. Since his agreement with the elders had been sworn to and Jephthah had uttered his convictions before the Lord, we view Jephthah as being a man who was guided of God. This does not mean that he was blameless in character. It also does not signify that he had all the gifts which were given to the apostles in the New Testament when they were baptized of the Holy Spirit. It does signify surely that Jephthah was God's man for the time in Israel.

*14. What was Jephthah's vow? 11:30, 31*

It is most important for the Bible student to dig deeply into the text at this point. Many ramifications of the situation are seen immediately. A question rises in the Bible student's mind as he asks himself if it is possible for a man like Jephthah to have in mind the making of a human sacrifice. Then consideration must be given to the

possibility of God's giving victory to a man who has such a sordid and cruel concept of sacrifice. The Bible does not say expressly that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter; it simply says that he did with her according to his vow (verse 39). The language of the vow is double in implication. Jephthah says whatever comes out will be the Lord's and he will offer it as a burnt offering. It would be possible for him to offer his daughter in perpetual service to the Lord, and that would be essentially the same as making a burnt offering. If he did have in mind the possibility of his offering a sacrifice, some students of the text indicate the conjunction *and* might be also translated *or*. Then the vow would indicate whatever came out would be the Lord's if it were human; or if it were animal, he would offer it as a burnt offering.

*Jephthah's Victory 11:32-40*

32 So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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,

40 That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

*15. Where is Minnith? 11:33*

After Jephthah had beaten the Ammonites he chased them from Aroer a spot east of the Dead Sea all the way to this point which was east of the Jordan River. Mention is made in ancient writings of Mannith which was located as being situated four miles from Heshbon on the road to Philadelphia, which is the modern Amman. The spot identified as the plain of the vineyards has also on occasion been transliterated under the name Abel-chermain. This spot is mentioned as being seven miles from modern Amman, and generally thought of as being in the same direction. Minnith is mentioned in Ezekiel 27:17 as one of the places which traded in the wheat market of Judah with Tyre. The implication of the mentioning of these spots is that Jephthah drove the Ammonites out of all the land across the Jordan.

16. *Why did Jephthah say his daughter had brought him very low?* 11:35

Jephthah had vowed to give the Lord the first object belonging to him as soon as he got back to his home. If he did sacrifice his daughter, the fact that he performed such a dastardly deed is reason enough for his saying that he had been brought very low. On the other hand, if he simply dedicated her to perpetual service around the Tabernacle, she would leave him without heirs. She would live a life of perpetual celibacy; and Jephthah, himself, would have no namesake since she was his only child. In any event, he was brought very low.

17. *Why did Jephthah's daughter want to be alone for two months?* 11:37

If the daughter had devoted herself to death, it is next to incredible that she should have asked to spend the last two months of life granted to her, not with her brokenhearted father, but in the mountains with her companions. She bewails not "her maiden age" but her "maidenhood." She does not bewail that she dies so young, but that she is to live unmarried. It is also impossible to understand why continued repetition should be made of the fact that she knew no man if she were sacrificed. If she continued to live a life of perpetual celibacy such as the women who served around the Tabernacle in the days of Eli (I Samuel 2:22, cf. Exodus 38:8), it would be pertinent to mention that she knew no man.

18. *Why did the daughters of Israel assemble yearly in honor of Jephthah's daughter?* 11:40

The King James Version gives a translation which indicates that the daughters of Israel went yearly to "lament" the daughter of Jephthah four days each year. The American Standard Version says they went to "celebrate." Brown, Driver, and Briggs in the *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* define the original

## JUDGES

word as coming from *tanah*, which means to recount or rehearse as is indicated in Judges 5:11, where the word also appears. In Young's *Analytical Concordance* the word is found with the meaning of "praise." It is not at all necessary to picture the women of Israel lamenting a person who was offered as a burnt offering. They may as well have gone up to praise her or to meet in celebration of her unselfish yielding to her father's vow.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 11

1. Who was Jephthah's father?
2. Where did he live?
3. Against whom did he fight?
4. Had Israel fought against Ammon when Moses led the people into the Promised Land?
5. Who did Jephthah say was the god of Ammon?
6. How long did Jephthah say Israel had been in the Promised Land?
7. Did the Spirit of the Lord come upon Jephthah?
8. Who first met Jephthah when he came back from battle?
9. Did Jephthah refuse to perform his vow?
10. Was the daughter willing for him to perform his vow?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 12

Vv. 1-7 *Jephthah's conflict with Ephraim.* The men of Ephraim again found fault with Israel's leader for not giving them a special call. They had earlier chided Gideon for not calling them at the first when he went to war with the Midianites. Gideon appeased their anger by telling them they were much more important than he was and the work which they had finally done



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

was more important than his initial victory. In Jephthah's day, actual fighting broke out between Jephthah and the dissatisfied men from the tribe of Ephraim. As a result, forty-two thousand Ephraimites lost their lives.

- Vv. 8-10 *Judgeship of Ibzan*. Ibzan was from Bethlehem in the land assigned to the tribe of Zebulun. The home of Ibzan is evidently not in Bethlehem of Judah since later on we find repeated references to the Bethlehem in the South in this form. Elon, who succeeded Ibzan as the judge of Israel, was also from the northern part of the country and is identified with the tribe of Zebulun. The thirty sons of Ibzan evidently married outside their tribe as the Scripture notices.
- Vv. 11-12 *The judgeship of Elon*. Elon was from Zebulun. Nothing much is mentioned of him except for his judging Israel. The leadership of the people in itself was a great challenge, and he held this prominent position for ten years.
- Vv. 13-15 *The judgeship of Abdon*. The most significant thing about Abdon was his family. He had forty sons and thirty nephews. Each one rode on his own ass colt, indicating their being rather wealthy.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. Say, "*Shibboleth*". Peoples of Christendom are divided on very many issues. Creeds divide people, and so do their shibboleths. The dictionaries define *shibboleth* as "any criterion, test, or watchword." A shibboleth is a

## JUDGES

word or saying which distinguishes the adherence of a party or a sect. This modern usage of the word *shibboleth* has arisen out of its being used originally by the soldiers of Jephthah to test the speech patterns of the men of Ephraim. Thus, a shibboleth is also defined as a given word which distinguishes persons not of a particular nationality or district. It is a peculiarity of speech which is distinctive of a particular class, profession, or set of persons. It is shameful that God's people are divided simply because some do not "talk right." They just don't "sound right" to those who erect their shibboleths.

2. *Pride goeth before a fall.* The men of Ephraim felt they were very prominent in Israel's life. They had not been given a special summons in the days of Gideon, and they chided Gideon for this act which they considered a slight of themselves. In Jephthah's day they had not been called; and when they continued in their stubborn ways, forty-two thousand of them were slain. Every Christian is well advised to take heed when he thinks he stands lest he fall. It is at such a proud moment that Satan's attacks are most vigorous. The fall of a proud Christian is even more shameful than the fate of the men of Ephraim.
3. *Opportunity knocks but once.* The men of Ephraim must have known there was a need for a deliverer in the days of Jephthah. The children of Ammon had passed over the Jordan River to fight against Judah, against Benjamin, and against "the house of Ephraim" (10:9). If the men of Ephraim were anxious to play the role of deliverers in Israel, they should have arisen at once to drive out the oppressors. Since the men of Ephraim hesitated and Jephthah arose to lead Israel,

the men of Ephraim were not as significant as they had hoped to be. Consequently, these warriors from Ephraim played a rather insignificant role. Eventually, forty-two thousand of them died. How much better would it have been for them to seize the opportunity when first there was the need for deliverance. In just such a manner, Christians today often lose the opportunity to win a victory for God because they do not stand up for their convictions when such courage is most needed.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Ephraimites Slain by Jephthah 12:1-6*

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.

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.

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?

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.

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;

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.

*1. What was the ground of the complaint? 12:1*

They were probably wanting spoils. The children of Ephraim had been blessed throughout much of Israel's history. Jacob had adopted Ephraim as one of his sons and given the descendants of Ephraim the status of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When he pronounced his blessings on his twelve sons, he prophesied that Ephraim would be like a fruitful bough. Joshua, the first leader of the people of Israel in the Promised Land, was from this tribe; and in many ways they had taken a place of leadership. When Jephthah arose and delivered the Israelites from the oppressing Ammonites, these Ephraimites probably felt they had not been given proper opportunity to assume the role of leader.

*2. When had Jephthah called the men of Ephraim? 12:2*

Since the children of Ephraim said that Jephthah had not called them and Jephthah said he had called them, two different times of calling must have occurred. Probably Jephthah had given indication earlier that the Ammonites were oppressing the Gileadites. Nothing had been done about it, however, until the enemies from the east crossed Jordan and entered into the territory belonging to the tribes who lived west of the Jordan. Even then, the western tribes had not been able to provide proper leadership. In their desperation, they came to Jephthah and asked him to take the place of leadership. Jephthah had marched boldly ahead, and God had used him mightily.

3. *What attitude did the men of Ephraim take toward the Gileadites?* 12:4

The Ephraimites had called the Gileadites fugitives of Ephraim. They indicated they were like unwelcome foreigners among the Ephraimites and the Manassites. Such a description would be used only of those who were regarded as inferior, and this must have aroused animosity among the Gileadites.

4. *Why did the men of Ephraim deny their identity?* 12:5

After the Gileadites took possession of the fords of the Jordan, the Ephraimites were afraid to reveal their true identity. As these warriors began to filter back to their land on the west side of the Jordan after having fought in Gilead on the east of Jordan, they were accosted by the Gileadites who controlled the crossings of the Jordan. It was then that the Gileadites asked for proper identification of these returning soldiers. When they asked one if he were an Ephraimite, he denied it because he was afraid for his life.

5. *Why were they not able to pronounce the word?* 12:6

Their speech organs were shaped by usage so as to prevent proper pronunciation. After pronouncing a word in a certain way a person becomes so accustomed to this pronunciation that he is unable to pronounce it differently. Such habits of speech become very deeply entrenched, and it is possible to identify a person's homeland by listening to his speech. During the trial of Jesus, those who identified Peter as one of His disciples said, "Thy speech maketh thee known" (Matthew 26:73). In other accounts of Peter's denials he was identified as a Galilean. Quite evidently, the speech habits of those in Galilee were different from those in Judea. It is possible even today to identify people from different localities by the way in which they speak.

*Jephthah's death 12:7*

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

*Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon Judged Israel 12:8-15*

8 And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.

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.

10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem.

11 And after him Elon, a Zebulunite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.

12 And Elon the Zebulunite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

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.

6. *Who was Ibzan?* 12:8

Ibzan was the ninth judge of Israel. He is identified as having been from Bethlehem, and Josephus says in his *Antiquities of the Jews* that he was of the tribe of Judah and from the city of Bethlehem (V, vii, 13). It is not certain that this judge was from the tribe of Judah since no definite note is made to this effect. As a matter of fact, it seems he was probably from the tribe of Zebulun in the North. Elon, who is mentioned as the next judge, was a man of the North. A town by the name of Bethlehem is found in Zebulun in the North. The Bethlehem

in Judea is identified in some of the later chapters of Judges. In these later references the southern town of Bethlehem is called Bethlehem-judah (19:1, 2).

7. *What state of affairs was indicated?* 12:9

Prosperity was apparent. Ibzan did nothing worthy of particular notice as far as any act of deliverance for Israel is concerned. He was blessed with thirty sons and thirty daughters, and he lived to arrange marriages for his children. Specific mention is made of his sending abroad to find wives for his sons. Josephus said he also arranged for the marriages of his daughters (*Ibid.*).

8. *Who was Elon?* 12:11

Elon is positively identified as being a member of the tribe of Zebulun. Like Ibzan, he did nothing worthy of mention, and no memorial was perpetuated in his name. His judgeship was ten years in length, and he was buried in Aijalon.

9. *Where was Aijalon?* 12:12

Aijalon is located by the Scriptures within the borders of the land given to the tribe of Zebulun. Another place by the name of Aijalon was in the territory allotted to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:42). Later this location was designated a Levitical city (Joshua 21:24) and was occupied by the descendants of Kohath (I Chronicles 6:69). Here Joshua prayed for the moon to stand over the valley (Joshua 10:12). The town in the territory assigned to the tribe of Zebulun is unknown. The only mention of it is made here in reference to the judgeship of Elon.

10. *Who was Abdon?* 12:13

Abdon is described as being the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite. Pirathon is located within the land assigned to the tribe of Ephraim. Josephus says he was "ordained the supreme governor after Helon" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, VII, v, 15). Public affairs were peaceable in his days as well as in the days of his predecessors. As a result

of the security which he found, no glorious action of deliverance is attributed to him. All his people seemed to be skillful in riding horses, and his forty sons and thirty nephews are mentioned as having each possessed an ass colt on which he might ride. His judgeship was eight years in length.

11. *Where was Pirathon?* 12:15

Many claims for identification with Pirathon are made for different places in Palestine. One of David's chief captains, Benaiah, was from this place (II Samuel 23:30, I Chronicles 11:31, 27:14). W. Ewing in his article on "Pirathon" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* concludes that the place should be identified with *Fer'ata*, a place about six miles south and west of Shechem. Others conclude that it may have been a site in Benjamin since Abdon was from Benjamin and his family is known as a Benjamite (I Chronicles 8:23, 30, and 9:36). A place known as Pharathon was fortified by Baccahides (I Maccabees 9:50).

12. *Where was the mount of the Amalekites?* 12:15

The Amalekites were nomadic peoples. They were the first to attack Israel when Israel was making her way out of Egypt (Exodus 17). At that time God foretold their ultimate destruction. They were the people whom Saul, Israel's first king, was told to destroy (I Samuel 15). At the time of the judges they were living among the Israelites and had evidently settled in a place long enough for the locale to be called the mount of the Amalekites.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 12

1. What word did Jephthah use to identify the Ephraimites?
2. What was the name of the river whose passages Jephthah seized?



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

3. How many men of Ephraim were killed?
4. What was the name of the judge who succeeded Jephthah?
5. In what city was his home?
6. Of what tribe was he a member?
7. Who was the next judge?
8. Of what tribe was he a member?
9. Who was the next judge?
10. How long did he judge?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 13

- Vv. 1-7 *Announcement of Samson's birth to his mother.* Israel turned away from God again. During this period of apostasy an angel of the Lord came to the wife of a man who was a member of the tribe of Dan. This woman was told the nature of the son who was to be born to her. He was to be a Nazarite from the time of his birth.
- Vv. 8-14 *Announcement of Samson's birth to his father.* Manoah asked the angel of the Lord to appear to him also in order for him to be assured of the truth of the message which his wife related to him. His request was granted and the angel of the Lord appeared to the two together. There was no question about God's intention of working great deliverance from the Philistine oppressors at the hands of the son to be born to the God-fearing couple in Dan.
- Vv. 15-25 *The birth of Samson.* Manoah thought he and his wife had seen God face to face. He knew no man could see God and live. He, therefore, thought they would be smitten and die. His

## JUDGES

wife, however, reasoned more logically than he. She believed their offering would not have been accepted if they were to be slain. She was right. They lived and became parents of Samson, the twelfth of Israel's judges.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.* The first announcement of the coming of the deliverer in the days when the Philistines were oppressing Israel was made to his mother. God blessed the nation through the giving of a son in the home of a righteous mother. God had done this before. Such was the case of His sending Moses to Israel in the home of a righteous woman, Jochebed. Such was the case in the days of Samuel when God heard the prayer of his mother, Hannah. So, it was in the days of the sending of the Son of God to be cradled in the arms of the virgin Mary. The world never really fully appreciates the blessing of righteous mother love.
2. *God is long-suffering.* Manoah wanted reassurance of the announcement made to his wife. He asked for a second appearance of the angel of God. God granted his request. In similar fashion, God has given man undeniable evidence of His love. Little by little—here a line, there a line; here a precept, there a precept—God has made clear the path which leads to eternal life. God has been patient through the centuries. He is not willing for any to perish, but He waits for all to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).
3. *Man wants to see God.* Moses wanted to see God. He was allowed to see the passing by of God's glory (Exodus 33:17-23). God told Moses that no man could see Him

and live. Manoah knew this, still he wanted to know God's will for his life. When the Angel of the Lord appeared, he thought he had seen God. He had seen one aspect of God's being, but his wife knew that they were not to die since God had accepted their sacrifice. Although man cannot see God in the flesh, one day without his flesh he shall see God, if he is faithful to God.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Samson of Dan 13:1—16:31

### *The Birth of Samson 13:1-25*

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.

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.

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.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

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.

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:

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.

8 Then Manoah entreated 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.

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.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

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.

12 And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

13 And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

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.

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.

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.

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 honor?

18 And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

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.

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.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

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 showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

### 1. *Where was Zorah?* 13:2

Zorah was a city on the border of Dan. It lay between Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh (Joshua 19:41). It is best known as the birthplace of Samson. He was buried near here also (Judges 16:31). From this point some Danites went to look for additional land as is recorded in one of the appendices of the book of Judges (18:2, 11). Zorah was allotted to the tribe of Judah when Joshua parceled out the land to the twelve tribes (Joshua 15:33). After the captivity, it was occupied again by the children of

Judah (Nehemiah 11:29). Rehoboam fortified this city (II Chronicles 11:10), and the modern *Sur'a* near the summit of a lofty hill on the north side of the *Wady es-surar* has been identified as the location of ancient Zorah. A striking stone altar nearby is pointed out as the altar from which the angel ascended.

2. *Who was the Angel of the Lord?* 13:3

The Angel of the Lord was the special messenger by whom God chose to reveal Himself at many different times in the days of the patriarchs and the other leaders of Israel of Old Testament times. He does not identify himself by name as did Gabriel, the angel who announced the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19). Other angels are also known by name, but this special representative of the Lord refused to give his name (vv. 17, 18). Manoah's wife told him she had failed to ask him about his name (v. 6); but when he was asked at a later time, the angel refused to give further identification of himself.

3. *Why was Samson's mother to drink no wine?* 13:4

Samson was to be a Nazarite from the time of his birth. A Nazarite was not allowed to drink wine (Numbers 6), and even Samson's mother was to live a similarly devoted life in preparation for the birth of this champion of God. Her model of abstinence is profitably followed by many conscientious mothers of modern times who refuse to weaken their constitutions by the use of alcoholic beverages. The abstinence of Samson's mother, however, was more than just a personal preference on her part. She was to drink no wine because she was given this commandment by the angel who appeared to her.

4. *Why was Samson to be a Nazarite?* 13:5

Samson was to be set aside for the service of God in a special way. The vows taken by a Nazarite are some of the most exacting and specific on record in the Old

Testament. A Nazarite could not drink any vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink. He was not allowed to drink any juice of grapes nor to eat fresh grapes or dried (Numbers 6:3). In addition, he was to allow no razor to come upon his head, but he was to let the locks of the hair of his head grow long. Furthermore he was not to come near a dead body, not even making himself unclean at the time of the death of his father, his mother, his brother, or sister (Numbers 6:5, 6). Some Nazarites took these vows for a specific length of time, but Samson was to live this kind of life throughout all his days, even from the time of his birth.

5. *Why did Manoah want the angel to come again?* 13:8

Manoah was not with his wife when the angel first appeared to her. He wanted confirmation of the instructions which had been given to his wife, and he asked God to allow the angel to appear again. The angel appeared to Manoah's wife the second time, but she ran and fetched Manoah so that he might hear the instructions which were given to them. All his questions were answered, and he was thoroughly convinced of the special nature of Samson's life.

6. *Why did Manoah's wife refer to the angel as a man?*  
13:10

The Angel of the Lord appeared to be a man. This was the normal way in which he made these appearances, beginning with the times when he appeared to Abraham and Hagar. Joshua thought he might be one of the soldiers and asked him whether he was for Israel or against them. Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord as a man would wrestle with another man. Nonetheless, those who saw the Angel of the Lord knew that they had seen a theophany. God was revealing Himself in this visible manifestation.

7. *What additional demand was made of Samson?* 13:14

When the Angel of the Lord first appeared to Manoah's wife, he instructed her not to drink wine or strong drink. She was not to eat any unclean thing. At the time of the second appearance the Angel of the Lord told her not to eat anything which came from the vine. This additional demand was made on her and indicated that she was to live a life very similar to the clean and holy life demanded of a Nazarite. Such a prohibition was given to prevent a person from imbibing in anything which would cause him to lose any of the keenness of his natural senses. Such a person was holy and completely dedicated to God.

8. *Why did Manoah wish to make ready a kid?* 13:15

It is not stated that Manoah intended to prepare a kid for sacrifice. The Angel of the Lord did not know whether he was intending to sacrifice or to prepare a meal. Manoah may have been intending to show hospitality such as the hospitality extended by Abraham when the three men appeared to him (Genesis 18). As a result, the angel said that if he were preparing something for them to eat he would not be allowed to stay or to partake. He said also for Manoah to make his sacrifice to the Lord and not to him, a manifestation of one aspect of God's being.

9. *What miraculous feat did the angel perform?* 13:19, 20

As Manoah and his wife looked on, the angel ascended through the flames of the sacrifice on the altar. God has chosen to reveal Himself on many occasions through such phenomena as fires and flames. It was a burning bush through which Moses came to learn God's will for his life (Exodus 3). It was a fire which came from heaven to burn up the sacrifice on Mount Carmel and convince Israel of her apostasy (I Kings 18). God's final judgment



will be meted out as the heavens and the earth are destroyed with the fervent heat (II Peter 3). Such an ascension as the one demonstrated by the Angel of the Lord to Manoah and his wife impressed them with the holiness of God, whom they served.

10. *Why did Manoah think they would die?* 13:22

Manoah knew it was not possible for a man to see God and live (Exodus 33:17 ff.). When he saw the angel do his wondrous deed, he knew he was standing in the presence of the angel who appeared in God's stead on many occasions throughout the history of the Old Testament. He was like Jacob, who thought he had seen God face to face. As a result, he expected to be smitten and to die.

