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# שופטים • JUDGES

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Judges* is made up of three unequal parts: **1** Introduction (1:1–2:10); **2** History of the Judges (2:11–16:31); **3** Two appendices: the first dealing with the migration of the Danites and the founding of the sanctuary at Dan (Chs 17–18), the second with the war waged on the Benjaminites for their crime at Gibeah (Chs 19–21). The present introduction to the book, 1:1–2:5, is not original and its insertion has given rise to the repetition of information about the death and burial of Joshua already given in Jos 24:29–31.

The history of the Judges occupies the central portion of the book, 2:11–16:31. Scholars commonly distinguish six ‘major’ judges: Othniel, Ehud, Barak (and Deborah), Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, whose deeds are told in considerable detail, and six ‘minor’ judges: Shamgar (3:31), Tola and Jair (10:1–15), Ibzan, Elon and Abdon (12:8–15), who receive only brief mention. The ‘major judges’ are hero-liberators: their origins, personalities and deeds vary in many respects but all have one common characteristic: they have received a special grace: God has chosen them individually for a mission of rescue. Initially, their histories were handed down by word of mouth and were eventually collected into a ‘book of liberators’, traditionally collated by the prophet Samuel. The ‘minor judges’, Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, come from a different tradition: to them, no saving act is attributed; the only information given is their origin, family and place of burial, and that they are said to have ‘judged’ Israel for a number of years. The ‘Deuteronomic’ *Book of Judges* evidently passed through at least two editions. The most obvious indications of this are: the two elements added in the introduction, 2:11–19 and 2:6–10 plus 2:20–3:6, and the two conclusions to the story of Samson, 15:20 and 16:30, which show that Ch. 16 is an addition.

There are 4 *Qumran* MSS that feature parts of Judges: 1QJudg, 4QJudg<sup>a</sup>, 4QJudg<sup>b</sup>, and XJudges (a fragment discovered in 2001).

## AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

Tradition holds that the Prophet Samuel was the author of the original book, which consisted of material dating back to the period shortly after the pre-monarchical period (8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) but some of the material (for example, the “Song of Deborah,” Ch. 5) dates back much further, to the time of the story’s setting (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Century); however, there have been numerous edits and additions made and, in its current form, it was probably completed by the so-called ‘Deuteronomic Editor’, during the reign of one of the later kings.

The chief events, the memory of which has been preserved, can be assigned only approximate dates within this period. The victory of Taanach under Deborah and Barak (Chs 4–5) may have been won sometime during the middle years of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE; it preceded the Midianite invasion (Gideon) and the expansion of the Philistines beyond their original frontiers (Samson).

The appendices (Chs 17–21), which do not relate the story of a judge but record events that took place before the inauguration of the monarchy, were most likely added (by a ‘Priestly Editor’) to the end of the book after the return from Exile.

## שופטים פרק א

א וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בִּיהוָה לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה-לָּנוּ אֶל-הַכְּנַעֲנִי בַתְּחִלָּה  
לְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יְהוּדָה יַעֲלֶה הֵנָּה נִתְּתִי  
אֶת-הָאָרֶץ בְּיָדוֹ: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה לְשִׁמְעוֹן אֲחִיו  
עֲלֶה אִתִּי בְּגִרְלִי וְנִלְחַמָּה בַּכְּנַעֲנִי וְהִלַּכְתִּי גַם-אֲנִי  
אִתְּךָ בְּגֹרְלֶךָ וְיִלְדָּה אִתּוֹ שְׁמֵעוֹן: ד וַיַּעַל יְהוּדָה וַיִּתֵּן  
יְהוָה אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי בְיָדָם וַיָּכּוּם בְּבֶזֶק  
עַשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ: ה וַיִּמָּצְאוּ אֶת-אֲדֹנִי בֶזֶק  
בְּבֶזֶק וַיִּלָּחֲמוּ בּוֹ וַיָּכּוּ אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת-הַפְּרִזִּי:  
ו וַיִּנָּס אֲדֹנִי בֶזֶק וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרָיו וַיֹּאחֲזוּ אוֹתוֹ  
וַיִּקְצְצוּ אֶת-בְּהֶנֹת יָדָיו וְרַגְלָיו: ז וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנִי-בֶזֶק