11. *What was the conclusion of Manoah's wife?* 13:23

Manoah's wife reasoned more logically than he did. God had accepted the sacrifice of this humble, God-fearing couple. She said God would not receive their sacrifice if He were intending to destroy them. When her husband became fearful at the appearance of the Angel of the Lord, his wife comforted him with this conviction which she expressed.

12. *Where was Eshtaol?* 13:25

Eshtaol was in the hill country leading up from the Mediterranean seacoast to the mountains of Judah. It is named next after Zorah in Joshua 15:33 and again in Joshua 19:41. The camp of Dan lay between these two cities, and here the Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson as we read in this passage. He was buried here also as is recorded in Judges 16:31. Later a contingent from Eshtaol formed part of the force of the Danites who captured Lachish in the northern part of Israel's territory (Judges 18:2, 11). Some believe it is represented by the modern *Asbu'a* about a mile and a half east of Zorah.

## JUDGES

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 13

1. Who were the oppressors of Israel in the days of Samson?
2. How long did they oppress Israel?
3. Of what tribe was Samson a member?
4. What kind of vow was Samson to keep throughout his life?
5. What was the name of Samson's father?
6. Could Samson keep his vow and drink wine?
7. Could Samson have his hair cut and keep his vow?
8. Could Samson eat of unclean animals and keep his vow?
9. Could Samson eat grapes and still keep his vow?
10. What kind of animal did Samson's father offer to the angel?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 14

- Vv. 1-11 *Preparations for Samson's marriage in Philistia.* Samson saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. He asked his father and mother to arrange for marriage. They hesitated but were not firm in opposing the marriage. Consequently, arrangements were made for the marriage; and Samson, his mother, and his father went down to Philistia for the wedding feast.
- Vv. 12-18 *Samson's riddle.* The famous riddle of Samson—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweet"—arose out of his experience with the lion. He had killed the lion and later had found bees with honey in the carcase. He had taken this honey and

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

eaten it. He challenged the Philistines at the marriage feast. He said he would give them thirty changes of raiment if they guessed his riddle. If they could not guess it, they were to give him an equal amount of clothing. After seven days the Philistines persuaded his wife to find out the meaning. She then told her friends; and as a result, Samson was expected to award the prize.

- Vv. 19-20 *Samson's first slaughter of the Philistines.* Since the Philistines had tricked Samson into revealing the meaning himself, Samson was enraged. He went and slew thirty Philistines and gave their clothing to the scheming lords of the Philistines. From this point forward, he becomes the great protagonist against the Philistines on behalf of Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Ruined character often begins at home.* Samson's unbridled passion was evident to his parents, but they were not strong enough to oppose him. The Scripture writer says that it was of the Lord to find an occasion against the Philistines. Sometimes even what appears bad can turn out for the good; but more often than not, such a spoiled child as Samson proves to be a grief to his parents.
2. *Broken vows lead to broken hearts.* Samson was a Nazarite. As a Nazarite he was not supposed to eat anything unclean. He was not even to touch a dead body. He not only touched the carcase of the dead lion, but took food out of it and ate it. This was the first of

the parts of his vow which he broke. God suffered long with him; but when he openly flaunted his breaking of his oath by allowing his hair to be cut, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him (16:20).

3. *Affairs of the heart run deep.* The Philistines used Samson's wife to find out the meaning of his riddle. Her love for him was not true, but Samson was shocked when he found marriage vows were so lightly esteemed among the Philistines as to allow his father-in-law to give his wife to another man. When he learned that his wife had been married to another, he brought a great destruction upon the land of the Philistines. Many men have committed heinous crimes because the marriage vows which have been exchanged are lightly esteemed by their partners. In a very real sense, they twain become one; and any violation of this principle brings great distress.
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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Samson and the Woman of Timnath 14:1-7*

And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.

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.

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.

4 But his father and 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.

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.

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.

7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well.

1. *Where was Timnath?* 14:1

Timnath appears in many different place names. For example, Timnath-serah appeared in Joshua (19:50 and 24:30). A town by the name of Timnath is mentioned in Joshua 15:57 and located in the southern part of the hill country of Judah, some eight miles west of Bethlehem. The Timnath where Samson went to get his bride must have been a town on the northern border of Judah (Joshua 15:10). This place lay between Beth-shemesh and Ekron. This place was assigned to Dan (Joshua 19:43). Being on the frontier, it must have changed hands from time to time. Ahaz took it from the Philistines (II Chronicles 28:18), and we learn from Assyrian inscriptions that Sennacherib captured a Tamna after the battle of Alteka before he attacked Ekron. A deserted ruin called Tibneh now stands on the southern slopes of the Wady es Surar, or the valley of Sorek. The spot is thus two miles west of Beth-shemesh, where there are a spring and evident signs of antiquity.

2. *Why did Samson ask his parents to get a wife for him?* 14:2

It was not customary in the era of the judges for a boy to make arrangements for his own marriage. Throughout patriarchal times the father made arrangements for the marriage of his son. Abraham sent Eliezer to seek a

wife for Isaac (Genesis 24), and Jacob arranged with Hamor for Shechem, Hamor's son, to marry Dinah, Jacob's daughter (Genesis 34). Such a custom prevails today, demanding that a man have a near kinsman to speak to the father of his intended bride. When the dowry has been arranged, an engagement is announced. After considerable time, a wedding feast is held; and the marriage is consummated.

3. *Why did Samson's parents try to discourage his intentions?* 14:3

Manoah and his wife called the Philistines by the same epithet used by David when he met Goliath. They looked upon the people as "uncircumcised Philistines." There was no stigma upon the Philistines because they failed to practice the rite of circumcision insofar as any physical strength or weakness may have been involved. The stigma arose from the fact of their not being under the covenant which God made with Abraham. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant. Those who were circumcised belonged to God. These Philistines were descendants of Ham and were not a part of the covenant nation of God. As a result, Samson's parents felt it was inadvisable for him to marry such a woman. They would have much preferred his marrying some girl from Israel.

4. *In what way was God seeking an occasion against the Philistines?* 14:4

Christians believe all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). Looking back upon many unfortunate circumstances, Christians can still see the hand of God in their lives. Such was the interpretation of the relationship of Samson with the woman of Timnath. The author of the book of Judges declares it was God's will for strife to arise between the Israelites and the Philistines. Samson was an instrument in God's hand. This does not mean God approved of Samson's intentions to

marry a wife from among the uncircumcised Philistines. God often uses the wickedness of men to bring honor and glory to His Name. He works out His will in spite of the weakness of men.

5. *Were lions plentiful in Palestine?* 14:5

Samson met a lion on the way down from his home in Dan to the home of the father of his bride-to-be in Philistia. Benaiah, one of David's mighty men, distinguished himself by killing a lion in a pit in the time of snow (II Samuel 23:20). Such wild animals do not seem to be numerous in the Promised Land, but one of the curses which was pronounced upon the people when they turned their backs upon God was the sending of wild animals among the Israelites (Leviticus 26:22). We do not read of the kings of Israel or Judah going on lion hunts or of the people themselves engaging in such pursuits of wild beasts. This indicates the scarcity of such wild animals in Israel. Such a reference as this of Samson's killing a lion is unusual by its very nature.

6. *Why did Samson not tell his parents about killing the lion?* 14:6

One of the parts of Samson's Nazarite vow was his oath to refrain from touching a dead body. When he killed a lion, he violated this part of his vow. He must have refused to tell his parents about this encounter because he knew of their desire for him to keep his vow. He was not proud of this feat of strength, for he was unwilling to keep his vow perfectly.

*Samson's Feast and Riddle* 14:8-20

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.

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.

10 So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

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:

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.

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.

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?

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?

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.



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.

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.

20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion, whom he had used as his friend.

*7. Why did Samson not tell his parents where he got the honey? 14:9*

Another part of Samson's vow was his oath not to eat any unclean food. The people of Israel were allowed to eat honey. The land is described as a land flowing with milk and honey; but since the honey was in the sun-bleached carcase of a dead lion, the food would be unclean. Even Samson's mother had been told by the angel who announced Samson's birth that she should not eat any unclean food. If Samson had told his parents where he got the honey, his mother at least would have refused to eat it. He also would have revealed his violation of his Nazarite vow.

*8. Why did the Philistines give Samson thirty companions? 14:11*

Commentators are divided over the reason for the Philistines providing thirty young men to be with Samson. They ask whether it was to honor the bridegroom or to watch him. From the first, suspicion must have been in the Philistines' mind as this passionate, young Israelite

came among them. It must have seemed necessary to have as many as thirty to one in order to awe Samson. In the course of a feast there often would be quarrels. Without a strong guard on the Hebrew from Dan, Timnath might have been in danger.

9. *Where did Samson get the idea for his riddle?* 14:12

Samson's experience with the lion must have been a traumatic episode. In the course of the wedding feast, the company fell to composing riddles. Samson, probably annoyed by the Philistines who watched every movement, gave them his riddle. The terms he proposed were quite fair. In his riddle, we see a man perfectly self-reliant, full of easy superiority, courting danger, and defying his opponents. The thirty may win if they can. In that case, he was willing to pay a forfeit. When he put forth the riddle he couched it in these words, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The riddle itself is a curiosity of old world banter. Some see in it a kind of gospel for the Philistines. It is true that like many witty sayings, the riddle had a range of meaning far wider than Samson intended. Any adverse influence conquered, any temptation mastered, any difficulty overcome, any struggle of faithfulness will supply us not only with happy recollections but also with arguments against infidelity. Anyone who can glory in his tribulations that have brought experience and hope, whether he be in bonds and imprisonments, or at liberty, can use this riddle. Vigor comes from what threatens life; joy comes out of sorrow. The man who walks with God is helped by the forces which oppose him. Samson demanded, however, a particular interpretation of his riddle.

10. *Did Samson gamble with his riddle?* 14:12, 13

There was no gamble involved in the proposal Samson made to the Philistines. It was a promise on his part to

give them a reward if they could find the answer to his riddle. On the other hand, if he was able to propound a riddle which defied them, they in turn were to reward him with thirty changes of garments and thirty sheets. The reward was proportionate to the number of companions given to be with Samson. It was a matter of each of his companions giving a reward to him. He probably never entertained the thought of their being able to learn the meaning of his riddle, but he was willing to reward each of them if such an event came to pass.

*11. How long did Samson's wife try to learn his riddle?*

14:17

His wife wept before him during the seven days of the banquet. Such a statement is not at variance with the statement made in verse fifteen. The woman had evidently already come to Samson every day with her entreaties from simple curiosity. Samson resisted them until the seventh day. At that time she became more urgent than ever because of the threat on the part of the Philistines. On the seventh day he finally told her, and she immediately went to those who had enticed her to wheedle the answer out of her husband. As a result the Philistines were able to come to Samson before sundown and give the answer to his riddle.

*12. What was the meaning of Samson's answer to the Philistines?* 14:18

Samson said that they would have been unable to find out the meaning of his riddle if they had not used his wife unfairly. John Milton in his poem, "Samson Agonistes," puts the answer in poetical form by saying, "You had not found out my answer I trow; if with my heifer you did not plow." It is not very complimentary to refer to his wife as a heifer, but the meaning of his statement is quite clear.

13. *Why did Samson kill the thirty men?* 14:19

He was angry. He had promised the thirty men who were his companions at the wedding feast that he would give them each a change of raiment and thirty sheets of cloth. He went out to find thirty men whom he could kill. He evidently took their garments and gave them to his companions. The thirty whom he killed were evidently not the thirty who were given to be his companions.

14. *How did the Spirit of the Lord cause this?* 14:19

God empowered him. The Spirit of the Lord began to move Samson at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol according to the statement made in Judges 13:25. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he was evidently able to perform deeds which he was not physically equipped to do without God's help. It was a supernatural gift; and as long as he was keeping his Nazarite vow, the Lord was with him.

15. *Why was Samson's wife given to another man?* 14:20

Samson's father-in-law looked upon his daughter more as chattel than as a person. He was anxious to get dowries from young men who wanted to marry his daughter. If one young man did not give the father satisfaction, he felt perfectly at liberty to arrange for his daughter's marriage to another man. Such a low view of marriage was prevalent in countries where they did not have the full revelation of God. Even among some of the Israelite people marriage did not have its high and holy estate to which it was raised in the teaching of Jesus. Nonetheless, Samson appears to be enraged when he learns later that his wife had been taken from him and given to someone else.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 14

1. In what city did the Philistine woman whom Samson wanted to marry live?

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

2. What kind of animal did Samson kill?
3. What kind of food did Samson get from the carcase of the dead animal?
4. How many companions were given to Samson at the wedding feast?
5. How many days did Samson give the Philistines to learn the meaning of his riddle?
6. What reward did Samson promise to give the Philistines if they learned the meaning of his riddle?
7. What was Samson's riddle?
8. What was the answer to Samson's riddle?
9. Where did Samson go to kill the Philistine men?
10. How many men did he kill?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 15

- Vv. 1-8 *Samson burns the Philistines' fields.* Samson left Philistia after he had killed thirty men to give changes of garments to the men who found out his riddle by their devious ways. Later he returned and found that his father-in-law had given his wife to another man. This so enraged Samson that he caught foxes, tied a firebrand to the tails of each pair, and set them loose in the standing grain-fields. This brought a great devastation on the land.
- Vv. 9-13 *Samson delivered to the Philistines by the men of Judah.* Samson went up into the hill country of Judah to hide from the Philistines after he had destroyed their fields. The men of Judah were distressed when the Philistines came after him and asked Samson to give up himself to the Philistines. When the men of Judah promised Samson that they would do no harm

## JUDGES

to him themselves, he allowed the men of Judah to deliver him into the hands of his enemies.

Vv. 14-20 *The slaughter of one thousand Philistines.* Samson had no weapons of war with which to defend himself, but even the jawbone of an animal became a vicious weapon of destruction in the hands of the new leader among the Israelites. His secret of strength was in the Spirit of the Lord which came mightily upon him (v. 14). Ramath-lehi received its name from this unusual event which took place there.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A man's foes are those in his own household.* Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman caused him a lot of trouble and brought much grief on both the Philistines and Samson. He was enraged because the Philistines used his wife to find the meaning of his riddle; and after he had killed thirty of them to get changes of raiment to give as a reward to his thirty companions, he left Philistia for awhile. Later he returned, thinking he would visit his wife, but on this occasion he learned his wife's father had supposed Samson was not pleased with his daughter and had given her to be another man's wife. This was an insult to Samson, and he vented his wrath on the Philistines by destroying their fields of grain. The Philistines in turn burned Samson's father-in-law because his treatment of Samson had brought this loss of grain upon them. Sin often causes grief to everyone, even those who are only remotely connected with a sinful situation.

2. *Sinners trouble their own houses.* Samson's associations with the Philistines not only caused him to be unwelcome in their midst, but the men of Judah wanted him to stay out of their territory. They were afraid the Philistines would punish them on account of Samson's actions. The men of Judah, therefore, asked Samson to allow them to deliver him to his enemies. Samson agreed upon the condition that the men of Judah themselves not afflict him. Thus, a sinner often finds himself beset on every hand—both friends and foes.
3. *God can strike a straight blow with a crooked stick.* The many devious ways of Samson detract from what might otherwise be a very admirable character. Through him, one thousand Philistines were slain on the occasion when the men of Judah delivered him to the Philistines. Even though Samson had broken a part of his vow, God used him to effect a mighty deliverance against the oppressors of Israel. God does not approve of sinful deeds, but God does use men who sometimes sin to champion His causes of righteousness.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Samson Is Denied His Wife 15:1, 2*

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 into my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to go in.

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.

#### 1. *What was the time of the wheat harvest? 15:1*

Wheat harvest comes in Palestine in the early part of June. By that time, several weeks of the dry season

have elapsed, and the fields are in full bloom. Samson went down to Philistia at this very interesting and beautiful time of the year. With him, he took a present for his wife. The present may seem strange to modern times, but it was a customary present for that time. If the animal was used at the time, all who participated in the festive occasion would enjoy the benefits of a gift of a young goat. A delicious and nourishing meal would have been prepared, and the festive occasion would have brought joy to all.

2. *Why did Samson's father-in-law give his wife to another man?* 15:2

Samson was shocked to learn that he was no longer welcome in his father-in-law's house as the husband of his older daughter. The father-in-law excused himself for having given his older daughter to another man by saying he supposed Samson was not pleased with her. He would have come to this conclusion because Samson had gone out from the wedding feast in a rage and killed thirty Philistine men in order to give thirty changes of raiment to his companions who had tricked him into revealing the meaning of his riddle. The father-in-law must have received another dowry from a second husband, and his greediness probably prompted him to make this arrangement for his daughter's second marriage. His eagerness to give his younger daughter to Samson indicates his desire for the dowry which would have been customary.

*Samson Burns the Philistines' Corn 15:3-13*

3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

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.



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.

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.

7 And Samson said unto them, Though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

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.

9 Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

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.

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.

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.

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.

3. *What did Samson mean by a displeasure?* 15:3

Samson had in mind the bringing of injury or calamity upon the Philistines. The word is sometimes translated as an evil. He certainly had in mind the afflicting of many casualties in Philistia. He regarded the treatment which he had received from his father-in-law as but one more instance of the attitude of the Philistines towards the Israelites. He was determined to avenge the wrong which he had received from one member of the Philistines upon the entire nation, or at least upon the whole city of Timnath.

4. *Were foxes plentiful in Philistia?* 15:4

The word translated "foxes" in the Hebrew is *shualim*. On some occasions it might be translated as jackals. These are animals which resemble foxes and are frequently classed with the foxes even among the Arabs of the present day. The animals are still found in great quantities around Joppa, Gaza, and in Galilee. They run together and may be rather easily caught.

5. *What kind of grain was destroyed?* 15:5

The authorized version has the word *corn*, but the reference is to shocks of wheat which were mentioned in verse five. Some of the grain was still standing in the field; some of it had been cut and gathered into bundles. Bundles had been placed in shocks, and the people were eagerly anticipating the storing of the grain from the harvest. Samson's act of vengeance brought great hardship upon them. The fires raged so heavily that destruction was even brought to the vineyards and the olive groves.

6. *Did the Philistines kill Samson's wife?* 15:6

The Philistines found out what had happened. They knew Samson had done them this "displeasure" on account of the treatment which he had received at the hands of his father-in-law, the Timnite. As a result, the Philistine

people vented their wrath upon the Timnite and Samson's former wife. It is not clear whether they actually burned them, but it is suggested by Keil and Delitzsch that they burned his house to the ground with the occupants inside it.

7. *What is the meaning of the expression, "hip and thigh"?* 15:8

Such an expression is proverbial for a cruel, merciless slaughter. The German people are known for "cutting arm and leg in two." Commentaries make reference to the Arabic "war in thigh fashion." Samson's great strength enabled him to run in hot pursuit of his adversaries. When he caught them, he would be able to stand his ground in hand-to-hand combat. Today, athletes are greatly concerned about their legs. When strength goes from their legs, they are no longer able to perform as in former days. It is easy to see how Samson was described as having smitten the Philistines "hip and thigh."

8. *Where was Etam?* 15:11

Two places by the name of Etam are mentioned in the Scripture. One, mentioned in II Chronicles 11:6, lies between Bethlehem and Tekoa. This spot was fortified by King Rehoboam and stood south of Jerusalem in the hill country of Judah. The other is mentioned in I Chronicles 4:32, along with Ain, Rimmon, and other Simeonite towns. Since Samson "went down" to Etam, the latter place fits very well. He would have had to "go up" if he were to go to the aforementioned Etam.

9. *Where was Lehi?* 15:9

The Philistines advanced with their armies to avenge themselves for the defeat they had sustained at the hands of Samson. They came into the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah and spread themselves out in Lehi. This spot is probably mentioned again in II Samuel 23:11.

It cannot be traced with any certainty, but the consensus of opinion among Biblical geographers is for placing it in the southwestern approach to the mountains of Judah near Beersheba.

*10. Why were the men of Judah alarmed? 15:10*

By fleeing to a place in the south part of the Promised Land, Samson had led the Philistines to come up into the territory belonging to the tribe of Judah. The presence of the armies of the oppressors would cause great concern to the men of Judah. They evidently did not recognize Samson as a deliverer whom the Lord had raised up for them. They did not crowd around him in order to smite the oppressors with his help and drive them out of the land. They had been so degraded by the Philistine oppression that they cast reproach upon Samson.

*11. Why did the men of Judah rebuke Samson? 15:11*

The men of Judah rebuked Samson for coming into their territory to hide from the Philistines. Furthermore, they chided him for having smitten the Philistines in the first place. They asked him if he did not know that the Philistines ruled over the Israelites. If he were aware of this, the men of Judah felt it was foolish to offend their oppressors. As a result, they had come in great numbers to deliver Samson to the Philistines.

*12. Why did Samson allow the men of Judah to bind him? 15:12*

Samson did not want to fight with members of one of the tribes of Israel. Consequently, Samson asked the men of Judah only to deliver him to the Philistines without their harming him themselves. He had no fear of the enemies of the people of the Lord, but he was concerned lest his own people turn against him. Such a circumstance as revealed here indicates Israel was one people, even though all did not rally to support Samson.

*Samson Slays a Thousand Philistines 15:14-20*

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.

15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.

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.

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 Ramath-lehi.

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?

19 And God clave a 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 En-hakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day.

20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

13. *Why did Samson use a jawbone of an ass?* 15:15

The men of Israel were probably without weapons. Such was their condition in the days of Saul. Samson had killed the lion with his bare hands; but when he confronted the hosts of the Philistines, he used the first object available to him. Some believe his weapon was the kind of a tool which the men of Israel used in cutting grain.

Instances are known of their placing sharpened flint stones in the ridges of jawbones and using them as scythes to cut their grain. Samson may have had such a fearful weapon available to him.

14. *What is the meaning of the name Ramath-lehi?* 15:17

The literal meaning of Ramath-lehi is "the jawbone height." Samson gave this name to the place where he met and defeated the Philistines. For this reason, it is probable that the name Lehi was given to the place where he fled only after this encounter. The author of the book of Judges used the name naturally as the name by which the spot was known when the book was written.

15. *What is the meaning of the name En-hakkore?* 15:19

The fountain which was caused to spring forth in Lehi was named En-hakkore, which means "the crier's well which is at Lehi." The place was still known when the book was written. Such a wonderful provision for Samson is reminiscent of that which was made for the Israelites at Horeb and in Kadesh (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8, 11). Samson was very near exhaustion after he had slain a thousand of the Philistines in the different places suggested by the reference to heaps upon heaps (verse 16). God miraculously supplied water in the place of the jaw, Lehi; and Samson was revived.

16. *Why were the days of Samson's judgeship called the days of the Philistines?* 15:20

Samson judged while the Philistines oppressed Israel. His rule was twenty years out of this period. This reference indicates clearly how the oppression may have overlapped the times of the judgeships of the various leaders in Israel. For this reason, it is better not to add up all of the chronological notes, but to use only the years of the judgeships in order to determine the entire span of the period covered by the book of Judges.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 15

1. How many foxes did Samson catch?
2. What did he tie between the tails of each pair of foxes?
3. Who burned Samson's father-in-law and his wife?
4. Where did Samson go to escape from the Philistines?
5. How many men from Judah went out to catch Samson?
6. With what did the men of Judah bind Samson to deliver him to the Philistines?
7. What did Samson use to kill the thousand Philistines?
8. What did Samson call the name of the place where he killed the one thousand Philistines?
9. What did Samson call the name of the place where God gave him water to drink?
10. How long did Samson judge Israel?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 16

- Vv. 1-3 *Samson in Gaza.* The city of Gaza was one of the five cities in the Philistine Pentapolis. Samson had gone down to Ashkelon to kill the thirty men from whom he took the changes of raiment to give to his companions at the wedding feast. This city of Ashkelon was also one of these five most important Philistine cities. After he was spurned by his wife and her father, he went to Gaza; and it also felt the sting of the hand of the strong man from Dan.
- Vv. 4-20 *Samson and Delilah.* The association of Samson and Delilah proved to be the undoing of this last of the judges. It is not stated that Samson married Delilah. He married only the

## JUDGES

woman of Timnath who had pleased him earlier in his life. The Bible does say, however, that Samson loved Delilah. Evidently the love he felt for her was not returned, for she entered into an agreement with the lords of the Philistine cities whereby she delivered Samson to them to be destroyed.

Vv. 21-31 *Samson's last days and death.* The Philistines blinded Samson and imprisoned him. His great strength was put to work in a mill as he performed the task which was ordinarily done by animals. Samson stood as a symbol of the people of Israel. His imprisonment represented the triumph of the Philistines over the people of God. For this reason, the Philistines brought him out of the prison to their temple in order that they might torment him and revel in their victory.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Her house is the way to hell*" (*Proverbs 7:27*). The writer of Proverbs concluded his chapter of advice for a young man by describing a harlot and saying, "Her house is the way to hell." As the proverb says, "She hast cast down many wounded" (verse 26). Samson's first step on the road to ruin was his going to the Philistines to marry a wife. At the harlot's house in Gaza, he is well on the way to the depths of despair.
2. *The Lord was departed.* In the days before the flood God said that His Spirit would not always strive with men. They were wicked and yet he gave them 120 years to obey the preaching of Noah. Paul said that



God gave up the people of his day who were reprobate (Romans 1:24). Samson broke every part of his vow, and the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. The irony of the tragedy was revealed when Samson was aroused from his sleep and did not realize God's Spirit had left him. Christians who have been promised the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit should pray daily lest the Spirit depart from them and leave them powerless.

3. *Only this once.* Samson prayed for God to give him one more victory over the Philistines. He had allowed his hair to grow and was evidently keeping the vow of the Nazarites which had been upon him from his birth. God did not forsake him in his great need. Workers for the Lord often come to the real moment of truth. On these occasions they pray for God to strengthen them for the critical moments of their lives. God does not forsake those who love Him.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### *Samson at Gaza 16:1-3*

Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in unto her.

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.

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 a hill that is before Hebron.

1. *Where was Gaza?* 16:1

Gaza was in Philistine territory west of Israel. It was one of the most ancient towns of the world. Modern Gaza serves as the capital of the Gaza strip, that elongated piece of land which was controlled by Egypt along the seacoast of the modern state of Israel. The land was taken by the Israelis in the six-day war of June, 1967. Gaza is a rather modern community and is southernmost of the cities which made up the Philistine Pentapolis. The ancient city was situated on the Mediterranean seacoast.

2. *How did Samson escape?* 16:2

The men of Gaza thought that Samson would stay all night in the house of the harlot, but he escaped by arising in the middle of the night. The Philistine men of Gaza had taken too much for granted. They had supposed that Samson would spend the entire night in the house of the Philistine harlot. As a result, they did not take the precaution of setting a guard at the house during the middle of the night. It was their false conclusion that they would be able to fall upon Samson after daybreak. Because of the carelessness of the Philistines, Samson left Gaza unharmed.

3. *What kind of gate was this?* 16:3

According to Keil and Delitzsch, Samson took hold of the folding wings of the city gate, as well as the two posts and tore them out of the ground (p. 418). Most gates were entranceways through which carriages might enter but the fortified cities in ancient times had not only the large they also had smaller gates which might be opened to admit people on foot. It was evidently the two smaller doors of the city gate along with the two bars or posts which went with them which Samson carried away from the city.

4. *How far did Samson carry the doors?* 16:3b

Samson carried the doors of the city gate to the top of a hill which was on the road from Gaza to Hebron.

The Scripture does not say that he carried the doors all the way to Hebron. He simply took them up the road to the top of the hill which was on the direct route to Hebron. This is the meaning of this verse which says he carried the doors to the top of the hill before Hebron.

*Samson and Delilah 16:4-22*

4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

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.

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.

7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withes which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

9 Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withes, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

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.

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.

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.

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.

14 And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awakened out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

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.

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;

17 That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor unto 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.

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 showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

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.

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.

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.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

5. *Where was the Valley of Sorek?* 16:4

The Valley of Sorek lay almost directly west of the city of Jerusalem. It runs from the heights near the city of Jerusalem down through the hills and valleys leading to the Mediterranean seacoast. Two different branches come together at the edge of the Philistine plain and continue westward until the mouth lies on the Mediterranean coast. This valley lay north of the Valley of Elah where the Philistines and Israel went to war at the time when David vanquished Goliath. It lay south of the Valley of Ajalon over which Joshua prayed the moon might stand still in his time of battle with the Canaanite kings. The Valley of Sorek was near the home of Samson.

6. *Who were the lords of the Philistines?* 16:5

Probably these men were the leaders of the cities which made up the group known as the Philistine Pentapolis. In the days of the captivity of the Ark there were five of these lords (I Samuel 6:16) and each of them made an offering to send back to Israel with the Ark of the Covenant. If there were five in the days of Delilah and each of them promised to give her 1100 pieces of silver, the price which they put on Samson's head was sizable. The total of the pieces of silver would be 5500; and when the Christian Bible student remembers Judas betrayed Jesus

for thirty pieces of silver, some kind of idea of the extent to which these lords of the Philistines were willing to go is seen.

7. *What were the seven green withes?* 16:7

Delilah was willing to betray Samson by wheedling from him the secret of his strength. When Delilah first approached Samson he told her he would not be able to break green withes if he were bound with them. He indicated it would take seven of these strands, and Delilah believed him. The green withes were probably strips of bark which had been woven together to form a kind of rope. It has been suggested that the withes were made from strips of bark which were peeled from trees.

8. *What is a thread of tow?* 16:9.

The American Standard Version calls this a string of tow. Tow is defined as a tuft of wool ready for spinning. It is sometimes in the form of yarn spun from tufts of wool. In either case a string of tow would be a highly flammable cord, and Samson broke the seven green withes as easily as one might burn a string of wool in the flame of a candle. In this way Samson escaped from the Philistines who were hiding in the chamber of Delilah's house.

9. *Why would Delilah think Samson might be bound with new ropes?* 16:11

When Delilah learned Samson had mocked her by telling her a lie, she was more insistent about his telling her the secret of his strength. When he was pressed for an answer the second time, Samson told Delilah that if he were bound with new ropes he would not be able to escape. Ropes would be made from seasoned materials. The green withes were made of fiber which was green and unseasoned. Delilah believed Samson when he told her a second lie. It was as easy for him to break the new ropes as it would be for an ordinary person to break a thread.

10. *Why did Samson tell Delilah to weave his hair?* 16:13

Samson was coming very close to revealing the reason for his super-human strength when he told Delilah to weave the seven locks of his head with the web of a loom. These words are difficult to explain. Several technical terms are used which have more than one meaning. The account itself is brief and new information is given both in Samson's advice and in Delilah's fulfillment of his instructions. His reference to the seven locks of his head is no doubt an allusion to the seven plaits or braids of his hair which had been allowed to grow since his birth. He doubtless meant for Delilah to weave his hair along with the warp on the loom. Some commentators believe the pin was used to fasten his hair to the cloth or to the loom. Samson's hair was thus not only woven with the material on the loom, but it was fastened with a pin, thus making it doubly secure. The beam was a flat piece of wood used in an upright loom to press the material together and increase the substance of the cloth.

11. *What was the source of Samson's strength?* 16:15

Samson finally revealed the source of his great power. He was a man completely dedicated to the service of God. He had been a Nazarite from the time of his birth. His strength did not reside in his hair, but in the fact that the Lord was with him. The Lord was with him as long as he maintained his dedication as a Nazarite. When he broke away from this vow by allowing his hair to be cut, the Lord departed from him. When the Lord went away, his strength left.

12. *Why was his strength gone with the loss of his hair?*  
16:17

Samson had broken other parts of his vow when he took honey from the carcase of a lion. He may have also broken a third part of his vow by drinking strong drink when he participated in the wedding feast in Philistia.

Neither of the latter two breaches of his vow made any noticeable difference in his appearance. When he allowed his hair to be shaved from his head, however, he was openly saying to everybody that he had broken his vow. This open and flagrant violation of a Nazarite vow caused Samson to be forsaken of the Lord.

*13. What difference was noticed by Delilah? 16:18*

Delilah could tell when Samson finally told her the real source of his strength. There was no doubt in her mind. After Samson had told her that he was a Nazarite, she sent with confidence to the Philistine lords and told them to come up again because Samson had revealed everything in his heart. As a result, the lords of the Philistines came up with the money they had promised.

*14. Why did Samson not know that the Lord had departed? 16:20*

The overpowering influence of the Spirit of the Lord evidently made no physical impression on Samson. He was not able to tell by any of his feelings when the Lord was with him. As he first awoke from his sleep, he would hardly realize his hair had been cut. As a result he intended to go out and to deliver himself from the hands of the Philistines as he had done many times before. It is a sad commentary on his fallen condition which is recorded in the Bible. The Scripture says, "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

*15. How did the Philistines treat Samson? 16:21*

The Philistines captured Samson after he had told Delilah he was strong on account of being a Nazarite. They put out his eyes so that he would not be able to see ways in which to use his great strength. They had already tried binding him with seven green withes. He had been able to break these. They were not able to hold him with ropes and so in this final effort to capture him they bound him with fetters of brass. He was then made to serve in



the prison house as a beast of burden. He was forced to turn the millstone which ground the flour for the despised Philistines.

*The Death of Samson 16:23-31*

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

28 And Samson called unto the 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.

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.

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.

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.

16. *What was the occasion for the sacrifice to Dagon?*  
16:23

The lords of the Philistines went together to proclaim a time of national rejoicing among the Philistines. Since they had been able to capture Samson they believed God had wrought a great victory for them. They wanted to praise Dagon their god for this great accomplishment. Samson had been a great enemy of their country, and they rejoiced when he was captured.

17. *In what way had he destroyed their country?* 16:24

On account of Samson's presence among them the house of the father of his wife had been burned by the Philistines themselves. He had sent foxes among their crops to burn down the standing grain and the vineyards. He had personally broken down the doors to the gates to the city of Gaza. In all of these instances he had proved himself indeed worthy of the title of "destroyer," as they said he had also slain many of them—on one occasion, a thousand men; on another occasion, thirty men.

18. *In what way did Samson make them "sport"?* 16:25

The wicked Philistines with a sadistic turn to their nature summoned Samson and required him to entertain them. They probably tormented him. Since he was blind, they would be able to trip him. They could come at him from all sides without his being able to prepare himself for their attacks. No doubt, they had a riotous time as they humiliated the great man from Dan who had won many victories over them.

19. *In what house were the men and women?* 16:27

These Philistines must have gathered themselves in the great temple which was dedicated to Dagon. Three thousand of them were on the roof, and others must have been inside the house. It was customary for these heathen peoples to have these centers of worship where they could gather for such festive occasions as the feast made to Dagon in honor of the capturing of Samson.

20. *What was Samson's final prayer?* 16:28

Samson prayed, "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." This was a prayer of great desperation, but it was a prayer made from a long period of meditation. Samson had let his hair grow in order again to proclaim he belonged to the Lord. Throughout these days he must have repented of the great wickedness he had committed and the headstrong way in which he had walked. As a result, God answered Samson's prayer and strengthened him for one great, final victory over the Philistines.

21. *How did Samson know the location of the pillars?*  
16:26, 29

Samson had asked the young lad who had led him from the prison house to the temple to let him lean upon the pillars which supported the temple. Some have supposed that this may have been a lad who was friendly to Samson's cause. Others have even believed it to be such a great Biblical character as Saul, the son of Kish, who later became the king of Israel. It is better to view the lad as one who was given the responsibility of leading Samson from the mill where he ground the grain of his captors to the temple where he entertained the raucous and impious devotees of Dagon.

## JUDGES

### 22. *Was Samson justified in his final act of destruction?*

Ancient commentators have discussed this question without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. Many believe he actually committed suicide in this act. Others have called his deed the act of a hero. Samson felt it was necessary for him to plunge into the midst of his enemies although it certainly meant his own death. In this way he did effect the deliverance of his people and decide the victory which was the greatest of all his career. If Samson had been able to deliver himself in any way out of the hands of the Philistines, he would always carry about with him the mark of his shame in the blindness of his eyes. This would be a reminder of the unfaithfulness of a servant of God as well as of the triumph of his foes. Even through Samson's death the Lord was working a victory for Israel in Philistia. He may not have justified himself completely by this final feat, but he did die in an hour of triumph.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 16

1. What was the name of the city whose gates Samson carried away?
2. Where was Delilah's home?
3. With what did Samson first tell Delilah to bind him?
4. With what did Samson next tell Delilah to bind him?
5. How many pieces of silver did each of the lords of the Philistines promise to give to Delilah?
6. To what city did the Philistines take Samson after they captured him?
7. What was the name of the Philistine god?
8. About how many men and women were on the roof of the temple to which Samson was brought?
9. Where was Samson buried?
10. How long did Samson judge Israel?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 17

- Vv. 1- 6 *Micah's image made.* Micah stole eleven hundred pieces of silver from his mother. When she uttered a curse concerning it, he confessed that he had stolen it. Nevertheless, Micah's mother carried out her intention concerning the money and paid a founder to forge an image. The rest of the money was probably used to perpetuate the idolatrous worship.
- Vv. 7-13 *A Levite consecrated to be Micah's priest.* A young Levite who lived in Bethlehem-judah was induced to serve as the priest at Micah's pagan sanctuary. Micah was thus satisfied with his wicked arrangements for the establishment of false worship in the midst of God's chosen people.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A wicked son is a grief to his mother.* Micah stooped so low as to steal money from his mother. Even when he gave it back to her and made confession of his theft, his mother had cause to be grieved; for he plunged deeply into idolatry. Although she herself was involved in the making of the graven image, Micah took the lead in setting up a center of image worship. He consecrated one of his own sons as a priest and became a leader of false religious practices in Israel. Such a son would surely be a heaviness of heart to any righteous mother, even if Micah were not so to his mother.
2. *Counterfeit religion is hard to detect.* Micah went to great trouble in order to make a false religion very much like the true religion. He made an ephod, the

distinctive garment of the priests of Israel. He secured a young Levite of Bethlehem-judah to be his priest. God had ordered the priestly family to be of the tribe of Levi. More specifically, they were to be descendants of Aaron. The man who became Micah's priest was probably a renegade who wandered up into Ephraim after he left his Levitical city in Judah, but he was still of the family from which the priests were taken. It is the same way with false religions today. They have many features copied from the true religion, but in essence they are only forgeries.

3. *False priests serve for selfish reasons.* Ezekiel roundly rebuked the "fat" shepherds of his day. The word of the Lord came to him saying, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves" (34:2). Jesus once described shepherds who were hirelings as those who fled when the dangers threatened the sheep (John 10:12). Christian workers today who follow the example of the Levite in Micah's day and go wherever they can find the best paying job without regard to the false way of life they must follow thereby are as reprehensible as was the man of Bethlehem-judah in the days of Micah.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DOUBLE APPENDIX 17:1—21:25

The Idolatry of Dan 17:1—18:31

*Micah's Images 17:1-6*

And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

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.

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.

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.

5 And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

### 1. *Who was Micah?* 17:1

The word Micah is an abbreviation for Micaiah (Jeremiah 26:18). The name is interpreted by a question: "Who is like the Lord?" The name was given to a rather large group of men, there being at least eight men in the Old Testament who bore this name. The best-known man bearing this name is the prophet whose book is one of the Twelve. The Micah mentioned in this chapter of Judges is not further identified, but the account of his idolatrous worship is one of great importance.

### 2. *Where was Mount Ephraim?* 17:1

The land given to the tribe of Ephraim was largely composed of hill country. There were many smaller mountains within the border of this section of Palestine, but the northern part was especially hilly since the heights of Mount Carmel began to take their rise from the center of this land. On the northern border of the territory

assigned to Ephraim were Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Somewhere in this hill country Micah and his mother had settled.

3. *In what way had Micah's mother uttered a curse? 17:2*

The Scripture is not clear as to the nature of the curse which was uttered by Micah's mother, but it appears on the surface that she had prayed for God to curse whoever had stolen her money. There is a possibility of her simply placing a ban on the money or in other words, having dedicated it to the service of God. When the money was restored to her, she said she had sanctified the silver to the Lord. In either case Micah realized he was encountering a possibility of being smitten of the Lord for having taken his mother's money. He had heard the curse which she uttered, and this frightened him into making a confession of his theft.

4. *Why did his mother pray for him to be blessed? 17:2*

When Micah made a confession of his theft, his mother prayed God to bless him. She saw in his confession a proof of his fear of God. More than this, his confession made possible her dedicating the silver to the Lord. When her son gave the money back to her, she was able to fulfill her intentions.

5. *What kind of image was made? 17:4*

Two different words are used in the Hebrew text to describe the idolatrous image. The first word *pesel* is used for an idolatrous image made either of metal or wood. The word *massecab* stands for something poured or cast. When this latter word is used in the singular, it generally refers to the calf cast by Aaron or Jeroboam. The two words used together probably describe a symbol of the Lord. Judging from the events at Mount Sinai, Micah's mother probably made an idol in the form of a calf to stand for the presence of the Lord. In Judges 18:17, 18, the two words are not used together; and some think Micah's



mother made two different objects. It is hard to imagine, however, that Micah's mother made two images of the Lord. For this reason it seems better to view this reference as signifying an image, *pesel* and a pedestal upon which it stood—the *massecab*. In Judges 18:30, 31 the *pesel* alone is mentioned. Likely it was probably an image of a bull similar to the golden calf which Aaron made at Sinai (Exodus 32:4) and the two golden calves which Jeroboam erected in Israel, one of which was set up in Dan (I Kings 12:29).

6. *What was the "house of gods"?* 17:5

Micah's house of gods was a private shrine which he erected on his property. It was not another tabernacle or a forerunner of the temple. God had decreed only one sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12). Although the house of gods which Micah erected was largely for his own private use, it is possible that neighbors and friends came to the sanctuary of false worship erected by this well-to-do man. Thus the seeds of idolatry were scattered far and wide from this center of paganism.

7. *What was the ephod?* 17:5

The ephod was the garment worn by the priests. God had prescribed the attire for priests. Various articles of clothing were described—an ephod, a robe, a mitre, linen breeches and breast plate. The ephod was a short garment without sleeves and formed the basic article of clothing.

8. *What were the teraphim?* 17:5

Teraphim were small household gods. They are sometimes called penates. Rachel stole Laban's teraphim when she and Jacob fled from Haran (Genesis 31:19). These images were worshiped as the givers of earthly prosperity and as sources of divine knowledge. The form *teraphim* is the plural of the singular *teraph*.

9. *What was the meaning of the remark about no king?*  
17:6

The author is dating the event as being prior to the time of writing, which was probably in the early days of the monarchy. The events which transpired in Chapter 17 did not necessarily follow those which are described in Chapter 16 of the book of Judges. That is to say, Micah's era was not later than that of Samson's. Micah established his false worship some time during the period of the judges. More than likely it occurred early in the era and may be no less than a century after the false worship which erupted at Sinai was soundly denounced by Moses.

10. *What is the bearing of this regarding the date of the book?* 17:6

If the people were then becoming acquainted with the monarchy, it would help them make a comparison between their times and the early days. Throughout the last five chapters of the book of Judges we find constantly recurring references of a similar nature (18:1; 19:1 and 21:25). If Samuel were the author, he was evidently emphasizing the difference in the social climate under the judges as compared to that under the king. By the end of Saul's lifetime the people of Israel had been given ample opportunity to see the nature of a king. They had asked for a king to enable them to be "like all the nations" (I Samuel 8:5). Most of the time commentators view this period as a time of near anarchy. We may be led to believe that it was also a time when the spiritual climate was very poor. Nevertheless the record says that "every man did that which was *right* in his own eyes." It does not say that every man did what was wrong. Things could have been worse.

*Micah's Hired Priest 17:7-13*

7 And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place.

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.

11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons.

12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

*11. How could the Levite be from Bethlehem-judah? 17:7*

Levites were given forty-eight cities spread throughout the length and breadth of the Promised Land. They were not given land on which they could plant vineyards and orchards. They did not have extensive fields in which they could sow grain. Only about 1,000 cubits round-about each of these forty-eight cities was provided as a place where they could tether their animals and raise gardens of herbs and vegetables. Thus the Levites might live in the land assigned to any one of the twelve tribes. The Levite who came to Micah was from the southern area, the tribe of Judah.