## JUDGES 1

<sup>1</sup> After Joshua died, the Israelites asked Yahweh, "Who shall march up first against the Canaanites to make war on them?" <sup>2</sup> Yahweh said, "Judah shall go up. Behold, I hereby give the land into his hand." <sup>3</sup> Then Judah said to Simeon his brother, "March with me into the territory allotted to me; we will attack the Canaanite, and then I in my turn will march with you into your allotted territory." So, Simeon marched with him. <sup>4</sup> Then Judah marched up, and Yahweh delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites into their hands; and they routed ten thousand men at Bezek. <sup>5</sup> They met Adoni-Zedek at Bezek and fought him; they defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites. <sup>6</sup> Adoni-Zedek took to flight, but they followed and captured him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. <sup>7</sup> Then

## JUDGES 1

- <sup>1</sup> The verb translated 'asked' (וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ) refers here to consulting God through a prophetic oracle; cf. *NJB*, *NAB*: 'consulted'.
- <sup>2</sup> The exclamation, הִנֵּה ('Behold'), draws attention to the following statement; the verb form in the following statement (perfect, indicating completed action from the standpoint of the speaker) emphasises the certainty of the event: though it had not yet taken place, God speaks of it as a 'done deal'.
- <sup>3</sup> These are the two tribes of the south (see v. 17ff), which seem to have entered Canaan without making the detour through Transjordan.
- <sup>4</sup> The location of 'Bezek' (בֶּזֶק) is uncertain, though Khirbet-Ibzik, 27 km north of Shechem, is a possibility.
- <sup>5</sup> It seems that there is some confusion between this Adoni-Bezek, king of Bezek, and Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem (see Jos 10:1-3), whence the mention of that city (v. 7 and the later gloss of v. 8, which contradicts v. 21 and 2S 5:6ff). The victory at Bezek raises a problem: the only known town of this name lying between Shechem and Beth-Shean in the region then occupied by the Perizzites, but a long way from the territory of Judah and Simeon; it is perhaps a memory preserved from the Patriarchal Age, when Simeon lived in central Palestine.
- <sup>6</sup> The exact purpose of this form of mutilation is unclear.
- <sup>7</sup> 'Jerusalem' represents Adoni-Zedek's own people (see #8).

שְׁבַעִים | מְלָכִים בִּהְנוֹת יְדֵיהֶם וְרַגְלֵיהֶם מִקְצָצִים  
הָיוּ מִלִּקְטִים תַּחַת שְׁלַחַי כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּכֹן שְׁלֹם-  
לִי אֱלֹהִים וַיְבִיאוּהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיָּמָת שָׁם: {פ}

ח וַיִּלָּחֲמוּ בְנֵי-יְהוּדָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיָּכוּהָ  
לְפִי-חֶרֶב וְאֶת-הָעִיר שְׁלָחוּ בָאֵשׁ: ט וְאַחֲרֵי יֵרְדוּ  
בְנֵי יְהוּדָה לְהִלָּחֵם בַּכְּנָעַנִי יוֹשֵׁב הָהָר וְהַנֶּגֶב  
וְהַשְּׁפֵלָה: י וַיִּלָּךְ יְהוּדָה אֶל-הַכְּנָעַנִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב  
בְּחֶבְרוֹן וְשֵׁם-חֶבְרוֹן לִפְנֵים קִרְיַת אַרְבַּע וַיָּכוּ אֶת-  
שֵׁשַׁי וְאֶת-אַחִימָן וְאֶת-תַּלְמַי: יא וַיִּלָּךְ מִשָּׁם אֶל-  
יוֹשְׁבֵי דִבְרִי וְשֵׁם-דִבְרִי לִפְנֵים קִרְיַת-סֶפֶר:  
יב וַיֹּאמֶר כָּלֵב אֲשֶׁר-יָכָה אֶת-קִרְיַת-סֶפֶר וּלְכָדָהּ  
וְנָתַתִּי לוֹ אֶת-עַכְסָה בְּתִי לְאִשָּׁה: יג וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ  
עֲתַנְיָאֵל בֶּן-קִנָּז אָחִי כָלֵב הַקָּטָן מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּתֵּן-לוֹ אֶת-  
עַכְסָה בְּתוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: יד וַיְהִי בְּבֹאָהּ וַתְּסִיתֶהוּ