12. *Why was the Levite so poor and so easily contented?*  
17:9, 10

He was evidently not needed in the service of the Lord in Bethlehem-judah; and when he left his village, he had no means of making a living. The Israelites were not always faithful to God's command to give a tithe to support the Levites. In the days of Nehemiah the Levites had been forced to go to labor in the fields. Nehemiah straightened this out and commanded the people to bring a tithe to support the Levites (Nehemiah 13:10, 14). It is also quite possible that this Levite was inept and rebellious. For this reason he was forced to go elsewhere to find a means of livelihood.

13. *What was the reward for the Levite?* 17:10

Micah promised the Levite that he would give him ten shekels of silver per year as his salary. By way of comparison, it is good to remember that the founder who made the image was paid 200 shekels of silver—an amount equivalent to twenty years of pay for the Levite. The Levite was also promised a place to live and clothing to wear. In other words he was to receive room and board plus a small stipend.

14. *Why did Micah think he would be blessed?* 17:13

Micah was like many people who follow false religions today. They are superstitious and ignorant of the true meaning of worship. Because Micah had an image, a sanctuary in which to worship, robes for his priest and a priest who was related to the true priests of Israel, he felt that he had everything any religious man could hope to have. He felt that such rituals and forms of religion would bring him a blessing. He was willingly ignorant of the fact that God's spirit does not dwell in externals. God is more pleased with obedience than with sacrifice (I Samuel 15:22).

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 17

1. Where was Micah's home?
2. How many pieces of silver did he steal from his mother?
3. How much did the graven image cost?
4. Who first served as a priest for Micah?
5. Where had the young Levite lived before he came to Micah?
6. How many pieces of silver did Micah promise per year to the Levite?
7. What other pay did Micah promise the Levite?
8. Who consecrated the Levite to be a priest?
9. What other objects did Micah make for his false worship?
10. Was there a king in Israel in Micah's day?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 18

- Vv. 1-6 *Men of Dan at the house of Micah.* The further history of the false worship instituted by Micah is traced out in this chapter. The men of Dan who were seeking additional territory in which to settle were caught up with the false worship. From the fact of their recognizing the voice of the Levite, we assume they had some former connection with the man in charge of Micah's sanctuary. The five men of Dan asked the Levite to inquire concerning the outcome of their expedition; and when he informed them of the good auspices, they set out on their journey.
- Vv. 7-26 *Micah's image stolen.* The spies sent out from Dan returned to their brethren and informed them of the good land which was theirs for the

## JUDGES

taking. Six hundred men with weapons of war set out to take possession of the territory around Laish, near the extreme northern border of the Promised Land. As they made their way towards their new home, they went up again to the house of Micah and took the carved image, the ephod, the teraphim, and the molten image. They also persuaded the unprincipled Levite to accompany them and serve as their false priest. Micah opposed them; but when he saw that they were too strong for him, he returned to his home.

Vv. 27-31 *False worship established in Dan.* The irascible Danites stole the idols of Micah and his priest and took them to Laish. They attacked the city and burned it to the ground. When they rebuilt the city, they named it Dan; and here they set up the graven image of Micah.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "*Replenish the earth, and subdue it*" (Genesis 1:28). When God created the earth, He gave it to man to possess. His blessing upon man in the beginning has been called the colonist's character, the missionary's manifesto. Some believe the Garden of Eden was a sample of what God intended for the whole earth to become. In a special way, God had given directions to the people of Israel as to His desire for them to go into the land and claim it for their inheritance. When the children of Joseph complained about their land being too small, Joshua told them to make good use of what they had. So with the Danites, when they found their land was not able to sustain them, they went out in

search for additional territory. Man is God's capsheaf of creation, and all that is in the universe is for his possession and good use. What he does with it will be accounted for in judgment; and if he has been a good steward, he will be amply rewarded.

2. *Some preach the gospel for personal gain.* The apostle Paul met those who had inferior motives for engaging in the work of the ministry. Although he could say he was glad for the gospel's being preached, his own high motives were certainly the best. The Levite, evidently a renegade from the true worship of God at the Tabernacle, first took his place with Micah and ministered at his pagan sanctuary. When he had an opportunity to serve as priest for a tribe instead of an individual, he offered little resistance to the Danites even though they stole the image at whose sanctuary he was to serve as priest.
3. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* The Israelites should have been very jealous to protect the true worship of God. The Ark was at Shiloh, but pagan worship was allowed to exist in Dan. Such a condition reached the state where God finally drove the people out of the land promised to their forefathers. The Israelites were told: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *Micah and the Danites 18:1-31*

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.

2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, 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.

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?

4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

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.

6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.

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.

8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?

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.

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.

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.



12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

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.

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.

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.

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 priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war.

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?

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?

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.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

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.

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?

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?

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.

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.

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.

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 Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

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.

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.

31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

1. *When did the events recorded in this chapter take place?*  
18:1

The events recorded in this chapter occurred in the time before the establishment of the monarchy. Chapter eighteen follows immediately upon chapter seventeen, and the two chapters together form what is often called the first appendix to the book of Judges. This second reference to the lack of a centralized government is an indication of the book's having been written when the people were clamoring for a king or immediately after Samuel had anointed Saul, Israel's first king. Certainly the events did not necessarily happen after the death of Samson, although his judgeship has already been recorded (chapters thirteen through sixteen). This establishment of false worship in Dan probably occurred quite early in the time of the judges. Since reference is made to the cessation of services of the house of God in Shiloh, the events were probably not recorded until after the Philistines captured the Ark and took it away from the land of Israel in the days of Eli (I Samuel 4).

2. *Where was Zorah?* 18:2

Zorah was a city on the border of the land given to the people in the tribe of Dan. It lay near Eshtaol and Ir-Shemesh (see Joshua 19:41). This spot was the birthplace of Samson as we learn from Judges 13:2. In Joshua 15:33, the site is also listed with the cities belonging to the people in the tribe of Judah. It must therefore have been on the border between the two tribes with Judah lying on the southeast and Dan on the northwest. After the Babylonian captivity, the site was occupied by the children of Judah (Nehemiah 11:29). A modern village called Sur'a occupies a summit of a lofty hill on the north side of Wady es-Surar, better known as the Valley of Sorek. From this city the people of Dan selected certain

men of valor to spy out an area where they might expand their territory and settle.

3. *Where was Eshtaol?* 18:2b

Eshtaol was near Zorah; and from the two cities, the people of Dan selected five men to serve as spies on their behalf as they looked for additional land to occupy. A modern site called Eshwa' which is thirteen miles northwest of Jerusalem is probably the location of ancient Eshtaol. The town is mentioned first in the list of cities assigned to Judah (Joshua 15:33), but later is assigned to Dan (Joshua 19:41). It, too, like Zorah must have been a border town; and both Judah and Dan may have occupied surrounding territory.

4. *How did the Danites know the voice of the Levite?*  
18:3

Quite possibly the Danites merely were able to determine from the vocabulary used by the young man that he was reared as a Levite and was familiar with the many expressions which were typical of those used by the priests in leading the people of Israel in their worship. It is not likely that the Danites had known the Levite personally and were thus able to identify him from his speech. There is no reason for their desiring the services of a particular Levite. It was enough for them that he was of the priestly tribe.

5. *Why did the Danites require the services of the Levite?*  
18:5

Joshua had been instructed to go to Eleazar, the high priest, to find out the will of God. It was his custom to inquire concerning the will of the Lord before leading the people into battle or undertaking any project of significance. Even though the Levite was established in a center of false worship, the men of Dan thought his inquiry would reveal whether or not their mission would be successful.

When the Levite informed them of the likely success of their venture, they were happy to continue on their expedition.

6. *Where was Laish?* 18:7

Laish was near the headwaters of the Jordan river. It lay at the feet of Mount Hermon and represented the northernmost point within the territory occupied by the children of Israel. Isolated as it was from the mainstream of life in Canaan, the people were not careful to erect defenses or to train men of war to protect them from invasion. Their manner of life was compared to the easy life of the Sidonians, inhabitants of the famous seaport city of Sidon, directly west of Laish. Although their manner of life was quiet and secure like the life of the Sidonians, the men of Laish had no direct connections with these Phoenician coastal dwellers. So peaceable was their life that they had no need of magistrates to keep law and order among them.

7. *How did the spies describe the land to their brethren?*  
18:8-10

Contrary to the way in which the ten spies had described the entire land of Canaan to their faint-hearted brethren, the five spies sent out from Dan brought back a glowing report of the possibilities of their inhabiting the land around Laish. Certainly the territory was well watered. It lay in a fertile valley beneath the foot of Mount Hermon, and it gave great promise of providing the additional territory desired by the people of Dan. The five men sent out to see about the land urged their fellow tribesmen to arise quickly to go and possess the land.

8. *How many men of war went out from Dan?* 18:11

Six hundred men, armed for war, went out from the land of Dan along the Mediterranean seacoast to take possession of the territory around Laish on the northern border

of Canaan. When the Danites were numbered in Abel-shittim, there were sixty-four thousand and four hundred men twenty years of age and older who were able to go to war. The six hundred who went out to possess Laish were thus a very small portion of the total fighting force which Dan could have mustered. The smallness of this band indicates the ease with which the spies anticipated they could take the new home.

9. *Where was Kiriath-jearim?* 18:12

Kiriath-jearim was that promontory on the west border of Benjamin which also formed a part of the east border of Dan. The spot was along the north border of the tribe of Judah and was named when the borders of all three of these tribes were given. As travelers made their way up from the Mediterranean seacoast, they came to this high hill and caught their first glimpse of the city of Jerusalem. Pilgrims were accustomed to stopping, taking in the view, and resting before they continued on their way up to the Temple during the later years of Israel's blessed history.

10. *What is the meaning of the name Mahaneh-dan?* 18:12

The term, Mahaneh-dan, means "the companies of Dan." The name was used to describe the place where the troop from Dan encamped before going on into the hill country of Ephraim as they made their way to the northern part of Canaan. The author, writing from the standpoint of one who lived in the center of the land, said the spot was "behind Kiriath-jearim," evidently signifying its location as being west of this better-known site.

11. *What were all the sacred articles in Micah's house?*  
18:14

The five men who had made the original trip through the hill country of Ephraim knew of the existence of an ephod, teraphim, a molten image, and a graven image in the house of Micah. The ephod was the distinctive garment of the priests, and one who wore the garment for

religious purposes was considered a man who could learn the will of the Lord. Teraphim were household gods, usually small images. The Bible student will remember they were small enough to be hidden in the camel's baggage when Rachel stole such idols from Laban, her father (Genesis 31:34). The graven image was probably the pedestal of the molten image which Micah made with the money he had stolen from his mother. Such an outfitting of a center of false worship indicates an extensive practice of idolatry, and the objects were of great interest to the men of Dan.

12. *What was the proposal made to the Levite by the men of Dan?* 18:19

The men of Dan told the Levite to put his hand on his mouth. He had asked them what they were doing, and they had instructed him not to make any outcry as they made off with the sacred objects of Micah's sanctuary. To induce him to cooperate with them, they asked him to accompany them and serve as their tribal priest. The carnal nature of this man is emphasized as the author of Judges says his heart was glad. He considered it to be a position of great prestige when he was asked to be a priest to a whole tribe. His position as priest to Micah was one of service only to one man. Without any regard to the rightness or wrongness of his position with the Danites, he considered only the fact of his being a religious leader among several hundred people.

13: *What was Micah's cry?* 18:24

The people who lived around the house of Micah gathered together and accompanied him as he went after the men of Dan. The concern of these other men indicates the spread of the idolatry practiced by Micah. What started out to be a private worship of an individual had become a matter of concern to several families. When Micah overtook the men of Dan, he made a pitiable cry,

"Ye have taken away my gods. . . ." This was similar to the cry made by Laban when he overtook Jacob. He said, "wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" (Genesis 31:30). Such is the dire strait into which one may fall when he worships gods made with hands.

*14. How did the men of Dan answer Micah? 18:25*

The men of Dan were quite sure of their military prowess. They told Micah to cease his crying after them before some of them lost their self-control and turned upon him. Micah saw the strength of the men of Dan and knew he would be unable to fight against them. He took the advice of the men and turned back from following them. Thus the man who had stolen from his mother, had taken the money which was in question and secured a graven and molten image to be the central part of a false worship presided over by a renegade Levite, and finally had watched as his objects of worship were stolen turned back empty-handed and sick of heart.

*15. Why did no one attempt to save Laish? 18:28*

The men of Laish had not entered into any alliance with a stronger power to protect themselves. Even when they were threatened by the invading Danites, they did not make any overtures to kings or governors of nearby cities and territories. Since they had felt removed from the mainstream of activity in Canaan and the surrounding areas, they made no provisions on their own for protection against outsiders. Truly "they had no business with any man." Thus the men of Dan were able to overpower them and take possession of the town and the land adjacent to it.

*16. Where was Beth-rehob? 18:28b*

Beth-rehob was in the northern part of the territory occupied by the Israelites. Nearby was the valley in which Laish, or Dan, was situated. The valley itself formed the upper part of the lowland around Lake Huleh, through



which the central source of the Jordan River flowed. The name of the town means "house of the street," and the spies sent out by Moses went as far north as this site when they spied out the land (Numbers 13:21). The entire area around Beth-rehob was isolated from the other communities in the northern part of Canaan, and the men of Dan saw in it a place admirably suited to their intentions of expansion.

17. *Why did the men rename the city?* 18:29

The name *Laish* had no meaning to the men of the tribe of Dan. When they took the city, they renamed it, giving it the name of the founder of their tribe. Dan was the son of Jacob by Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid. He was the fifth son born to Jacob and was the first son born to any mother except Leah. God saw that Jacob did not love Leah as much as he loved Rachel; and He dealt kindly with her, allowing her to bear four sons to Jacob before any son was born to another mother. Rachel saw her womb was closed and gave Bilhah, her handmaid, to bear a son to Jacob in her name. She named him Dan, saying God had judged between her and Leah and heard her petition. The word Dan means "judge." The troop of men who went out from their inheritance on the seacoast in the heart of Canaan thought it fitting to give this name to their new home. Since this was on the extreme northern border of Canaan, it became common in later years to signify the extent of Israel by saying it reached from Dan, the northernmost point, to Beersheba, the last important town on the southern border.

18. *Who was Jonathan?* 18:30

Some think the young Levite, who first served as Micah's priest, was named Jonathan. His genealogy is given, and he is identified as being the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh. How he could be a Levite and still be a son of Manasseh is not clear; and many commentators

point to another manuscript reading which is as follows: "Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses." We do know that Moses had a son named Gershom (Exodus 2:22). Moses was the son of Amram, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi (Exodus 6:16-27). Which reading is better? Many commentators believe the original reading was the latter and that a scribe, unable to believe a son of Moses would enter into such a false worship, deliberately changed the reading. On the other hand, since the worship was false through and through, it seems better to suppose the Danites secured the services of a Manassite. The men of Manasseh were their neighbors to the south and east, and the Danites would have no twinge of conscience in making such a man to serve as priest. This was the way Jeroboam established his false worship in Israel's later history. Jeremiah wrote, "he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (I Kings 12:31). These Danites probably did a similar thing in making a man of Manasseh a priest.

19. *What was the "captivity of the land"?* 18:30

Many Bible students jump to the conclusion that this is a reference to the Babylonian captivity. If so, this verse could not have been written by Samuel. Samuel died before David was made king in 1010 B.C. The Babylonian captivity did not begin until around the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Reference here is evidently to the dreadful Philistine captivity of the land which reached its height when the Ark was captured and taken from Shiloh (I Samuel 4). The Philistines oppressed the Israelites at this time until the people of Israel hid themselves in caves and tombs. They took away all their weapons of war and made them go to Philistine blacksmiths to sharpen their plowshares, coulters, axes, and mattocks (I Samuel 13:20).

20. *How long was the house of God in Shiloh?* 18:31

Joshua established the Tabernacle in Shiloh soon after he led the people of Israel into the Promised Land (Joshua 18:1). The center of Israel's worship was at this spot all through the times of the judges, a period of not less than three hundred years. The God-fearing parents of Samuel, Elkanah and Hannah, made their way to this spot yearly in order to worship (I Samuel 1:3). Eli was high priest there at that time. Reference is made to a yearly feast at Shiloh in the time of the civil war which resulted in the near-extermination of the tribe of Benjamin; for the last two hundred surviving men of Benjamin were allowed to catch wives for themselves from among the daughters of Shiloh who went out yearly for the feast held there (Judges 21:19, 20). Only when the wicked sons of Eli took the Ark into the battle against the Philistines was the worship there interrupted. At that time the Ark was lost, Hophni and Phinehas were killed, and Eli died when told the shocking news of the loss of the Ark (I Samuel 4:18). Reference is made to the same era by the two phrases: "until the day of the captivity of the land" (verse 30) and "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh" (verse 31). The captivity of the land began when the house of God was torn away from Shiloh.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 18

1. Was there a king in the land when the Danites sought new land?
2. How many men of Dan went to look for a new home?
3. What was the name of the town where the Danites chose to settle?
4. To what famous people were these citizens compared?
5. How many soldiers went up out of Dan to attack the city?

## JUDGES

6. Where did they first pitch their camp as they started out?
7. To what site in Judah was it near?
8. What objects of worship did they take from the house of Micah?
9. What was the name of the man established in the priesthood by Dan?
10. What new name did the men of Dan give to the site of their new home?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 19

- Vv. 1-9 *The Levite in Bethlehem.* The Levite from Ephraim had taken a concubine from Bethlehem-judah. When she was unfaithful to him, she returned to her father's house and stayed there for four months. The Levite went to Bethlehem-judah to ask her to return to him. The kind hospitality of the woman's father caused the Levite to linger longer than he had originally intended to stay.
- Vv. 10-15 *The Levite lodged in Gibeah.* The continued pleading of the woman's father prevented the Levite from leaving Bethlehem-judah until the day was so far spent that he could not reach his home before nightfall. When he came to Gibeah, he stopped and intended to spend the night in the street.
- Vv. 16-26 *The death of the concubine.* An old man coming from the field at the close of day saw the Levite in the streets and took him, his servant, and his concubine to his house. The wicked men of the city insisted that they be allowed to commit acts of sexual perversion

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

with the Levite. Instead, the Levite gave his concubine to them, and they mistreated her all the night long until she was left dying at the door of the host's house.

- Vv. 27-30 *Israel alerted of the sin in Gibeah.* The Levite took the corpse of his concubine and dissected it into twelve pieces. He sent this evidence of the wicked deed done in Gibeah to all the tribes of Israel.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Hospitality is ageless.* When Abraham was given a revelation of God's intentions of destroying Sodom, three men came to him as he sat in his tent (Genesis 18:1). Abraham was concerned for the comfort of these strange visitors, and he entertained them royally. The father-in-law of the Levite took the Levite into his house and kept him there for more than four days. He was still reluctant to see his guest leave. The old man coming from the field in Benjamin took the strangers from Ephraim into his house. Christians are enjoined not to forget to show love unto strangers "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2). Gaius, the recipient of the third epistle of John, was commended because brethren and strangers were welcome in his house (III John 5-8).
2. *The imagination of man's heart is evil continually.* In the days before the flood it was said that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Sodom and Gomorrah became so wicked that God could no longer spare these twin cities. Not even ten righteous people were found there, for God said He would spare them for the sake of ten

righteous people (Genesis 18:32b). Once again in the days of the judges the darkness of men's hearts is revealed in the tragic death of the Levite's concubine.

3. *Love rejoiceth not in evil.* There were some good people left in Israel. When they saw the evidence of the crime in Gibeah, they 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 until this day. Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds" (19:30). The Apostle Paul said that love never rejoiceth in unrighteousness but rejoiceth with the truth (I Corinthians 13:6).

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### The Crime at Gibeah and Its Punishment 19:1—21:25

#### *The Levite and His Concubine 19:1-30*

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 Beth-lehem-judah.

2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was there four whole months.

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.

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.

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.

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.

7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

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.

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 tomorrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

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.

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 us turn into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

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.

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.

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.

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.

16 And, behold, there came an old 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.

17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a way-faring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.

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.

20 And the old man said, Peace be with thee; howsoever let all thy wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.

21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

*1. When did the evils recorded in this chapter take place?*  
19:1

The death of the Levite's concubine occurred sometime during the period of the judges. It was described as the era when "there was no king in Israel." Once again

the Bible student needs to be reminded that this event probably did not occur after the death of Samson. Chapters seventeen and eighteen tell the story of the establishment of the idolatrous worship set up by the men from Dan. Chapters nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one tell the story of the death of the Levite's concubine and the civil war which followed. Both appendices following the close of the sixteenth chapter of Judges are designed to give insight into the life of the period.

2. *What were the evils of concubinage?* 19:2

Concubines did not have the ties of family devotion and were easily led into sin. The concubine of the Levite played the harlot against him and eventually returned to her father's house in Bethlehem. She remained separated from her husband for four months. In the days of Abraham, Hagar was used by Sarah to raise up a son by natural means instead of waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled through herself. As a result, jealousy came into Abraham's family; and eventually Hagar and Ishmael were forced to flee (Genesis 21:21). God had never intended for a man to have more than one wife. The two were to become one flesh and live together in all the blessings of matrimony.

3. *Why did the woman take her husband to her father's house?* 19:3

The Levite spoke kindly to his concubine who had sinned against him and fled from him. He wanted to persuade her to return with him to the land of Ephraim. As a result of his kind approach to her she gladly brought him to her father's house. Her father was pleased to meet the Levite and entertained him royally.

4. *What indications are given of the easy habits of the time?* 19:5

They seemed to be in no hurry to end a visit. No pressing duties called them away. The three days which

were spent in the house of the concubine's father were devoted largely to eating and drinking. Their hearts were merry, and none of them seemed to be particularly distressed over the unfaithfulness of the concubine. There are no national calamities to upset the domestic scene, and the passage presents the picture of a time of great tranquility.