Adoni-Zedek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to pick up the crumbs under my table. As I did to others, so God does to me.” They took him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

<sup>8</sup> The sons of Judah attacked Jerusalem and took it: they put it to the sword and set fire to the city. <sup>9</sup> After this, the sons of Judah went down to make war on the Canaanites who lived in the highlands, the Negeb and the lowlands. <sup>10</sup> Then Judah marched against the Canaanites in Hebron (the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-Arba) and they overcame Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai. <sup>11</sup> From there, they marched against the inhabitants of Debir (the name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-Sepher). <sup>12</sup> Caleb said, “To the man who attacks and takes Kiriath-Sepher, I will give my daughter Achsah to wife.” <sup>13</sup> And Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. <sup>14</sup> When she came to her husband, she urged

<sup>8</sup> This verse is a gloss (see #5): David captured Jerusalem (2S 5:6ff). In place of ‘put it to the sword’, here following the MT, NRSV & NETB, the NJB has ‘put its people to the sword’.

<sup>9</sup> This paragraph is an editorial introduction to the rest of the narrative, ascribing conquests to Judah that were, in fact, achieved by groups only later assimilated to Judah: Caleb (conquest of Hebron, v. 20, see Jos 14:6ff), Othniel (capture of Debir, v. 13, see Jos 15:15–17), the Kenites (occupation of the Negeb of Arad, v. 16) and Simeon (capture of Hormah, v. 17). Another reading for ‘lowlands’ (שְׁפֵלָה) is ‘foothills’.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Hebron’ (חֶבְרוֹן) is 32 km south of Jerusalem; the continuous occupation of the area has made it impossible to locate the remains of the Bronze and Iron Age city.

<sup>11</sup> The identification of Debir (דִּבְרִי) with Tell Beit Mirsim is not certain; Khirbet-er-Rabub is another possibility.

<sup>12</sup> In place of ‘attacks and takes’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘conquers and captures’.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Caleb’s younger brother’ may refer to Othniel or to Kenaz (in which case Othniel was Caleb’s nephew; so CEV).

<sup>14</sup> In place of ‘she urged him’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (ἐπέσεισεν αὐτήν) has ‘he urged her’ (cf. Jos 15:18).

לְשֹׂאֵל מֵאֵת־אָבִיהָ הַשָּׂדֶה וַתִּצְנַח מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר  
וַיֹּאמֶר־לָהּ כָּלֵב מֶה־לָּךְ: <sup>טו</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִבֵּה־לִי  
בְרָכָה כִּי אֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב נָתַתָּנִי וְנָתַתָּה לִי גִלְתַּי מִיָּם  
וַיִּתֵּן־לָהּ כָּלֵב אֶת גִּלְתַּי עָלֶיךָ וְאֶת גִּלְתַּי  
תַּחֲתֶיךָ: {פ}

<sup>טז</sup> וּבְנֵי קִינִי חָתָן מֹשֶׁה עָלוּ מֵעִיר הַתְּמָרִים אֶת־  
בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה מִדְּבַר יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר בְּנֶגֶב עָרַד וַיֵּלֶךְ  
וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת־הָעָם: <sup>יז</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוּדָה אֶת־שִׁמְעוֹן אָחִיו  
וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב צֶפֶת וַיַּחְרִימוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרָא  
אֶת־שֵׁם־הָעִיר חֲרָמָה: <sup>יח</sup> וַיִּלְכְּדוּ יְהוּדָה אֶת־עֵזָה  
וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ וְאֶת־אֲשְׁקֶלֶן וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ וְאֶת־עֶקְרוֹן  
וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ: <sup>יט</sup> וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה וַיִּרֶשׁ אֶת־  
הָהָר כִּי לֹא לְהוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יֹשְׁבֵי הָעֵמֶק כִּי־רַכֵּב  
בְּרִזָּל לָהֶם: <sup>כ</sup> וַיִּתְּנוּ לְכָלֵב אֶת־חֶבְרוֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר

him to ask her father for a field. Then she jumped down from her donkey, and Caleb asked her, “What do you want?” <sup>15</sup> She answered, “Give me a present! As the land you have given me is the Negeb, give me springs of water, too!” So, Caleb gave her what she wanted: the upper springs and the lower springs.

<sup>16</sup> The sons of Hobab the Kenite, father-in-law of Moses, marched up with the sons of Judah from the City of Palms into the desert of Judah, lying in the Negeb of Arad; they went and lived with the Amalekites.

<sup>17</sup> Judah set out with his brother Simeon; they overcame the Canaanites who lived in Zephath and delivered it over to the ban; so, the city was called Hormah. <sup>18</sup> Judah then captured Gaza and its territory, Ashkelon and its territory, and Ekron and its territory; <sup>19</sup> Yahweh was with Judah, and Judah subdued the highlands, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had iron chariots. <sup>20</sup> As Moses had

<sup>15</sup> The NRSV uses ‘Gulloth-Mayim’ (‘Basins of Water’) in place of ‘springs of water’ and ‘Upper Gulloth’ and ‘Lower Gulloth’ for ‘upper springs’ and ‘lower springs’; here, we follow the NJB & NETB. Elsewhere, בְּרָכָה (‘present’) is often translated ‘blessing’ but here it refers to a gift (as in Gn 33:11, 1S 25:27, 30:26 & 2K 5:15).

<sup>16</sup> The MT lacks ‘Hobab’, here following the LXX (Ιωβαβ), NJB & NRSV. The ‘City of Palms’ is probably Jericho (as in 3:13).

<sup>17</sup> The name ‘Hormah’ (חֲרָמָה) is derived from the Hebrew חָרַם, the total destruction of a city and its inhabitants.

<sup>18</sup> Judah did not conquer these towns in Philistia, either at the time of the settlement or later, and this verse is in contradiction to v. 19. The LXX (and the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the Jerusalem text) overcomes this difficulty by inserting a negative: “Judah did not conquer...” The text possibly reflects and amplifies David’s victories over the Philistines (2S 5:17–25, 8:1).

<sup>19</sup> The NJB subdivides and rearranges this verse, having, “<sup>19b</sup> but they could not drive out ... iron chariots,” followed by “<sup>19a</sup> Yahweh was with Judah, and Judah subdued the highlands.”

<sup>20</sup> NETB has ‘Anakites’ in place of ‘sons of Anak’, here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּרֶשׁ מִשָּׁם אֶת־שְׁלֹשָׁה בְנֵי הָעֲנָק: כֹּא וְאֶת־  
הַיְבוּסִי יֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם לֹא הוֹרִישׁוּ בְנֵי בְנִימִן וַיֹּשֶׁב  
הַיְבוּסִי אֶת־בְּנֵי בְנִימִן בִּירוּשָׁלַם עַד הַיּוֹם  
הַזֶּה: {פ}

כב וַיַּעֲלֹ בֵית־יוֹסֵף גַּם־הֵם בֵּית־אֵל וַיהוָה עִמָּם:  
כג וַיִּתְּרוּ בֵית־יוֹסֵף בְּבֵית־אֵל וְשֵׁם־הָעִיר לְפָנִים  
לְזוֹ: כד וַיֵּרְאוּ הַשְּׂמָרִים אִישׁ יוֹצֵא מִן־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
לֹא הָרָאנוּ נָא אֶת־מְבֹא הָעִיר וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ חֶסֶד:  
כה וַיֵּרְאֵם אֶת־מְבֹא הָעִיר וַיָּכּוּ אֶת־הָעִיר לְפִי־  
חֶרֶב וְאֶת־הָאִישׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ שָׁלְחוּ: כו וַיֵּלֶךְ  
הָאִישׁ אֶרֶץ הַחִתִּים וַיִּבֶן עִיר וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ לְזוֹ הוּא  
שְׁמָהּ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: {פ}

כז וְלֹא־הוֹרִישׁ מִנְּשָׁה אֶת־בֵּית־שֶׁאֵן וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ  
וְאֶת־תַּעֲנָךְ וְאֶת־בְּנֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי יוֹשֵׁב דּוֹר  
וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי יִבְלָעַם וְאֶת־בְּנֹתֶיהָ  
וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי מְגִדּוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ וַיֹּאֲלֵ הַכְּנַעֲנִי

directed, Hebron was given to Caleb, and he drove out the three sons of Anak.<sup>21</sup> But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites living in Jerusalem, and the Jebusites have been living in Jerusalem with the sons of Benjamin ever since.

<sup>22</sup> In the same way, the House of Joseph went up against Bethel, and Yahweh was with them. <sup>23</sup> The House of Joseph made a reconnaissance of Bethel. The name of the city used to be Luz. <sup>24</sup> The spies saw a man coming out of the city, and said to him, "If you show us how to enter the city, we will spare you." <sup>25</sup> He showed them a way into the city. They put the inhabitants to the sword but let the man go, and all his clan with him. <sup>26</sup> The man went off to the country of the Hittites and built a town, which he called Luz; that is its name even yet.

<sup>27</sup> Manasseh did not dispossess Beth-Shean and its dependencies, or Taanach and its villages. He did not drive out the inhabitants of Dor and its outlying villages, or of Ibleam and its villages, or of Megiddo and its villages; in those parts the Canaanites held their ground. <sup>28</sup> When the

<sup>21</sup> Jerusalem was certainly reckoned a Benjaminite town (Jos 18:28) but was not in fact conquered until it was taken by David (2S 5:6–9).

<sup>22</sup> 'House' here is a metonym for the warriors of the tribe.

<sup>23</sup> The capture of Bethel owing to the treachery of one of its occupants does not figure in the account of the conquest in Joshua.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB has 'scouts' in place of 'spies', here following the NRSV & NETB.

<sup>25</sup> Before 'way into', NETB adds the word 'secret'; here, we follow the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>26</sup> Note that the man names his new town after his former city.

<sup>27</sup> The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>28</sup> These towns were not actually conquered until the early days of the monarchy (1K 9:15–22).



לְשֵׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת: כֹּחַ וַיְהִי כִי־חָזַק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁעוּ  
אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי לַמָּס וְהוֹרִישׁ לֹא הוֹרִישׁוּ: {ס}

כֹּס וְאֶפְרַיִם לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּגֶזֶר  
וַיֵּשֶׁב הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ בְּגֶזֶר: {ס}

לִזְבוּלֹן לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יּוֹשְׁבֵי קִטְרוֹן וְאֶת־יּוֹשְׁבֵי  
נַהֲלָלוֹל וַיֵּשֶׁב הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וַיְהִיו לַמָּס: {ס}

לֹא אָשֶׁר לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יּוֹשְׁבֵי עֲכוֹ וְאֶת־יּוֹשְׁבֵי  
צִידוֹן וְאֶת־אֲחֻלַּב וְאֶת־אֲכֻזִּיב וְאֶת־חֶלְבָּה וְאֶת־  
אֶפֶיק וְאֶת־רְחֹב: לִב וַיֵּשֶׁב הָאֲשֻׁרִי בְּקִרְבֵּי הַכְּנַעֲנִי  
יֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ כִּי לֹא הוֹרִישׁוּ: {ס}

לִנַּפְתָּלִי לֹא־הוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יּוֹשְׁבֵי בֵּית־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת־  
יֹשְׁבֵי בֵּית־עֲנַת וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּקִרְבֵּי הַכְּנַעֲנִי יֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ  
וַיֵּשֶׁב בֵּית־שֶׁמֶשׁ וּבֵּית עֲנַת הָיוּ לָהֶם לַמָּס:  
לִד וַיִּלְחָצוּ הָאֲמֹרִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־דָן הַהֵרָה כִּי־לֹא נָתְנוּ  
לָרֶדֶת לַעֲמֹק: לֵה וַיּוֹאֵל הָאֲמֹרִי לְשֵׁבֶת בְּהַר־חֶרֶס  
בְּאֵילָוִן וּבְשַׁעֲלָבִים וּתְכַבֵּד יָד בֵּית־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִיו

Israelites became stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labour, though they did not drive them out.