5. *Why did the woman's father insist on his staying?*  
19:7, 8

The concubine's father seems to have been especially happy to have his daughter's husband in his house. One gets the impression from reading the narrative that this was the first time the man had met the fellow who took his daughter to be a concubine. Normally a man would arrange for some kind of dowry before he could take another man's daughter to be his wife or concubine. Even if the father of the concubine had already met the Levite, he was glad for him to make this journey from the north country to his home in Bethlehem. After he arrived, he wanted him to stay as long as possible.

6. *What was the distance traveled?* 19:10

From Shiloh to Bethlehem would be not more than a day's journey. It would have been rather easy for the Levite to make the trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in less than half of a day. He could have traveled then on his donkey from Jerusalem to the house of the Lord during the rest of the day. Since he did not get an early start, however, he was able to travel only as far as Gibeah before the sun went down.

7. *Why did the Levite refuse to stay in Jerusalem?* 19:12

The Israelites had failed to drive the Jebusites from the citadel which was later called Jerusalem. Joshua had defeated the southern coalition which was led by Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem. The territory including the

site had been assigned to the tribe of Benjamin, but the Benjamites had failed to drive out the Jebusites. As a result, we read that the Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem until the day of the writing of the book of Judges (Judges 1:21). It was not until David took the city after his seven-year reign at Hebron and made it his capital that Jerusalem came finally into the possession of the Israelites. Since the inhabitants of the site of Jerusalem were not Israelites, the Levite was afraid to stay among them. He felt that these Canaanite peoples would be antagonistic towards him, but he little dreamed of the trouble he would find in a city belonging to one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

8. *Where was Gibeah?* 19:13

Gibeah was in the territory of Benjamin, just north of Jerusalem. It was the home of Saul, who became Israel's first king. The site of the settlement was on the top of a hill north of Jerusalem. From this vantage point the inhabitants could see all the way to the Jordan valley on the east. They could see the hill country of Ephraim to the north. To the south lay the city of Jerusalem. On the west, the hill country of Judah rose to the horizon.

9. *Where was Ramah?* 19:13

Ramah was another height on still farther north from Gibeah. The Levite felt that he would be able to make it to Gibeah or Ramah before the sun went down, and for that reason he did not accept his servant's proposal that they spend the night in Jebus. Ramah was the home of Samuel (I Samuel 1:1). The word itself means "height," and both Gibeah and Ramah were no doubt in sight as the Levite spoke about them.

10. *Why did the man sit down in the street?* 19:15

The Levite did not find any inn where he could find public lodging. No acquaintance lived in the city. When he sat down in the street, no man had invited him to his

house. He was preparing to spend the night in the street. Travelers are often forced to this extreme; and people of ancient times would lie on the ground, spread their large coats over them, and wait for the coming day. The Levite felt safer in the streets of a town than in the open highway where robbers and wild animals would threaten his safety.

11. *Where had the old man been working?* 19:16

It was customary for people to live in the villages and go to their fields to work during the day. When the sun set, they returned to the villages in order to find protection. As they lived together, they were able to protect one another. In addition, they enjoyed the fellowship as the men sat in the gates of the city and discussed the events of the day. Fellowship sometimes degraded into corruption as it had in Gibeah. These people, too, felt safer inside a city's walls than in the open field.

12. *Where was the house of the Lord?* 19:18

The Tabernacle was in Shiloh. Joshua had made arrangements for its being set up there before he died (Joshua 19:51). Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun distributed the land to the children of Israel as they met in Shiloh at the door of the tent of meeting. The Ark and the Tabernacle remained in Shiloh until the days of Eli when the Ark was captured by the Philistines.

13. *Why did the man of Gibeah take the Levite to his house?* 19:20

The man who came out of the fields to lodge in his house in Gibeah was also of Mount Ephraim. The rest of the people were members of the tribe of Benjamin. For this reason the Levite found a ready reception in the house of the old man, for the Levite, too, was from Ephraim. Furthermore, the hospitable host must have realized the wickedness of the community and feared for the safety of the Levite as he proposed to stay in the street.

14. *Who were the sons of Belial?* 19:22

This constantly recurring phrase is transliterated in the King James Version. In the American Standard Version it is translated. These men are called "certain base fellows." They were wicked, and the imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only wicked continually. Eli's two sons, who committed lewd acts with women who served at the Tabernacle, were also called by this name (I Samuel 2:12). In addition, it is said "they knew not the Lord." Certainly any man who acts as these men did are men who do not know, at least do not serve, the Lord.

15. *Why did the host try to stop the men?* 19:23, 24

The lord of the house felt that it was a special crime for these men of Gibeah to take a stranger who had found hospitality in his house and treat him shamefully. He did not rebuke them very sharply. At least he did not say that this was a sin against the law which God had given to the people of Israel by Moses. He simply called it folly and based his objection on the fact that the man had been invited to be a guest in his house.

16. *Who brought forth the concubine?* 19:25

The host had a daughter, a maiden; and he offered her to the base men who had come to get the Levite. He also told them that the Levite had a concubine and he offered to bring these two women out to them in order that they might humble them and do with them what seemed good to them. The men did not hearken to the host, however; and it is apparent that the Levite himself took his concubine and brought her forth unto them. He must have overheard his host trying to save him by offering his own daughter and the concubine. He was willing to make this sacrifice and give his concubine to the men who abused her all night.

*17. Why did the Levite dissect his concubine? 19:29*

The Levite cut his concubine into twelve pieces and sent a piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. He wanted them to have this vivid evidence of the terrible crime which had been committed in Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul, when he was asked to be king of Israel, sent a message with similar vivid evidence as he cut up his oxen and sent them around among the tribes of Israel. This was Saul's way of calling the people of Israel to war (I Samuel 11:7). The Levite must have hoped for the people of Israel to come to Gibeah to punish the wicked men who had killed his concubine.

*18. What message was sent with the pieces? 19:30*

There is no record of any written message going with the pieces of the concubine which were distributed among the tribes of Israel. It must have been clear to the recipients of this bloody testimony, however, that they were expected to do something about the crime. As a result, the reaction was quick. Those who considered the deed said that nothing like it had ever happened throughout all the time Israel had spent in Canaan. Such a wicked deed could not be allowed to go without punishment.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 19

1. Where was the home of the Levite?
2. Where was the home of the concubine of the Levite?
3. How long had the Levite stayed in the home of his father-in-law before he started to go home?
4. On what day did he finally depart?
5. Where did the servant of the Levite propose staying all night?
6. Where did the Levite want to go before stopping for the night?
7. Where did they finally stay all night?

## JUDGES

8. In what tribe was this city?
9. Where did the Levite tell his host he was going?
10. Into how many pieces was the concubine dissected?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 20

- Vv. 1-11 *All Israel aroused.* The people were knit together as one man to punish the wicked men of Gibeah. A total of 400,000 men were in the armed force, and 40,000 were assigned to the task of supplying the army with victuals. All these Israelites demanded that the people of Benjamin either punish the men of Gibeah themselves or deliver them into their hands for judgment.
- Vv. 12-30 *Benjamin victorious in the first two battles.* The Israelites asked God who among them should go up first against Benjamin, and Judah was selected. The men of Benjamin destroyed 22,000 men of Israel. In the second battle 18,000 men of Israel were slain.
- Vv. 31-48 *Benjamin nearly annihilated.* All but 600 men of Benjamin fell in the final battle. The men of Israel set an ambush around Gibeah so that when the men of Benjamin came out to fight against Israel, the men of Israel fled before them as they had done in the first two battles. Then the men lying in wait went into the city of Gibeah and set it on fire. The site of the city burning so distracted the men of Benjamin that they began to flee before the armies of Israel. As a result, 25,000 men of Benjamin were killed. Only 600 men who fled to Rimmon were left of the fierce tribe.



## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Sin is a reproach to a nation* (Proverbs 14:34). The men of Israel were of one mind and soul in the matter of punishing the criminals at Gibeah. There was no voice crying for allowing the men to go free. The popular conscience was aroused. The Israelites knew that the wickedness in their midst would destroy them all if allowed to continue.
2. *The Lord orders the battle*. Each time before Israel went up against the men of Benjamin, they inquired of the Lord. In the first battle God told Judah to lead. Even when they were beaten, the Israelites asked if they should go to battle again. When God told them to go against Benjamin even though they had been defeated, they again went to battle. Those nations who go to war should ask the Lord about their affairs before they take the field.
3. *Right will triumph in the end*. Israel lost 40,000 men and was humiliated in two stunning defeats. Led as they were by the Lord and unwavering as they were in their purpose, they were finally victorious. Law and order may be challenged in a nation, but society will perish unless those who are on the side of right remain steadfast in their purposes.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

*The War Against the Benjamites 20:1-14*

Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with the land of Gilead unto the Lord in Mizpeh.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

7 Behold, ye are all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.

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.

9 But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it;

10 And we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel and a 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.

11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.

12 And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What wickedness is this that is done among you?

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:

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.

1. *Where was Mizpeh?* 20:1

Mizpeh is known as *Neby Samuel*, not far from Ramah, and is visible from Jerusalem. It is a poor village seated on an elevated ridge. Gibeah would be plainly visible from Mizpeh, as it was the first high hill east of Mizpeh. As the men of Gibeah looked directly westward, they would see Mizpeh as the highest hill directly west of their situation. Thus the armies of Israel were in plain site of the men of Benjamin as they gathered to defend the men of Gibeah.

2. *Did all of Israel's army come out to battle?* 20:2

When the men of war were counted in Numbers, chapter one, there were 603,550 men twenty years of age and older. As they paused before crossing Jordan into Canaan, they were counted again. At that time Israel's men of war totaled 601,730 (Numbers 26). On many occasions it was necessary for some of the men eligible for battle to stay behind to care for the women, children, flocks and fields. This must have been the case in this instance, since 400,000 would hardly be all of the men old enough to go to war.

3. *Did the Levite give a true account of the crime at Gibeah? 20:4, 5*

As the men of Israel came together to avenge the crime committed in Gibeah, they asked how the wickedness occurred. The Levite, the husband of the woman who was slain, told them how, when he came to Gibeah to find lodging, the men of Gibeah rose against him besetting the house round about by night. He also said that they intended to slay him. In the account of the events recorded in chapter 19, no mention is made of their intention of killing him; but their evil treatment of him might have resulted in this tragic end for the Levite. They did kill his concubine. All the other details fit, and the evidence was properly presented to the men of Israel for their judgment.

4. *Why did Israel decide to go against the men of Benjamin by lot? 20:9*

The men of Israel outnumbered the men of Benjamin many times. In the mustering of the troops there are 400,000 men of war listed in Israel. Only 26,000 armed men were found in Benjamin. The men of Israel must have felt it was unnecessary for all of the soldiers to go into this battle. Furthermore, they wanted the leading of the Lord and asked for Him to indicate which one of the tribes should take the lead in the battle.

5. *Why were so many needed to prepare victuals? 20:10*

Forty thousand men were assigned to the task of providing the necessary provisions for the rest of the fighting men. Such an arrangement is not at all uncommon. When David went to battle against the Amalekites, he took only two-thirds of his men into the actual battle. The rest of them were weary and were left behind to guard the baggage (I Samuel 30:10). On one occasion

Moses called for only 1,000 men from each of the tribes of Israel to go to war (Numbers 31:4). In hardly any situation would people be able to sustain an army in the field unless there were those who were assigned to the task of seeing that they had the necessary supplies. It would probably take a tenth of the able-bodied men to keep the rest of the men in fighting shape.

6. *Why would the men of Benjamin not surrender the men of Gibeah?* 20:13

They let their love of their tribesmen overpower their sense of right and justice. Repeated mention is made of the men of Benjamin coming "out of the cities" (vv. 14, 15). Some Bible students have gathered from this that the men of Benjamin were rulers who had settled in towns and subdued the Canaanites who settled as dependents in the villages. Still others believe that the Benjaminites formed military brotherhoods living unmarried in the towns. Those who take this position believe this accounts for the abominable crime to which the inhabitants were addicted. It is further held that the Benjaminites then defended these sinful unmarried brotherhoods of military men. Such inferences are extremely uncertain, but at any rate the men of Benjamin seemed fiercely determined to protect the criminals in Gibeah.

7. *From what cities did the men of Gibeah gather?* 20:14

When territory was assigned to the men of Benjamin, their land included such villages and cities as Luz, Ataroth-Addar, Beth-Horon the Upper and Beth-Horon the Lower, Kiriath-jearim, and Jebus or Jerusalem. Still others were Jericho, Beth-Hoglah, Emak-Keziz, Beth-Arbah, Zemarim, Geba, Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, Chepirah, Mozah, Rekem, Irpeel, Gibeath and Gibeah. In fact, twenty-six different cities are listed in Joshua, chapter 18.

*Seven Hundred Left-handed Men Chosen 20:15, 16*

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.

16 Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.

8. *Did all the men of Benjamin go to battle? 20:15*

When the men of Israel were counted before they crossed Jordan into Canaan, there were 45,600 men twenty years of age and over in Benjamin. Earlier there were 35,400 men able to go to war (Numbers, chapter one). Since these men had been subject to attacks from the nations to the east, it is quite possible that their ranks were already reduced to near 27,000 by the time the civil war occurred. It would appear that nearly all their men of military age went out to fight this battle.

*Israel Defeated in Two Battles 20:17-23*

17 And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war.

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.

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

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.

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.

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.

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.)

9. *Why was Judah selected to lead in the battle?* 20:18

Judah had led in the exodus. Her standard went first whenever the armies of Israel marched. It was the tribe of Judah who led in the conquest and settlement of Canaan (Judges, chapters one and two). It would have been very unusual for another tribe to have taken the lead in this instance, since Judah had repeatedly been chosen for such responsibilities. The people of Israel asked God to indicate which tribe was to go first, and God again chose Judah.

10. *Why was Israel defeated when God approved?* 20:21-25

God was testing the devotion of the other tribes to their sense of duty. Furthermore, some significance is to be attached to the absence of any expression of genuine sorrow as they began such an unpleasant but necessary task as punishing the criminals at Gibeah. Before the first battle, they "asked counsel of God" (verse 18). Before the final battle "all the children of Israel, and all the people" (verse 26) went up and came to the house of God. On this occasion they wept, offering burnt-offerings and peace offerings. There must have been sin in the minds of the people of Israel therefore as they went into the first

two battles. They had gone in their own self confidence; but when they finally trusted the Lord completely, He gave them victory.

*The Defeat of the Benjamites 20:24-48*

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

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.

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.

27 And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days,

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 tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand.

29 And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.

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.

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.



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.

33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah.

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.

35 And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and a hundred men: all these drew the sword.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.

42 Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel unto the way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.

43 Thus they inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them, and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the sunrising.

44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these were men of valor.

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.

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 valor.

47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

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.

*11. Where was the house of God? 20:26*

The house of God was established in Shiloh. Joshua made arrangements for its being there. Repeated reference is made to Israel assembling at Shiloh to worship. It was to Shiloh that Elkanah went up to worship (I Samuel 1:3). While worshiping there, Hannah, Samuel's mother, prayed;

and Eli heard her petition (I Samuel 1:9-18). The Tabernacle remained at Shiloh until the time of the Philistines' capturing the Ark as recorded in I Samuel, chapter four. Shiloh lay several miles north of Gibeah and Mizpeh, and the assembling of the people at Shiloh indicates some must have left the battlefield at Gibeah.

12. *At what period of time did this civil war occur?*  
20:28

Phinehas, son of Eleazar, was still alive. Eleazar, the son of Aaron, had succeeded Aaron as high priest when Aaron died in the fortieth year of the exodus (Numbers 20:24). Eleazar died soon after the death of Joshua as is recorded in Joshua, chapter twenty-four (verse 33). Since the events described in this second appendix to the book of Judges occurred within the lifetime of Phinehas, they must have transpired long before the era of Samson recorded in Judges, chapters 13-16. One might readily expect them to have occurred during the time of Othniel or Ehud, the first two judges of Israel.

13. *Along what road did Israel flee?* 20:31

The battle was pitched before Gibeah and the main body of the soldiers of Israel came from Mizpeh to the west. The forces of Israel appear to have been divided and some fled to the right and others to the left along the road which led from Gibeah to Shiloh. The main road of travel in Israel from ancient times until the present runs northwest from Jerusalem past Gibeah, Ramah, Bethel to Shechem between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. All along this road Israel's soldiers fell in the battle.

14. *Where was Baal-Tamar?* 20:33

The name in the Hebrew language signifies a place where there was a palm tree. Such a place existed in the days of Eusebius. It was a small place in the neighborhood of Gibeah still carrying the name of Bethamar. Of course, the word *Baal* denotes the pagan god by that name. Some

believe that the palm tree under which Deborah sat (Judges 4:5) came to be a place of false worship where people would honor Baal, hence the name was given Baal-Tamar. A site named Erhah some three miles northeast of Jerusalem is selected as a probable site.

15. *Who were the 10,000 chosen men of Israel?* 20:34

The ten thousand chosen men must have been the men lying in wait around Gibeah. As the battle transpired, the main body of Israel fled along the road; and then these men placed in ambush came out of hiding. By such a stratagem the children of Israel caught the men of Benjamin between two strong forces. The tide of battle turned, and Israel won in the final skirmish.

16. *Does verse 35 describe a separate battle?* 20:35

The result of the battle is summarized immediately. The author gives the result at once before entering more minutely into the actual account of the battle itself. The details are given in verses 36-46 in a series of explanations. Again in verse 46 the results are mentioned. Radical critics try to delete verse 35 and call it an interpolation. Some believe that it was written by a different author and inserted at this point; but such arguments overlook the normal Hebrew mode of writing history, which resulted in a summary being given as soon as possible with details following afterwards.

17. *Which way did the men of Benjamin flee?* 20:42

The men of Benjamin fled eastward "toward the sun-rising." This territory is described as wilderness (verse 42). The territory is mountainous and barren at the present time. It would be very difficult for an army to pitch a battle, and this explains why 18,000 men fell at one point, 5,000 at another, and 2,000 at still a later point. In this rugged terrain Joshua hid two ambushes of soldiers when Israel fought and defeated the men of Bethel and Ai.

18. *How are the numbers in verses 15 and 46 to be reconciled? 20:15, 46*

In verse 15 it is said that there were 26,000 men of Benjamin who "drew sword." These were in addition to the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered at 700 chosen men. In addition there were 700 chosen men left-handed within this total who could sling a stone at an hair's breadth and never miss (verse 16). When the final count of casualties was made, a total of 25,000 men had fallen in Benjamin. Still only 600 remained (verse 47). Some Bible students seeing these numbers are puzzled to account for the additional men, since there were at least 26,700 to begin with and only 600 left when 25,000 casualties were mentioned. It is apparent, however, that some men from Benjamin must have fallen in the first two battles. It is hardly likely that 40,000 men Israel would be killed without some casualties in Benjamin. These other men must have already fallen in battle.

19. *Where was Rimmon? 20:47*

The rock of Rimmon to which the Benjaminites fled was in the wilderness, the desert which rises from Jericho on the way to the mountains of Bethel (Joshua 16:1). An Arab village of Rammun still stands about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem. It is on a summit of conical limestone mountain and is visible in all directions. Such a high place would make it possible for a band of six hundred men to see the approach of an army from any direction. It was here that the few remaining soldiers of Benjamin fled for their last stand.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 20

1. Where did Israel assemble before going up to Gibeah?
2. How many soldiers were numbered in Israel?
3. How many armed men were in Benjamin?
4. How many chosen men were in Gibeah?

## JUDGES

5. Who did God say should go up first out of Israel to fight Benjamin?
6. How many men were slain in the first battle?
7. How many were slain in the second battle?
8. Who was high priest in Israel in those days?
9. How many men of Benjamin were killed in the final battle?
10. How many escaped to rock Rimmon?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 21

### Vv. 1-12 *Wives for Benjamin taken from Jabesh-gilead.*

The Israelites had vowed that they would not give their daughters to the men of Benjamin to be their wives. As a result, the remaining six hundred men were likely to be the last of the entire tribe. The tribe was in danger of being extinguished. When the Israelites found a city, Jabesh-gilead, whose inhabitants had not helped to punish the crime, they sent 12,000 men to destroy the city and slay all but 400 young women who were spared and given as wives for the men of Benjamin.

### Vv. 13-25 *Wives taken for Benjamin in Shiloh.*

The Levitical families living in Shiloh were not expected to send warriors into the battle. They had not been numbered with the rest of the Israelites in Numbers 1 and 26. It was therefore decided to permit the men of Benjamin to take wives from the daughters of Shiloh as they came to dance their yearly dances in connection with the Tabernacle services. They urged the fathers of the Levitical families to be lenient with the men of Benjamin in order to establish again this tribe in their midst.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.* After the children of Israel had slain all but six hundred of the men of Benjamin, their hearts were filled with sorrow. Even when society exacts punishment on evil doers, there is no pleasure in the sentencing. Christians most of all weep for the fate of the wicked.
2. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Forty thousand men of Israel had died in battle, and only six hundred of the men of Benjamin were left in rock Rimmon. If Israel had been of a hard heart, they would have completely destroyed the men of Benjamin. Instead they went and called "peaceably" to them. Immediately they made preparations for establishing the tribe again in the midst of the Israelites.
3. *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).* Although civil war had drenched the land in blood, people were still going up yearly to the house of the Lord for the feasts. The apostle Paul urges Christians not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, and worship is especially needful in times of national distress. God's people should be regular in their worship whether they are in a period of war or peace.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

*Mourning for Benjamin 21:1-7*

Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

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;

3 And said, O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel?

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.

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.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

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?

*1. Why had Israel made the oath? 21:1*

The other men of Israel did not want to associate with the wicked men in Benjamin. This verse gives additional information about the oath which the children of Israel took as they gathered in Mizpeh. This conference is described in chapter twenty, verses one and nine, of the book of Judges. While they were there asking the Levite how the crime was committed, they made a decision to go up to fight against Gibeah. At the same time they took this oath which is recorded in chapter twenty-one, verse one. Specifically, they had decided not to give any of their daughters to any of the men of Gibeah as their wives. They did not want to see their children brought into a society which was as corrupt as the community in this city of Benjamin.