<sup>29</sup> Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites in Gezer; thus, the Canaanites went on living there among them.

<sup>30</sup> Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or Nahalol. The Canaanites lived on with Zebulun but were subject to forced labour.

<sup>31</sup> Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco or of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib or of Helbah, or of Aphek, or of Rehob; <sup>32</sup> so the Asherites lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the country, for they did not drive them out.

<sup>33</sup> Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh or of Beth-Anath but lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land; but the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh and Beth-Anath became subject to forced labour for them. <sup>34</sup> The Amorites drove the Danites into the highlands; they did not allow them to enter the plain. <sup>35</sup> The Amorites held their ground at Har-Heres and Shaalbim, but the hand of the House of Joseph

<sup>29</sup> 'Gezer' is on the Jerusalem-Jaffa road, dominating the Philistine plain: the southern tribes were cut off from the northern ones.

<sup>30</sup> Before 'Nahalol', the MT & NRSV repeat 'the inhabitants of'; here, we follow the NJB.

<sup>31</sup> For 'Ahlab' the NJB, following Jos 19:29, has 'Mahalab'; 'Helbah' is presumably a doublet.

<sup>32</sup> NETB has 'conquer them' in place of 'drive them out', here following the NJB & NRSV.

<sup>33</sup> Before 'of Beth-Anath', the MT & NRSV repeat 'the inhabitants'; here, we follow the NJB.

<sup>34</sup> NETB adds 'coastal' before 'plain'.

<sup>35</sup> In place of 'held their ground', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'continued to live'.

לָמַס׃ לוֹ וְגִבּוֹל׳ הָאֲמֹרִי מִמַּעַלָּה עַקְרָבִים מֵהַסֵּלַע grew heavy and they became subject to forced labour. <sup>36</sup> The border of  
וּמֵעֵלָה׃ {פ} the Amorites ran from the Ascent of Akrabbim to Sela and up.

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<sup>36</sup> The NJB has 'Edomites' (following, perhaps, an obscure MSS of the LXX) in place of 'Amorites' (וְגִבּוֹל׳ הָאֲמֹרִי). This verse is a gloss.

## שופטים פרק ב

א וַיַּעַל מַלְאֲכֵי־יְהוָה מִן־הַגִּלְגָּל אֶל־הַבְּכִים {פ}

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָּה אַתְּכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וַאֲבִיא אֶתְכֶם אֶל־  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם וָאֵמַר לֹא־אֶפְרָ  
בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם לְעוֹלָם: ב וְאַתֶּם לֹא־תִכְרְתוּ בְרִית  
לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִזְבַּחֹתֵיהֶם תִּתְּצוּן וְלֹא־  
שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי מֵהַזֹּאת עֲשִׂיתֶם: ג וְגַם אִמְרָתִי  
לֹא־אֶגְרֹשׁ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְצָדִים  
וְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִהְיוּ לָכֶם לְמוֹקֵשׁ: ד וַיְהִי כִּדְבַר מַלְאֲכֵי  
יְהוָה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיֵּשְׂאוּ הָעָם אֶת־קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכּוּ: ה וַיִּקְרְאוּ שֵׁם־  
הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בְּכִים וַיִּזְבְּחוּ־שָׁם לַיהוָה: {פ}

ו וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּלְכוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ  
לְנַחֲלָתוֹ לָרֶשֶׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: ז וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ הָעָם אֶת־

## JUDGES 2

<sup>1</sup> The Angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bochim.