2. *Why did the people assemble at Bethel?* 21:2 (ASV)

Bethel was a holy place not too far from the scene of the battle. Bethel was just east of the road which ran from Gibeah to Shechem. It was much closer than Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was. At Bethel, Jacob had received the revelation from the Lord telling him that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan. Here he took the stone which he had used for his pillow and made it to be a pillar on which he poured oil. Here he took a vow saying that he would serve God (Genesis 28:12-20). Jacob and his family returned to Bethel when they came from Haran, Laban's home, to settle again in Canaan. Again Jacob worshiped at Bethel (Genesis 35:9-15). As the most readily accessible holy place, Bethel was chosen as a place for the assembly of the children of Israel. Bethel is "house of God" in the King James Version.

3. *Why had they made such a rash oath?* 21:5

They had vowed that they would kill anyone who did not go up to Mizpeh. The tide turned and another danger arose. A crowd roused to anger is hard to control. The tribes were right in deciding to punish the criminals at Gibeah, but they went too far when they made such strong vows. On numerous occasions different tribes had not rallied to support the judge who was trying to deliver the people of Israel from their oppressors. Although these judges chided those who were faint hearted, they did not always take such drastic actions against those who did not cooperate with them. Similar action was necessary in the days of Gideon and Jephthah, but even in these instances the emotions of the people were not out of control to a large extent. Such was surely the case with the children of Israel in this instance.

4. *Why was there a question about wives?* 21:7

They did not intend to wipe out the tribe. Having once tasted of vengeance, the children of Israel did not

cease in their slaughter until Benjamin was almost exterminated. The slaughter extended not only to the fighting men, but to women and children. The six hundred who fled to the rock fort of Rimmon appear to be the only survivors of the tribe. Justice overshot its mark and while eradicating one evil created another. Even those who had most fiercely used their swords looked at the result with horror and amazement for almost an entire tribe was lacking in Israel. If wives were not found for the six hundred men who were left, the tribe would eventually be lost completely.

*Wives for the Benjamites 21:8-25*

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 Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 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.

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.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

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?

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.

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.

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 Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

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.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favorable 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.

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.

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.

25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

5. *Where was Jabesh-gilead?* 21:9

Jabesh-gilead was east of the Jordan and southeast of the Sea of Galilee. The town was attacked by Nahash, king of Ammon, but was rescued by Saul (I Samuel 11:1 ff.). On account of this kindness shown to them by Saul, the inhabitants later rescued the bodies of Saul and his sons when the Philistines gibbeted them on the wall of Beth-shan (I Samuel 31:8 ff.). Josephus called Jabesh a metropolis of Gilead (*Antiquities* VI, v, 1). Although the people of Israel had looked with horror and amazement, they still were not willing to give any of their daughters to be the wives of the men of Benjamin. Since the people of Jabesh-gilead had not taken the vow entered into by the rest of the men of Israel, the leaders saw the women of this town east of the Jordan as possible wives for the men of Benjamin.

6. *Why did they take the captive women to Shiloh?*  
21:12

Shiloh is described as being in the land of Canaan because Jabesh was in Gilead. Shiloh was the usual meeting place of the congregation for it was the place where the Tabernacle was established. The representatives of the thousands of Israel had gone there after their deliberations concerning the men of Jabesh. From this place they were able to send a delegation to the surviving men of Benjamin. The women taken from Jabesh-gilead were to be kept at Shiloh until all the details of the arrangements were finalized.

7. *Why were the men of Benjamin still at rock Rimmon?*

21:13

The children of Israel had spoken peaceably to the six hundred men of Benjamin who had fled to the rock of Rimmon, but the entire matter had not been settled satisfactorily. Consequently, these men who survived the dreadful slaughter were still on their guard. They were not yet at peace completely, and they were evidently afraid to return to Gibeah or to any other of the cities of Benjamin. Only when their differences with the children of Israel had been completely settled were they in a position to resume anything resembling a normal life.

8. *Why did the author say the Lord had made a breach?*

21:15

Quite often the writers of Scripture refer to God as the ultimate cause of all things. For example, Moses said God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 10:20), whereas earlier it had been said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:32). Moses also said Pharaoh's heart was hardened when the magicians imitated Moses' miracles (Exodus 7:22) without saying whether Pharaoh hardened his own heart or God hardened it. In the days of the judges, Israel had made a breach in Israel—they had nearly destroyed one entire tribe—but since they had asked God whether to go to war or not, the statement is made that God made the breach. God allowed it. The people themselves actually made it.

9. *What yearly feast was this?* 21:19

It might have been either Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles. The festivities best fit the first one. All three feasts—Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles—were held yearly. From the importance of it, it was likely one which lasted seven days—either the Passover or the feast of Tabernacles. Since a dance was held in connection with the feast, the festivities appear to be an imitation of the

dances of the Israelitish women who celebrated the safe crossing of the Red Sea. At that time Miriam led the women of Israel singing of the triumph of the Lord over Pharaoh (Exodus 15:20).

10. *Where was Lebonah?* 21:19

Lebonah was three miles west of Shiloh. There is a community now known as El Lubban. The village stands on the slope of a hill bordering a valley called Wady Lubban. The houses are grey and have an ancient appearance. In the cliffs above the community are caves and sepulchers which testify of its having been of importance through the centuries. The location of Shiloh is thus fixed as being north of Bethel and somewhat south but mostly east of Lebonah.

11. *Why did Israel devise such a plan?* 21:20, 21

The children of Benjamin were encouraged to go and hide in the vineyards of the area around Shiloh. They were instructed to wait until the daughters of Shiloh came out to dance in the celebration of the feast. At that point the men were to come out of hiding and catch wives from among the daughters of Shiloh. They would then be in a position to return to their homes and begin a semblance of normal life. Since the daughters of Shiloh were probably the children of the Levites, the vow which the children of Israel had taken at Mizpeh did not apply. In this way, the Israelites were enabled to follow the letter of the oath while preventing the complete annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin.

12. *Why did they expect the fathers and brothers to complain?* 21:22

Although the Levites had not entered into the warfare, they might naturally be reluctant to have their daughters marry men who had been guilty of protecting the criminals at Gibeah. Since all the other fathers and brothers of Israel had decided not to give any of their daughters

and sisters as wives to these men, the Levites would feel a similar repugnance for such marriages. The leaders of Israel had promised the men of Benjamin they would encourage the Levites to be lenient in the matter since they had not actually taken the oath themselves.

*13. What light does verse 25 throw on the question of authorship? 21:25*

This final verse of the book of Judges, along with such other verses making reference to the kind of government in Israel at the time, points to the book's having been written when the monarchy was in the thinking of the people. Such statements as this one (see 19:1 and 18:1) bring the era of the judges into sharp contrast with the time of the monarchy. No era in the history of Israel was so filled with this kind of discussion as that of the closing days of Samuel's judgeship. At that time the people of Israel had begun to clamor for a king in order that they might be like all the other nations. Samuel had tried to tell them what kind of person a king would be. He even wrote the manner of a kingdom in a book (I Samuel 10:25). The closing of Samuel's judgeship would be the most appropriate time for such a book as Judges to be written and given to the people of Israel as a part of their Scriptures. Of course, Samuel was filled with the spirit of God. His work has found a place in the canon of the Bible. For that reason it is a part of the Word of God preserved for all men to the present age.

*14. What was the condition of life in Israel? 21:25b*

Along with the statement telling of there being no king in Israel, we find a collateral statement of every man doing that which was right in his own eyes. Such a statement may point to anarchy; but since it speaks of men doing what was right, we are led to believe conditions may have been better than often supposed. There was rudeness degenerating into unbridled licentiousness. The law given

## JUDGES

by Moses was well above the standard by which the people lived. The worst traits of the Canaanites surrounding the Israelites had written their mark in the characters of many. When we read of the people going "to the house of the Lord" (19:18), of the yearly feasts at Shiloh (21:19), of all Israel rallying as one man to punish crime (20:1), and of men doing that which was right (21:25), we are led to believe many in Israel were striving to follow the Lord's leading even though they had no central government in the form of a king.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 21

1. Where had Israel gathered to sacrifice after the war?
2. What town had not sent any soldiers to fight with Israel?
3. How many men of Israel went to fight against these people?
4. How many wives were found there for the men of Benjamin?
5. Where was the camp to which these women were brought?
6. Where were the remaining men of Benjamin?
7. Where was the feast to the Lord?
8. Where did the highway run which went past Shiloh?
9. How many wives were taken from the women who danced at Shiloh?
10. Was there a king in Israel in those days?



## INTRODUCTION TO RUTH

The book of Ruth is tucked into the Canon of the Old Testament in a spot where it is like a breath of fresh air in a room which has become heavy with strong odors. The spirit of the book of Judges is one of violence and struggle, and although there are notes of sadness and conflict in the book of Ruth, it is overall a love story. Its message is one of beauty, setting the stage for the account of the tender love of Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

### *NAME*

The Hebrew word for Ruth is pronounced much the same as the English word. It means "comrade, companion, or neighbor." The word is found in Exodus 11:2 in a common setting. The name has come down through the Greek translations of the pre-Christian era, through the Latin translations of the fourth century, A.D., and finds its way into the modern English versions. The book receives its name from the principal character, the Moabitess who became the ancestress of the Christ.

### *PLACE IN THE CANON*

In the later Hebrew arrangement of the Bible, the book of Ruth stands second among the five scrolls called the Megilloth. In the ancient Hebrew Bibles, Judges and Ruth were closely united as is evidenced by the testimony of Josephus, Melito of Sardis, Origen, and Jerome. When the translation of the Bible was made into the Greek, some two hundred years before Christ, Ruth was placed among the historical books. In later times the Jews placed the book among the other writings, called the Hagiographa or Kethubhim.

## RUTH

### AUTHOR

The fact that it has been closely associated with the book of Judges has lent emphasis to the view that the book was probably written by the same man who wrote Judges. Ancient Jewish and Christian tradition has pointed to Samuel as the author. Some modern commentators, such as Robert Pfeiffer in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (page 717), declare that this view is no longer tenable. A. S. Geden feels that a post-exilic date (about 400 B.C.) seems to be a preferable time for its being written.

Even some very conservative Christian writers such as Merrill Unger (*Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, page 384) take the position that the author of the work is unknown. They admit that the Babylonian Talmud ascribes the book to Samuel, but they hold that this is not likely.

The Babylonian Talmud (Baba Bathra, 14 b) says Samuel wrote the book. Matthew Henry in his introductory materials to his comments on the book of Samuel wrote it is probable that Samuel was the penman of it.

Since history knows no other authors, Samuel should be regarded as the writer of the book of Ruth.

### DATE

David was the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse. If we place his birth in the fiftieth year of his father's life, Jesse would have been born in the first year of the Philistine oppression, or forty-eight years after the death of Gideon. It is quite possible that Jesse may also have been a younger son of Obed and born in the fiftieth year of his father's life. If so, the birth of Obed would fall in the last years of Gideon or about 1150 B.C.

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

The last event mentioned in the book is the birth of David. David began to reign at 1010 B.C., but he was a very popular man in Israel before his death. He had been anointed by Samuel (I Samuel 16:1). Early in his career he slew the giant Goliath and became a constant dependent in the court of Saul (I Samuel 17). The fact that he was well known as a soldier and popular in Israel would be reason enough for writing the story of his ancestry.

Samuel died before David became king, and the book must have been written prior to Samuel's death. The death of Samuel is recorded in I Samuel 25:1. A date of 1015 B.C. is probably the best suggestion one can make for the time of writing.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the book of Ruth is to give a biographical sketch of the righteous ancestors of David, the man destined to be Israel's second king. Through the years the book has given an insight into the history of pious people of the era and encouraged faithful Christian living by their good example. The loving concern of Naomi for her daughters-in-law has inspired many of the mothers of Israel to take good care of their families and to encourage action which will produce the best benefits for all concerned. The devotion of Ruth has been an ideal for married couples through the years, and a song based on her statement of faith is quite often heard in a wedding ceremony. Although Ruth's statement was not made to her husband, her love for a member of his family was the kind of love which must undergird solid, Christian homes.

### PLAN

The book is planned as a straightforward historical narrative. There are no poetic passages, and the work is

## RUTH

presented in good Hebrew prose. The story flows naturally along and reaches its conclusion in an orderly fashion. It has all the earmarks of historical narrative.

### OUTLINE

The following outline is quite usually given for this short narrative. It contains all the major details of the book and presents them in a fashion which is easy to remember. It should be committed to memory by the Bible student.

- I. Ruth comes to Bethlehem (chapter 1)
  - A. Introduction (vv. 1-7)
  - B. Ruth's determination to remain with Naomi (vv. 8:18)
  - C. The arrival in Bethlehem (vv. 19-22)
- II. Ruth meets Boaz (chapter 2)
  - A. Ruth gleanes in the fields (vv. 1-7)
  - B. The kindness of Boaz (vv. 8-16)
  - C. Ruth returns to Naomi (vv. 17-23)
- III. Ruth appeals to Boaz (chapter 3)
  - A. Naomi's advice (vv. 1-5)
  - B. Ruth speaks to Boaz (vv. 6-13)
  - C. Ruth returns to Naomi (vv. 14-18)
- IV. Ruth marries Boaz (chapter 4)
  - A. The kinsman approached (vv. 1-8)
  - B. Boaz takes Ruth (vv. 9-12)
  - C. Ruth bears a son (vv. 13-17)
  - D. The ancestry of David (vv. 18-22)

### INDEPENDENCE

Although the book of Ruth is very closely associated with the book of Judges, it is not an appendix to that book. It is a small independent work. It resembles the two appendices of the book of Judges only so far as the

#### STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

incidents recorded in it fall within the period of the Judges. It has a thoroughly distinctive character both in form and content and has nothing in common with the book of Judges to make it inseparable. It differs essentially in substance and design from the book of Judges and its two appendices. As far as history is concerned, the contents of the book pass beyond the time of the Judges. The author plainly shows his intention was not only to give a picture of the family life of pious Israelites in the time of the judges but to give a biographical sketch of the pious ancestors of David, the hero of Israel.

## OUTLINE OF RUTH

### I. Ruth Comes to Bethlehem, Chapter One

This section tells how Ruth, the Moabitess, a daughter-in-law of the Bethlehemite Elimelech, of the family of Judah, who had emigrated with his wife and his two sons into the land of Moab on account of a famine, left father and mother, fatherland and kindred, after the death of her husband. Out of childlike affection to her Israelitish mother-in-law, Naomi, whose husband had also died in the land of Moab, Ruth went to Judah, to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel.

A. Introduction to the life and times of Ruth, 1:1-7

B. Ruth's determination to remain with Naomi, 1:8-18

C. Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem, 1:19-22

### II. Ruth Meets Boaz, Chapter Two

After Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, she went to glean ears of grain in the field of a wealthy man, Boaz, a near relative of Elimelech.

A. Ruth gleans in the fields, 2:1-7

B. The kindness of Boaz, 2:8-16

C. Ruth returns to Naomi, 2:17-23

### III. Ruth's Appeal to Boaz, Chapter Three

Under the Mosaic dispensation, a man was obligated to marry his brother's widow, if the widow had no children by her first marriage. In keeping with this law, Boaz was the nearest willing kinsman of the deceased husband of Ruth, Mahlon. Ruth reminded Boaz of this sacred obligation.

A. Naomi's advice to Ruth, 3:1-5

B. Ruth speaks to Boaz, 3:6-13

C. Ruth returns to Naomi, 3:15-18

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

### IV. Ruth Marries Boaz, Chapter Four

Boaz did marry Ruth, according to the custom of the Levirate marriage; and they were blessed with a son named Obed. This Obed was the grandfather of David, with whose genealogy the book closes.

A. The near kinsman approached, 4:1-8

B. Boaz marries Ruth, 4:9-12

C. Ruth bears a son, 4:13-17

D. The ancestry of David, 4:18-22

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 1

Vv. 1- 5 *Ten tragic years in Moab.* Naomi with Elimelech, her husband, and her two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem-judah when the famine in the land was so severe that they were unable to maintain themselves any longer in Israel. As the Scripture says, they dwelt there about ten years. In that time Elimelech died. Mahlon and Chilion married, Chilion to Orpah and Mahlon to Ruth. Both Mahlon and Chilion died, thus Naomi was left alone with her two widowed daughters-in-law.

Vv. 6-14 *Orpah left behind in Moab.* Naomi was determined to return to the home she had left in Israel at Bethlehem-judah. She encouraged both her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab. Orpah decided this was best for her and kissed Naomi, parting from her.

Vv. 15-22 *Ruth and Naomi return to Bethlehem.* Ruth's famous articulation of her decision has been an encouragement to many, especially to a man and his wife when they exchange their vows. The two widowed women thus made their lonely way across Jordan to the west and came to Naomi's home in Bethlehem-judah. There was a love between them which made them inseparable.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *No bread in the "house of bread."* Bethlehem means "house of bread." There was a famine in the land, and there was no bread in the "house of bread." Life's



situations are often similar to this. The title of a place or a person may belie the truth of the matter. "Professors are not always possessors" is a proverbial statement. They may profess truth but not possess truth. Kings are not always rulers. They may be ruled by vile passions. Churches are not always filled with people who are "called out," the root meaning of *ecclesia*. It is ironic that people living in the place signifying the house of bread had to flee to a foreign country in order to find something to eat.

2. "*Thy God shall be my God.*" Ruth had found more in Naomi than a concerned and conscientious mother-in-law. By her association with Elimelech's family, especially her marriage to Mahlon, she had come to the point where she was willing to leave her family, her people, and her pagan gods. When such firm foundations are laid for marriage and family life, all around is happiness.
3. *Call me "Mara."* When Naomi came home to Bethlehem-judah, many older members of the community remembered her and welcomed her back. Since she came home alone—widowed and without sons—they asked if it really were Naomi. It was hard to believe that she had suffered such losses. In answer she replied, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara." The Hebrew word, *Mara*, means bitter. She felt God had dealt bitterly with her. A similar fate may await many Christians, but all need to remember that the child whom a father loves he chastens. Even though we may feel God has dealt bitterly with us, we should praise His holy name.

## CHAPTER ONE

Ruth Comes to Bethlehem 1:1-22

*Introduction to the Life and Times of Ruth 1:1-7*

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 Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

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 Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

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 dwelt there about ten years.

5 And Mahlón and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

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.

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.

*1. What time is described in Ruth? 1:1*

Ruth is attached to other well-known events by the definite statement "in the days when judges judged." It is assigned to the period of the judges generally. "A famine in the land," i.e., in the land of Israel and not merely in the neighborhood of Bethlehem is the import of

a second introductory statement. The time of this famine cannot be determined with certainty, although it seems very natural to connect it with the devastation of the land by the Midianites (Judges 6); and there are several things which favor this. For example, giving consideration to the marriages mentioned in the last chapter, the events are pushed back to the middle of the period of the judges, and no period fits better than the period of Gideon.

2. *Do the names of the characters explain the narrative?*

1:2

(1) Elimelech, *God is King*; (2) Naomi, *the gracious*; (3) Mahlon, *the weakly*; and (4) Chilion, *pinning* are genuine Hebrew names; whereas the names of the Moab- itish women, Orpah and Ruth, who were married to Elimelech's sons, cannot be satisfactorily explained from the Hebrew. The meaning given to Orpah, "turning back," is very arbitrary; and the derivation of Ruth from a word for "a friend," is quite uncertain. According to 4:10, Ruth was the wife of the elder son, Mahlon. The names do not really explain the narrative. They are genuine names; and if any further information is gathered from them, it is coincidental to the real historical message of the narrative.

3. *Why were they called Ephrathites?* 1:2

They were residents of Bethlehem; and the old name for Bethlehem was *Ephratha*, as "Queen City" was for Cincinnati. The name appears again and again as a reference to Bethlehem. Micah speaks of Bethlehem Ephratha (5:2). An explanation of the meaning of the name is given in the account of the death of Benjamin near this spot. As the record says: "Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem)" (Genesis 35:19).

4. *What was the route from Bethlehem to Moab? 1:2b*

They might have gone over the Jordan River around the north end of the Dead Sea or through the Negeb around the south end of the Dead Sea. Since no mention is made of their taking a boat across the Dead Sea, it was not likely that this was their means of making the journey. A trip around the south end would lead them through an area which was very hot and arid, and it is reasonable to doubt their going this way. By going around the north end of the Dead Sea, they would have entered rather quickly into the territory where they would be among members of the tribe of Judah, and it is best to think of their going in this direction.

5. *What was the danger of this move to Elimelech's sons? 1:4*

He was taking his family into a pagan country. The young men were of marriageable age, and there was a danger of their marrying pagan wives. This they did. Under usual circumstances these wives would have a great influence upon the young men, running almost always to the point of leading them away from the faith of their parents. In fact such was so often the case that God forbade the Israelites to marry among the Canaanite people into whose midst they came.

6. *How long did they sojourn there? 1:4*

They were in Moab long enough for the boys to mature, marry, and expire. All of this occurred in about ten years. Since all these events occurred in such a short span of time and turned out to be very tragic, Naomi said God had dealt bitterly with her and afflicted her (verses 20, 21). These ten years were very significant; and although they were rather few in number, they must have dragged slowly by for the lonely Naomi.

7. *Why was there a famine in Judah and not in Moab?*

1:6

If the famine were inflicted by the Midianites, Moab would not have been affected. The terrain of the two areas was not particularly different. The latitude of Moab and Judah was almost the same, the two areas being parallel and directly across the Dead Sea from each other. Since the Moabites were not a part of the commonwealth of Israel, the Midianites would have little reason to attack them. The Midianites were sent as a plague against the Israelites, who had turned their backs on God.

8. *Why did the daughters-in-law start to return with Naomi?* 1:7

They were somewhat obligated to care for their aged relative. More than this, they were attracted to the Israelite way of life. In addition, any change of scenery may have been welcome to them. Normally young people are of an adventurous spirit, and it would be a new experience for them. The trip from Moab to Judah must have been emotion-packed, as Ruth and Orpah were leaving families behind; but it also was filled with anticipation as the young women especially looked forward to a new phase of their lives.

*Ruth's Determination to Remain With Naomi 1:8-18*

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.

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.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

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?

12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also tonight, and should also bear sons;

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.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

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.

16 And Ruth said, Entreat 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:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

9. *Why did Naomi ask each of her daughters-in-law to return "to her mother's house"? 1:8*

They would need the maternal protection since their husbands were dead. By referring to the mother's house instead of the father's house, Naomi may have indicated the girls were without fathers. If so, they had suffered tragic losses in the early deaths not only of their husbands,

but also of their fathers. Even if the fathers were alive, Naomi may have mentioned the mothers on account of the close ties of the women with their mothers.

10. *What kind of wives had Orpah and Ruth been?* 1:8

They had been kind, good, and loving. No reason is given to the Bible student to believe the suggestion of their being wicked women and occasioning the deaths of their husbands. Some believe Judah received this kind of impression from the associations of his sons with Tamar and thus procrastinated in giving his youngest son to her as her husband. Still more believe Onan was possessed of this same fear of Tamar. The Bible narrative is clear, however, in attributing the death of both Er and Onan to their own wickedness (Genesis 38:7, 9). Judah's procrastination in giving Shelah to Tamar as her husband should rather be attributed to his being dilatory. Certainly nothing in the account of the lives of Ruth and Orpah suggest their being wicked and occasioning the deaths of their husbands, Mahlon and Chilion. All of the record of their lives is good.

11. *What is the meaning of the remark about "the hand of the Lord"?* 1:13

Naomi felt the losses were punishment from God. Most people quickly jump to the same conclusion when they suffer losses. Job's friends accused him of doing evil and thus receiving punishment from the hand of God. The Apostles thought the man born blind must have sinned and received his blindness as a punishment from God (John 9:1 ff.). Since Naomi had lost her husband and her two sons after having fled from their home on account of a famine, she believed God was against her.

12. *Why did Ruth wish to return with Naomi?* 1:16

Naomi had simply the earthly prosperity of her daughter-in-law in her mind. With Ruth, however, it was evidently not merely strong affection and attachment

by which she felt herself drawn to her mother-in-law. She wished to live and die with her. There was a leaning of her heart towards the God of Israel and His laws, of which she herself was probably not yet fully conscious. She had acquired this faith in her married relation. It was her earnest wish never to be separated from Naomi and her God.

13. *From where did Ruth obtain her power of expression?*  
1:16, 17

She had been accustomed to hearing similar expressions of love and devotion from her new family. Some may think her expression was inspired of the Holy Spirit. God must have been pleased with her statement of her faith and desire, but nothing in the narrative suggests Ruth's being overpowered by the Spirit of God and enabled to give an expression beyond what was natural to her. Her pleasant associations with Mahlon and his family brought these thoughts to her mind.

14. *What was the effect of the intermarriage on the two young women?* 1:17, 18

They had been brought out of idolatry. Orpah was not as devoted as Ruth, but she had at least begun to find her way out of the pagan society in which she had been reared. Ruth's faith was deep enough to cause her to leave her family behind, to go out of her native country into a strange land, and to seek a new life in a community where she had no prospect of happy married life. Her experience as the wife of Mahlon had brought a big change in her life.

#### *Ruth's Arrival in Bethlehem 1:19-22*

19 So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?



20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

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?

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 Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

15. *How did Naomi contrast her return with her departure? 1:20*

The whole town of Bethlehem seemed to be excited at Naomi's return, but we suppose it was the women of the city in particular. They were not as surprised to see Naomi was still alive and had come back again as to see her returning in so mournful a condition. She was a solitary widow, without either husband or sons. Naomi replied, "Call me not *Naomi* (i.e. gracious), but *Mara* (the bitter one; i.e., who has experienced bitterness)." She said she went away full and Jehovah had made her come back again empty. She did not mean she had been "full" of riches, money and property but in the possession of a husband and two sons. She had been a rich mother. Now she was deprived of all that makes a mother's heart rich. She was bereft of both husband and sons. She felt Jehovah had testified against her by word and deed (see Exodus 20:16; I Samuel 1:6).

16. *In what season was the return to Bethlehem? 1:22*

It was the harvest time. Barley was the first crop harvested by the people of the land. When the harvest began, the people of Israel were commanded to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits to the priest. He was to wave the

## RUTH

sheaf before the Lord on the day after the sabbath, and the people were to offer a he-lamb without blemish for a burnt offering unto the Lord (Leviticus 23:10-12). Since so many of the events recorded in Ruth occurred during the time of the barley harvest, it was customary to read the little book as the people celebrated the feast of Pentecost, the feast which came fifty days after the passover. This statement in the closing verse of chapter one opens the way for telling of events which happened in the barley fields where Ruth worked after she came to Bethlehem-judah.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 1

1. Where was Naomi's home in Israel?
2. What was the name of Naomi's husband?
3. What were the names of the two sons of Naomi?
4. What were the names of the two women of Moab whom Naomi's sons married?
5. How long was Naomi in Moab?
6. Did Orpah return to Bethlehem with Naomi?
7. What is the meaning of the word *Naomi*?
8. What name did Naomi ask the people of Bethlehem to call her?
9. What is the meaning of the word *Mara*?
10. What time of year was it when Naomi returned to Bethlehem?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 2

- Vv. 1- 7 *Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz.* Provision was made in Israel for the poor and widowed to glean the fields for their sustenance. Land owners were instructed not to reap wholly the corners of their fields. They were not to

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

gather the gleanings of the harvest. Fallen fruits of the orchards were to be left as were the grapes in the vineyard. These were for the poor and the sojourner among them (Leviticus 19:9, 10). Ruth took her place among these "non-advantaged" people.

Vv. 8-16 *Ruth treated kindly by Boaz.* Ruth was invited to eat with the reapers of Boaz. When they went out to the field again, Boaz gave instructions to his men telling them to leave additional grain in the field for Ruth. He was a near kinsman of Naomi's and had heard of Ruth's coming back to Bethlehem with Naomi.

Vv. 17-23 *Naomi informed of Ruth's good fortune.* The day's work in the fields of Boaz gave enough grain to Ruth to meet the immediate needs of the two women. Naomi thanked God that Ruth received such kind treatment, and she encouraged Ruth to work only in the fields of Boaz. For this reason, Ruth stayed with the workers in the fields of Boaz until the end of the barley harvest.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Labor and Management are compatible.* When Boaz came to meet his workers, he greeted them with a prayer that the Lord would be with them. They replied by praying that God would bless their master. Such a healthy relationship between the owner of land and those who worked for him is a good example to be imitated by all who are in similar situations today.

2. *A good reputation is the best kind of introduction.* When Boaz met Ruth, she was humble before him. She was surprised that he paid any attention to her since she was a foreigner. Boaz replied that he had heard already how she had treated her mother-in-law kindly after the death of her husband. He knew how Ruth had left her father and mother and the land of her nativity to come into the land of Judah. All of this spoke highly of Ruth's character.
3. *Generation gaps need not occur.* In the twentieth century much has been made of children entering into an era of life known as the "teen ages." Young people believe they enter into some kind of magic time of life when they are not quite children and not quite adult. Throughout many of these years they look askance at anyone more than ten years older than they are and quite often refuse to listen to the counsel of wiser and more mature judgment. Ruth did not take this attitude. She looked to Naomi for counsel, and Naomi counseled her wisely as she asked her to stay in the fields of Boaz. Each generation should look for this pleasant association with those younger or older than they.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Ruth Meets Boaz 2:1-23

#### *Ruth Gleans in the Field of Boaz 2:1-7*

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess 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.

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.

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.

5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

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:

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.

1. *What is the meaning of mighty man of wealth?* 2:1

Boaz is described as "a mighty man of wealth." Such terminology is usually used to describe one who was a brave "man of war." The term was used in this way in Judges 6:12 in describing Gideon. The angel of the Lord called Gideon "a mighty man of valor," but the original language is the same in both places. The phrase is translated in the same way in Judges 11:1 where Jephthah is called "a mighty man of valor." Since Boaz had nothing to do with warfare, it is presumed the phrase means he was an influential man with considerable wealth, and the translation is so given.

2. *What was the law regarding gleaning?* 2:2, 3

The Mosaic law (Leviticus 19:9, 23:22, cf. Deuteronomy 24:19) expressly secured to the poor the right to glean in the harvest fields. It prohibited the owners from gleaning themselves, but hard-hearted farmers and reapers threw obstacles in the way of the poor. Some even forbade

their gleaning altogether. Hence, Ruth proposed to glean after him who should generously allow it. She carried out this intention with the consent of Naomi. God led her to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, a relative of Elimelech, without her knowing the owner of the field or being at all aware of his connection with Elimelech. Ruth was industrious and willing to work with her hands to provide their daily bread.

3. *What was the relationship between Boaz and his reapers?* 2:4

He treated them mercifully and they served him faithfully. He greeted them by saying, "The Lord be with you." They replied to him by saying, "The Lord bless thee." Such a greeting indicates the existence of a good rapport between the landowner and those who worked in his fields. Their expressions were more than the customary greetings which are often thoughtless and given hastily, such as our everyday, "Hi!" or "Hello!" Both the greeting of Boaz and the reply of his reapers were prayers.

4. *Why did he come from Bethlehem?* 2:4

Men lived in towns and went out to their fields. It was unsafe for individual farmers to live alone in the countryside. They would be vulnerable to highway robbers and in danger of harm from predatory animals. Most of the time, these settlements had walls around them with gates which could be locked at night, thus protecting the people who dwelled there from any harm. Boaz resided in Bethlehem and went out to his field during the daytime. Thus we read, "Boaz came from Bethlehem."

5. *Why did Ruth ask to work "among the sheaves"?* 2:7

She wanted permission to go into the fields—more than walking along the roadside. The Old Testament law was specific in giving instructions as to how much grain could be gathered by those who were dependent upon this activity for their livelihood. For example, it was specified

that they could go into the vineyard of their neighbor, but they were not to take any grapes out in a vessel. They could eat all that they needed while they were there. A similar rule was made with regard to walking through the standing grain of the fields. People were allowed to pluck the ears with their hands, but they were not allowed to use a sickle in the standing grain (Deuteronomy 23:24, 25). According to this custom and regulation Jesus' disciples plucked grain as they walked through the grain fields on the sabbath day (Matthew 12:1, 2). Ruth's request was for freedom to work in the fields following the reapers.

6. *What can we learn from the servant's conversation with Boaz? 2:4-7*

It is evident from this answer of the servant who was placed over the reapers that Boaz did not prohibit any poor person from gleaning in his field. It is also clear that Ruth asked permission of the overseer of the reapers. She availed herself of this permission with untiring zeal from the first thing in the morning. She wanted to get the necessary support for her mother-in-law and herself. Lastly, we learn her history was well known to the overseer and also to Boaz, although Boaz saw her now for the first time.

*The Kindness of Boaz 2:8-16*

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:

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.

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?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed 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.

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.

13 Then she said, Let me find favor 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.

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.

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:

16 And let fall also some of the handfulls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

*7. Why did Boaz make special arrangements about the water? 2:9*

Men who hired workers were especially careful to provide water for them. Even in modern times these provisions are cared for with great detail. Men soon be-



come disgruntled if good clean water is not made available to them. The hot climate of Palestine demands such arrangements. If Ruth were forced to provide her own jug for drinking water, she would be handicapped in this respect. It was a fine concession which Boaz made to her in this regard.

8. *What was the cause of the kind treatment?* 2:11, 12

Boaz heard a good report of Ruth. Word must have spread rapidly about the woman from a foreign country who had shown great kindness to her deceased husband's family. Boaz mentioned especially her leaving her own father and mother and her native land to come into Judah. He was impressed because she had entered a country about which she had no prior knowledge. He was also duly impressed with her renunciation of a former pagan faith in order to be counted among the redeemed of Israel. His picturesque expression of this action was similar to an expression used by Moses as he mentioned God's bearing the children of Israel on "eagle's wings" (Deuteronomy 32:11). Boaz prayed that Ruth would be rewarded by "the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust."

9. *Why did Ruth compare herself unfavorably with the other gleaners?* 2:13

She was a stranger in Israel. She said she was not like any of the handmaidens in the service of Boaz. She may have had different facial characteristics since she was not descended from one of the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Her people had been separated by location and social customs from the people of Israel. Her appearance was evidently different enough to set her apart. Some feel the main thrust of this book is to break down barriers of national and racial prejudice, and certainly Boaz did not withhold his kindness from Ruth because she was of foreign nationality.

10. *What was the parched corn? 2:14*

Parched corn was a delicacy prepared by roasting the heads of grain (not ears of maize). Israel's offering of the firstfruits to the Lord demanded their giving "green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears" (Leviticus 2:14). These roasted grains of wheat are still eaten by reapers in the harvest field. On occasion strangers will be offered some of these delicacies. One traveler told of coming into a field where nearly two hundred reapers and gleaners were working. The gleaners were nearly as numerous as the reapers. Some of them were resting from their labors and taking some refreshment. These offered the traveler some of their "parched corn." Those who have partaken of this kind of grain describe the grains of wheat as being not yet fully dried and hard. They are roasted in a pan on an iron plate and constitute a very tasty bit of food. This is sometimes eaten along with bread or at other times in place of it. Boaz gave Ruth an abundant supply of the parched grain. She was not only satisfied, but saved some to take home to her mother-in-law.

11. *Why did Boaz give special instructions to his young men? 2:15, 16*

Ruth had evidently asked for permission to glean among the sheaves, an allowance which was not normally made. Boaz also felt it necessary to instruct his reapers not to torment her or cause her any injury. Furthermore, he instructed them to drop little bundles of grain for her. These were to be left lying so that she could pick them up and add to her supply of gleaned grain. Some of the workmen may have thought Ruth was out of place. Others may have resented the presence of a Moab woman among the other gleaners, but Boaz instructed them to "reproach her not." He continued by saying, "rebuke her not."

*Ruth Returns to Naomi 2:17-23*

17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

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.

19 And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned today? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz.

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.

21 And Ruth the Moabite said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

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.

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.

*12. How much is an ephah? 2:17*

An ephah equals three pecks and three pints. It was almost a bushel. This standard of measure was popular throughout much of Israel's history. When the children of Israel received manna in the wilderness, the portion given to each person was counted as a tenth part of an ephah (Exodus 16:36). Since one-tenth of this amount was sufficient for an individual's need of manna, Ruth's por-

tion from her gleanings was considerably more than a day's supply of grain. She was quite evidently industrious and achieved a great deal from her day's work.

13. *Why was Ruth reserving some grain?* 2:18

The writer of Proverbs wisely counseled a young man to put a knife to his throat when he went to eat with a ruler. Otherwise, he might be tempted to plunge into the abundant provisions and make a spectacle of himself. He would thus show his greediness and offend his host (Proverbs 23:1, 3). Such conduct was not becoming to any person, and it was especially so with Ruth since she was a woman and a foreigner. Consequently, she did not eat all of the parched grain which was provided for her. Furthermore, she must have been thinking about Naomi. Her unselfish and loving character prompted her to save some of the delicacies for her mother-in-law.

14. *How was God showing kindness to the dead?* 2:20

What was done to Ruth and Naomi was also done to Mahlon and Chilion. Naomi admits it was kindness done to her and to Ruth, the living. God was showing kindness to Elimelech and his sons inasmuch as He was caring for their widows. The property was still in the name of Elimelech, and Ruth was still known as the wife of Mahlon. The kindness of Boaz to Ruth was a remembrance of both the living and the dead.

15. *What is the meaning of "next kinsmen?"* 2:20b

There were three ways in which redemption was specified in Leviticus 25:25 ff. *The first case was this:* if a man became poor and sold his property, his nearest redeemer was to come and release what his brother had sold. He was to buy it back from the purchaser and restore it to its former possessor. The nearest kinsman was the relative upon whom this obligation rested. *The second*

*case was this:* if one had no redeemer, either because there were no relatives upon whom the obligation rested or because they were all too poor and he had earned and acquired sufficient to redeem it, he was to calculate the years of purchase and return the surplus to the man who had bought it. He gave as much as was paid for the years which still remained up to the next year of jubilee. Thus, the original owner might come into possession of it again. *The third case was this:* if a man had not earned as much as was required to make compensation for the recovery of the land, what he had sold was to remain in the possession of the buyer till the year of jubilee and then it was to "go out." It was to become free again, so that the impoverished seller could enter into possession with compensation. Since the "near kinsman" was also to marry the widow of a brother, the two transactions—redemption of the land and marriage of the surviving wife—became inextricably associated.

16. *How long did the gleanings continue?* 2:23

Barley harvest was early spring (March, April). Wheat harvest was in the summer. Altogether harvest lasted from three to four months. These were important events in the lives of this agricultural people. The plagues which came on Egypt were identified in time by the condition of the crops. When the plague of hail came on Egypt, the flax and the barley was smitten "for the barley was in the ear and the flax was balled" (Exodus 9:31). At the same time a note was made of the season because the "wheat and the rye were not smitten: because they were not grown up" (verse 32). These people were accustomed to noting time by making reference to the progress of their crops. Such activities as the harvesting of the grain were very important to the lives of these people.

## RUTH

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. What was the name of Elimelech's near kinsman?
2. What service did Ruth ask Naomi to allow her to perform?
3. In what village did the near-kinsman live?
4. What was the kinsman's greeting to the men in his field?
5. What was the reply of the men in the field?
6. Where did Ruth want to glean?
7. By what title did Ruth describe herself?
8. What delicacy was Ruth given to eat?
9. How much grain did Ruth get from her gleaning?
10. What kind of grain was it?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1- 5 *Naomi's instructions to Ruth.* When the barley harvest was nearly completed, Naomi instructed Ruth to go to the threshing floor for the feast. Since Boaz was a near kinsman, Naomi thought he should enter into a Levirate marriage with Ruth. With typical mother-love, she helped Ruth to make herself as appealingly feminine as possible. She had also advised her to bide her time and to approach Boaz in modesty.
- Vv. 6-13 *Boaz honors Ruth's request.* Boaz received Ruth's proposal and complimented her on her honorable conduct. He did not go outside the Law, however, and reminded Ruth of the presence in the community of one who was closer of kin than he was himself. He asked Ruth to stay with him for the rest of the night in order to protect her from any harm and prom-

## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

ised her he would inquire of the other man's intentions in this matter.

Vv. 14-18 *Ruth's return to Naomi.* Boaz was careful to protect Ruth's reputation and asked her to leave the threshing floor early in the morning before the light was sufficient for anyone to know who it was leaving the threshing floor. When Naomi heard what happened, she was pleased; and she assured Ruth of Boaz's sincerity by saying he would not rest until he had found out what the other kinsman would do.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A worthy woman who can find? (Proverbs 31:10).*  
A good woman is to be praised. High in the list of great women of the Bible stand Ruth and Naomi. Naomi challenged Ruth's faith to see if she would be willing to leave all in order to find a home in Israel. When Ruth proved steadfast, Naomi did everything she could to guide her daughter-in-law in finding a happy life among God's chosen people. By Naomi's good grace, Ruth not only found a place to glean, but eventually was enabled to find an honorable husband. Every young woman needs a mother-in-law like Naomi.
2. *A good name is better than riches (Proverbs 22:1).*  
Ruth did not have a rich family who could demand a great dowry for her. She came to Boaz from a foreign country and lived among the people as a widowed stranger. Her conduct won for her a good reputation. On account of this, she found a place to work in the fields of Boaz; and when she reminded Boaz of his responsibility as a near kinsman, he was amazed at her

deep understanding of the Law. He complimented Ruth for being honorable in the matter. He also was anxious to protect her good reputation by sending her away before anyone could recognize her when she left the area.

3. *The king's business requires haste* (I Samuel 21:8). Naomi believed Boaz was an industrious man. She told Ruth to wait patiently for Boaz because she knew he would attend to the matter right away. Boaz was a good man, and he was rich not only in this world's goods but also towards God. He would never hear God say, "thou fool" to him as did the rich man in the parable of Jesus (Luke 12:13-21). He would do what was expected of him without delay.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Naomi Instructs Ruth 3:1-5*

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?

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshing floor.

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.

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.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.



1. *What was Naomi's purpose in giving instructions to Ruth?* 3:1, 2

Naomi wanted Ruth to act properly. Furthermore, she wanted Ruth to enjoy a peaceful life in a well secured condition. Such would be her life under the loving care of a considerate husband. Normally it was the responsibility of the father to arrange for a marriage of his daughters. Laban was anxious to see his daughters provided for in this way, and excused himself for deceiving Jacob in giving him Leah instead of Rachel by saying it was not customary for the younger daughter to be given in marriage before the older daughter was married (Genesis 29:26). When the father was dead, the responsibility for arranging these marriages fell to the oldest son who received the father's birthright and blessing. Since both Mahlon and Chilion were dead, no one was left to care for the welfare of the widows except Naomi. She had counseled both Orpah and Ruth to return to their parents' homes, but Ruth's love for Naomi had prompted her to accompany Naomi back to Judah. Consequently, Naomi was still primarily concerned for Ruth's future welfare and instructed her accordingly.

2. *How was the winnowing done?* 3:2

Grain was thrown into the air with winnowing fans. Threshing floors were nothing more than level places in the field which had been trodden smooth. The surface was generally quite hard. A level spot was selected, and the threshing floors were generally close together. They were circular in form, sometimes fifty feet in diameter. Grain was thrown onto the ground. Animals walked over it and crushed out the grains from the head of the stalks. A wooden fork was used to throw this mixture of chaff and grain into the air. As the wind blew away the chaff, the grain settled to the ground. Sometimes a carpet was placed

under the threshers' feet so the grain fell onto it whence it could be easily placed in bags.

3. *Why was the grain still on the ground?* 3:3

The grain was left on the ground until it was put in the granary. As the threshing season continued, the piles of grain mounted higher and higher. These piles might be covered with cloth to protect them from the dew, but the final removal would await the completion of the threshing season. Like the rich farmer in the parable of Jesus described in Luke 12, all landowners took some bit of pride in seeing the large amounts of grain accruing to them as the harvest season continued. Boaz celebrated the conclusion of a plentiful harvest by holding a feast on the threshing floor, and Ruth went to him there.

*Ruth Speaks to Boaz 3:6-13*

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

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.

8 And it came to pass at midnight that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

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.

10 And he said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou hast showed more kindness, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich.

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.

12 And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

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.

4. *What kind of "corn" was on the threshing floor?* 3:7

In the days of the translating of the King James Version, the word "corn" indicated any kind of cereal grain. The average American reader visualizes corn as a grain which grows on a cob, since he has become acquainted with the grain called maize by the Indians when the first settlers came to America. Corn in Bible days was grain in a head. Notice has already been made in the narrative of the book of Ruth with regard to this kind of grain. Boaz and Ruth met in a time of barley harvest and a time of wheat harvest. Both these grains would be described by the word "corn."

5. *What was the meaning of Ruth's request?* 3:9

Ruth was proposing marriage to Boaz. She was primarily interested in reminding him of the duty of a near kinsman. According to the laws of Israel, a man's brother was to marry his widow and raise up children in the name of his brother whenever a deceased brother had no heirs. Such was the case with Mahlon. Ruth was widowed, and there were no children to carry on the name of either Elimelech or Mahlon. Ruth reminded Boaz that he was "a near kinsman," one who had the right and the duty to redeem a deceased kinsman's land and marry his widow.

6. *Was her act improper?* 3:11

Ruth was a "virtuous woman" (verse 11). Boaz would not break the Law. He said, "There is a kinsman nearer than I" (verse 12). Nothing in all the narrative suggests impropriety on the part of either Ruth or Boaz. Nothing transpired between Ruth and Boaz during the night while she was at the threshing floor. Had Boaz been a man of lustful nature, he would have immediately entered into an improper connubial relationship with Ruth; but since he was a man of honor, he reminded her of the presence of another whose right superseded his own. He thus asked her to wait until this man could be approached.

7. *Was a Levirate marriage connected with the redemption?* 3:13

The Levirate marriage was a customary right which had received the sanction of God. It was given certain limitations through the Mosaic law. This was to be the marriage of a widow and her brother-in-law. We meet such marriages as early as Genesis 38:8. If an Israelite was married and died without children, it was the duty of his brother to marry the widow, that is to say, his sister-in-law. He was to do this to establish his brother's name in Israel. This was done by begetting a son through his sister-in-law. The son took the name of the deceased brother. Thus the brother's name did not become extinct in Israel. The son was the legal heir of the landed property of the deceased man (cf. Deuteronomy 25:5 ff.). The two institutions are not connected in the Mosaic law; nevertheless it was a very natural thing to place the Levirate duty in connection with the right of redemption. This had become the traditional custom. The Law merely imposed the obligation of marrying the childless widow upon the brother. It even allowed him to renounce the obligation if he would take upon himself the disgrace connected with such a refusal (see Deuteronomy 25:7-10). Accord-

ing to Ruth 4:5, it had become a traditional custom to require the Levirate marriage of the one who bought the property of the deceased relative. Thus the landed possession was permanently retained in the family, but also the family itself was not suffered to die out.

*Ruth Returns to Naomi 3:14-18*

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.

15 Also he said, Bring the veil 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.

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.

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.

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.

*8. Why did Ruth rise so early? 3:14*

Boaz was anxious to protect Ruth's physical well-being. He did not want to send her out into the night from the threshing floor. She would be at the mercy of such men as those who milled about Lot's house in Sodom (Genesis 19) and the men of Gibeah who tried to misuse the Levite in the days of the judges (Judges 19-21). Boaz also was careful to protect Ruth's reputation. Although he was willing to keep her safe from harm during the middle of the night, he counseled her to leave his

threshing floor early in the morning before the sun was risen. In this way, any who saw her leave would not be able to discern who she was and would not point a finger of scandal in her direction.

9. *What kind of veil did Ruth wear?* 3:15

The veil into which Boaz poured the grain was a large garment, possibly similar to a large shawl. The cloaks worn by ancient people were very full. One part could be thrown over the shoulder and another corner could be gathered up under the arm. By holding a certain part of the pallium, as it is sometimes called, Ruth could receive into her bosom the grain which Boaz gave her. The garment is called a veil since it could easily be drawn up over the face to hide the countenance of a modest woman from the unholy gaze of wicked men.

10. *How much barley did Boaz give to Ruth?* 3:15

The old rabbins said the measure was a seah which is equal to two ephahs. Since an ephah was nearly equal to a bushel, Boaz would have given twelve bushels to Ruth by this calculation. Certainly this is incorrect. Ruth could not have carried such a large quantity of barley. The smallest unit of dry measure was a log and equaled approximately a pint. If Boaz gave six of these measures to Ruth, the amount of grain she received would be approximately the same as one omer which was the amount of daily provision made for the children of Israel during their exodus as God gave them manna (Exodus 16:16). This is the better view.

11. *Why did Naomi say, "Who art thou?"* 3:16

Since Ruth had left the threshing floor of Boaz before anyone could tell who she was, Naomi may have been unable to identify Ruth in the darkness when she arrived home. The question, however, makes a fuller inquiry than the mere matter of identification. Naomi was asking what kind of person it was who stood before her. She was

trying to find out in what circumstances Ruth had returned. She really wanted to know what had been accomplished. She was anxious to find out what Boaz had done. Her question was much the same as asking, "How did it go?"

12. *Why did Ruth call attention to the six measures of barley?* 3:17

Ruth told Naomi all about her interview with Boaz. She must have rehearsed every detail and finally called attention to the six measures of barley as concrete evidence of the favor which Boaz had bestowed upon her. The concern of Boaz reached not only to Ruth's needs, but to the immediate needs of both Ruth and Naomi. Ruth recited how Boaz had told her not to go empty to her mother-in-law. In a sense, the gift of six measures of barley was more for Naomi than for Ruth herself.

13. *Why did Naomi tell Ruth to sit still?* 3:18a

Naomi wanted Ruth to remain quietly at home. Such instructions were also given to Tamar by Judah as he told his daughter-in-law to "remain a widow" (Genesis 38:11). Naomi was instructing Ruth not to look any further for a husband. She had earlier instructed her not to glean in anybody else's field, and she felt sure of Boaz's good intentions. God had blessed Naomi and Ruth as they made their way from Moab to Bethlehem. By His good providence, Ruth had been led to glean in a field which belonged to a near kinsman. Naomi had guided Ruth to remind Boaz of his fraternal duty. Now the time had come for the two women to await the consummation of the matter.

14. *Why was Naomi confident concerning the outcome?* 3:18

Naomi knew Boaz was a man of faith and ability. Everything he had done pointed to his intentions and abilities to consummate his agreement with Ruth. Naomi

## RUTH

had told Ruth to stay at home and await the outcome. She instructed her to learn in this way how the matter would fall. It was more needful for Ruth to put her confidence in Boaz than for her to take any other actions on her part. Naomi believed Boaz to be a man of deep faith, and she must have had faith in God's providence for the outcome of Ruth's association with Boaz.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. Where was Boaz winnowing grain?
2. Where did Ruth lie down?
3. What did Ruth ask Boaz to do for her?
4. Did Boaz scold Ruth for coming to his threshing floor?
5. What kind of woman did Boaz say all the people in the city knew Ruth to be?
6. Why did Boaz not marry Ruth immediately?
7. In what did Boaz put grain for Ruth?
8. How much grain did Boaz give Ruth?
9. What kind of grain did Boaz give her?
10. How long did Ruth stay with Boaz?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER. 4

Vv. 1- 5 *The near kinsman approached.* Boaz went to the gate of the city and waited for the approach of the man who was a kinsman nearer than he. When he came by, Boaz approached him. The kinsman was ready to redeem the land which had belonged to Elimelech; but when he was reminded of Ruth being Mahlon's widow and his responsibility to marry her, he declined to accept his obligations.



## STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

- Vv. 6-12 *Boaz married to Ruth.* When the kinsman nearer to Elimelech than Boaz refused to take Ruth as his wife, Boaz called the elders of the city to witness the man's refusal. Boaz then purchased the property himself and stated his intention of marrying Ruth. The men of the city gave Boaz their blessing, praying for Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah, the two wives of Jacob to whom were born the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Vv. 13-22 *The birth of Obed.* The women of the city rejoiced, especially on behalf of Naomi because she was not left without descendants. Even though she had lost her husband and her two sons in Moab, she lived to have the pleasure of nursing a grandchild. The genealogy of Ruth and Boaz is carried down to David, the second king of Israel. Since it goes no further, we assume it was written in the days of David before the birth of Solomon.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Be not slothful in business (Romans 12:11).* Boaz lived up to the reputation he enjoyed in Naomi's eyes. He went immediately to the gate of the city where the men met to discuss the affairs of the day. Before long he met the man who had the priority in redeeming Elimelech's land. In the presence of ten men of the city, Boaz called to him to get his decision concerning the matter. God's people should ever be as full of alacrity and concern as they go about the work entrusted to them.

2. *They buy the poor for a pair of shoes* (Amos 8:6). The man who was nearer of kin than Boaz seemed quite anxious to have the land which had once belonged to Elimelech, but he was not interested in performing the right of a near kinsman in the matter of raising up children to bear the name of Mahlon. As in the days of Amos, a man was considered of little value; but the people were very much interested in possessions of every other kind.
3. *"Good tidings of great joy"* (Luke 2:10). The women of Bethlehem-judah rejoiced when a son was born to Boaz and Ruth. Their joy was enhanced since Naomi was not left without an heir. From this marriage of Boaz and Ruth came the family of David, the king of Israel who was a man after God's own heart. Every Christian mother and father rejoice at the birth of a child; for they see in their children the prospect of God's work being done among men. Man's greatest joy came when the Son of God was born.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Ruth Marries Boaz 4:1-22

#### *Boaz Redeems the Inheritance 4:1-8*

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.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

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:

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.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

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.

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 neighbor: and this was a testimony in Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.

### *1. Where was the "gate" to the city? 4:1*

The gate was the open space before the city gate. It was the forum of the city, the place where public affairs were discussed. The statement that he went up signified the ideal eminence of the place of justice to which a man went up (see Deuteronomy 17:8). In this instance, ten elders of the city were called to be witnesses of the business in hand. Lot was sitting in the gate of the city of Sodom when the two angels came to him (Genesis 19:1). The husband of the virtuous woman described in the book of Proverbs was "known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23). The meeting of Boaz and the other near kinsman was typical of life in Bible times.

2. *Was it customary to take ten men as witnesses?* 4:2

The law stipulated that matters should be decided on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6). A man might be condemned to death at the testimony of this small number of witnesses if the witnesses themselves were the first to lay hands on the accused. More serious matters were taken to the priests and the Levites for decision (Deuteronomy 17:9). God foresaw the day when the people of Israel would need a king and made regulations concerning his installation (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Evidently the people of Israel had come to the place where they customarily had a council of ten men. Certainly none could say the matter was done "in a corner" when such a large number of people were involved in the decision.

3. *Why had the land been sold?* 4:3

Elimelech and his family were evidently in need. There was a famine in the land. It was so severe that Elimelech had taken his wife and two sons to flee to Moab in order to survive. He would have needed funds for making the journey, and this may have necessitated his surrendering his title to his land. Although he had to give up the land temporarily, it would have returned to his family in the year of jubilee. If there were a kinsman who could redeem it for him, it was the privilege of this man to assist his needy brother. If the man himself came into better times, he also could redeem the land.

4. *Why take Ruth instead of Naomi?* 4:5

Naomi was past the age of raising up children. The whole purpose of the Levirate marriage was to raise up children in the name of a deceased brother who had died without heirs. Boaz naturally married Ruth instead of Naomi, who had earlier indicated she was not considering marriage for herself. She had provoked Orpah and Ruth to deep thought about their plans by asking, "Are there

yet any more sons in my womb?" (Ruth 1:11). Later she said, "I am too old to have an husband" (Ruth 1:12).

5. *Why did the kinsman refuse his obligation?* 4:6

The kinsman was selfish. He said he was afraid to "mar" his own inheritance. What he meant by this is hard to determine. Some suggest he was unwilling to marry a woman who was of foreign extraction. If such were the case, he was prejudiced against the foreign nations. More than likely he was afraid later generations would not be able to make a distinction between children born to him in the name of Mahlon and those born in his own household. In this way, some confusion might arise over title to family property and genealogical data.

6. *What was the origin of the custom of removing the shoe?* 4:7

From the expression "formerly," and also from the description given of the custom in question, it follows that the custom had gone out of use at the time when the book was composed. This custom also existed among the Indians and the ancient Germans. It arose from the fact that fixed property was possessed by treading upon the soil. Taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership (see Deuteronomy 25:9).

7. *Was the law fully carried out?* 4:8

The practice of spitting in the face of one who refused to perform his Levirate duty had evidently ceased. The Law had stipulated that the widow would come to the man in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot. She was also instructed to spit in his face and say, "So shall it be done unto the man that will not build up his brother's house" (Deuteronomy 25:9). As a result of this, the man was called in Israel "the house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deuteronomy 25:10). In this instance only the shoe was removed and given to

the neighbor. The years intervening between the giving of the Law and the time of Ruth had caused the people to drop the spitting in the face from the practice of the day.

*Boaz Marries Ruth 4:9-12*

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.

10 Moreover Ruth the Moabite, 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.

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 Ephratha, and be famous in Bethlehem:

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.

*8. How could Naomi have the right to sell Elimelech's property? 4:9*

Property descended through the sons and not through the daughters of the family, but the law relating to the inheritance of the landed property of Israelites who died childless did not determine the time when such a possession should pass to the relatives of the deceased. Sometimes it may have been immediately after the death of the owner. At other times, it may not have been until after the death of the widow who was left behind (see Numbers 27:9 ff.). No doubt the latter rule prevailed at the time, having been

established by custom. Thus the widow remained in possession of the property as long as she lived. For that length of time she had the right to sell the property in case of need. Still, the sale of a field was not an actual sale of the field itself, but simply of the yearly produce until the year of jubilee.

9. *Why did the people pray for Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah?* 4:11

Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob. She bore two sons to him, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were given equal status in the house of Israel with the other sons, thus Rachel was the mother of three of the founders of the tribes of Israel. Leah bore six sons to Jacob and all of these became heads of the tribes. One, Levi, was the father of all the priestly family. The handmaids of Rachel and Leah gave birth to the other sons who became the heads of the tribes of Israel. The prayer of the people for Ruth was for her to be like these respected mothers of Israel.

10. *Why did the people wish Boaz to be like Pharez?* 4:12

Pharez was the son of Judah. He was born to Judah by Tamar (Genesis 38:29). The families of Judah were descended through him. Judah became the leading tribe of Israel. When Jacob blessed his sons and prayed for them, he predicted the preeminence which would belong to Judah (Genesis 49:8-12). Since Judah was such a leading tribe and his families were counted through the descendants of Pharez, the people of Bethlehem, a city in Judah, could think of no greater blessing than for Boaz and his family to be like the family of Pharez.

*Ruth Bares a Son* 4:13-17

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.

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.

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 borne him.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbors 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.

*11. Why was Naomi congratulated? 4:14*

Her family was not extinct. She had suffered severe losses in the deaths of Elimelech, her husband, and Mahlon and Chilion, her two sons. When she came back to Bethlehem, she felt God had dealt harshly with her. She even asked the people not to call her Naomi any more. Now her fortunes were changed. She indeed deserved the name, Naomi. She was blessed and happy. The women of the community prayed for God's richest blessings to be upon Naomi.

*The Ancestry of David 4:18-22*

18 Now these are the generations of Pharez; Pharez begat Hezron,

19 And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,

20 And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,

21 And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,

22 And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.



12. *At what period was this?* 4:20-22

Obed was David's grandfather. If David were born when Jesse was fifty years old and Jesse was born when his father was at a similar age, we would expect this marriage and birth to have occurred at least a century before the time of David. David came to the attention of Israel when he slew Goliath. Later, he became king at the age of thirty. We are fairly certain of his era as beginning around 1010 B.C., thus the events recorded in the book of Ruth must have transpired sometime during the middle of the twelfth century before Christ.

13. *When was the Book of Ruth written, and for what purpose?* 4:22

It was written before Solomon but after David was a popular hero. If Solomon had been born when Ruth was written, it is natural to expect his name would appear in the genealogy. Since his name is not there, we assume the book was written prior to the time of his birth. Samuel did not live to see David on the throne. His death is recorded in I Samuel 25:1, therefore we place the date of writing as somewhere near 1015 B.C. This would have been after David came to national prominence by killing Goliath (I Samuel 17). He was also a man of war who went in and came out from among the Israelites with great dignity. They sang songs celebrating his prominence; and during this time after his anointing by Samuel (I Samuel 16) and before he became king (II Samuel 2), the book must have been written.

14. *What is the significance of the closing verses?* 4:18-22

The genealogy closes with David, an evident proof that the book was intended to give a family picture from the life of the pious ancestors of this great and godly king of Israel. For us the history which points to David acquires a still higher signification from the fact that all members

## RUTH

of the genealogy of David whose names occur here are also found in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. The passage is given by Matthew word for word in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5, 6a). In view of this, we see this history looks not so much to David as to Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed by all as the Savior and Redeemer of the human race. We learn with what wonderful compassion the Lord raises up the lowly and despised to the greatest glory and majesty.

15. *What state of society under the judges does the book indicate?*

Many of the people were faithful to the Law. They were without central government. Matters such as the redeeming of land by the marrying of widows were handled by the council of men who met in the city gate. All in all, it was a time of peace and prosperity except for the terrible famine which must have been brought on the people by the invasion of the Midianites. They were an agricultural people and took pleasure in the common things of life. Women rejoiced when a healthy child was born to one of their number, and the leaders of the community prayed for rich blessings to be upon husbands and wives whose marriages were consummated in their presence. Certainly, mankind has known cruder eras, and Israel's crying for a king must have been more from selfishness than from actual need.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 4

1. Where did Boaz go to meet the near kinsman?
2. How many men did Boaz call to witness the transaction?
3. In whose name was the property in question?
4. Why did the kinsman refuse to enter into the transaction?

# STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

5. What article of clothing was exchanged to witness the transaction?
6. Whose wife had Ruth been?
7. Whom did the people wish Ruth to be like?
8. To whose house did they wish the house of Boaz to be like?
9. What was the name of the son born to Boaz and Ruth?
10. In whom did the genealogy of Boaz culminate?

## EPILOGUE

The books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth were not written merely to tell the story of what happened in the years covered by the narrative. If this were so, the story would be very incomplete. Many more details should have been given in order to give the reader a full perspective of the era. Neither were the books written to tell a life story of the heroes and heroines of the period. The book of Ruth would be especially incomplete in this regard. Her story is not told completely at all. Many questions are left unanswered. How did Ruth die? How long did she live? Where was she buried? Nothing is said about these details of her life at all.

Ruth fits in between the books of Judges and Samuel like a bone in a socket. Probably the events which are recorded in these four chapters occurred during the time of Gideon. The final verses of the book reach down to the time of David. Hence, the book reaches back into the middle of the time of the Judges and reaches far down into the time of Samuel.

Israel gloried in David. He was not only a man after God's own heart, but he was a man who captured the hearts of the people. They sang of him. They ascribed more honor to him than they did to their first king, King Saul.

The people gloried in the house of David. His house was to be established forever. As long as there was a throne on which a king might sit in Jerusalem, there was a man from the loins of David to sit on that throne. Like the woman from Tekoah, they looked to David as "an angel of God" (II Samuel 14:17).

David captured the city of the Jebusites. The narrative in the book of Judges makes a last mention of this city with a note of despair and contempt. The city was

in the hands of the Jebusites, and a Levite from the north passed the city by in scorn and fear. He would rather spend the night in a nearby hamlet of Benjamin than to risk his life and reputation by stopping in the wicked city of the Canaanites. Although this Levite met a terrible fate at the hand of wicked Israelites, his attitude nevertheless reflects the disdain which the men of the time felt for the city now known as the Holy City.

When David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites, he made it his capital. From this central location, he ruled for thirty-three years of his life, and in it he firmly established the throne of Solomon, his heir and successor. With pride, the people came to refer to Jerusalem as the City of David. Bethlehem, Ruth's adopted home, was the home of David. Centuries later, wise men from the East journeyed through the streets of the town in search of Him whom they called the king of the Jews. Bringing treasures and gifts of distinction, these strange visitors symbolize the adoration of wise men of all ages from all countries.

On the hills where David must have practiced the use of his sling, shepherds sat as they heard the angels sing. The Son of God was born where Ruth gave birth to Obed.

The history of these three books—Joshua, Judges, and Ruth—is only a brief part of the total account of God's dealings with men. It is a part of His Story, the story of redemption. The love story of Ruth couched in the setting of the time when Israel had no king is but a dim reflection of the love story of God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In similar fashion, the story of Joshua's leading the people into the Promised Land of Canaan is typical of the great Saviour who will eventually lead His people into the promised land of heaven. The story of Joshua is so suggestive of the final triumphal entry of God's people into

## EPILOGUE

eternal rest that the pages of the book of Hebrews are in part a rather full exposition of this analogy. In fact, the translators of the King James Version use the names of Jesus and Joshua interchangeably in Hebrews 4:8. The Authorized Version reads as follows: "For if Jesus had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day." The American Standard Version changes the word *Jesus* to *Joshua*. Joshua's name in Greek is the same as the Greek for the English name, Jesus. Joshua gave the people of Israel rest by leading them into the land of Canaan. Jesus will give His faithful followers rest when He comes back to welcome them into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

All through these historical books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth the modern-day reader is constantly finding issues which are relevant to his own times. Answers to some of his problems are found in his reflections over the causes and results of events recorded in this part of the Bible. At the same time, his eyes are lifted over the horizon of the hills of Judea to see the coming of the Christ. Even beyond these hills, his vision is directed to anticipate the time when the son of David comes again. The end of the story of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth has not yet been written.

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