And he said, "I brought you out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your fathers. I said: "I shall never break my Covenant with you. <sup>2</sup> For your part, make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you must destroy their altars." However, you have not obeyed my orders. What is it that you have done? <sup>3</sup> Very well, I now say this: I am not going to drive out these nations before you. They shall become your oppressors, and their gods shall be a snare for you." <sup>4</sup> When the Angel of Yahweh had spoken these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, they called the name of the place Bochim and offered sacrifices to Yahweh there.

<sup>6</sup> When Joshua told the people to go, the Israelites went away, each to his own possession, to occupy the land. <sup>7</sup> The people served Yahweh

### JUDGES 2

<sup>1</sup> In place of 'Bochim' (בְּכִים), the NJB, following the LXX (Βαιθηλ), has 'Bethel' and adds, 'and came to the House of Israel' (καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραηλ).

<sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'obeyed my orders' is 'listened to my voice'.

<sup>3</sup> 'Oppressors' follows the Vg; the MT has 'sides' (צָדִים). The term may be related to an Accadian cognate meaning 'snare', giving 'they will become snares to you'; alternatively, on the basis of Nb 33:55, some suggest the word for 'thorns' has been accidentally omitted, so that the text should read 'they will become thorns in your sides' (cf. NASB, NIV, NLT).

<sup>4</sup> In place of 'lifted up their voices and wept', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has 'began to groan and weep'.

<sup>5</sup> 'Bochim' (בְּכִים) means, 'The Weepers'; the place is unknown and occurs nowhere else in the OT; cf. the 'Oak of Tears', near Bethel (Gn 35:8).

<sup>6</sup> Vv. 2:20–3:6 have been added to explain the persistence of foreign nations in Israelite territory.

<sup>7</sup> This verse repeats Jos 24:31.



יְהוָה כָּל יְמֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְכָל יְמֵי הַזִּקְנִים אֲשֶׁר  
הָאֲרִיכוּ יָמִים אַחֲרֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת כָּל־  
מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>ח</sup> וַיָּמָת  
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון עֶבֶד יְהוָה בֶּן־מָאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים:  
<sup>ט</sup> וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּגִבּוֹל נַחֲלָתוֹ בְּתִמְנַת־חֶרֶס בְּהַר  
אֶפְרַיִם מִצְפּוֹן לַהֲרִגְגֹּשׁ: <sup>י</sup> וְגַם כָּל־הַדּוֹר הַהוּא  
נֶאֱסָפוּ אֶל־אֲבוֹתָיו וַיָּקֶם דּוֹר אַחֵר אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־יָדְעוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וְגַם אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

<sup>יא</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבְדוּ  
אֶת־הַבַּעַלִּים: <sup>יב</sup> וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָם  
הַמוֹצִיא אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו | אֱלֹהִים  
אַחֲרִים מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר סָבִיבוֹתֵיהֶם  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם וַיִּכְעֲסוּ אֶת־יְהוָה: <sup>יג</sup> וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־

throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the lifetime of those elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the great deeds that Yahweh had done for the sake of Israel. <sup>8</sup> Joshua son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died when he was a hundred and ten years old. <sup>9</sup> They buried him on the estate he had received for inheritance, at Timnath-Heres in the highlands of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. <sup>10</sup> Moreover, when that generation too had been gathered to its fathers, another generation followed it, which knew neither Yahweh nor the deeds that he had done for the sake of Israel.

<sup>11</sup> Then the sons of Israel did what displeases Yahweh and served the Baals. <sup>12</sup> They deserted Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from the gods of the peoples round them. They bowed down to these; and they provoked Yahweh to anger; <sup>13</sup> they deserted Yahweh to serve Baal

<sup>8</sup> This verse repeats the statement of Jos 24:29.

<sup>9</sup> This verse is nearly identical to Jos 24:30.

<sup>10</sup> This verse does not occur in the parallel passage of Jos 24. The death of Joshua and of the generation of the conquest leaves the way free for Israel to lapse into infidelity.

<sup>11</sup> Here, an editor of the book states the theme to be restated in the history of each of the major Judges (see #3:7): 3:7-9, 12-15, 4:1ff, 6:10, 10:6ff, etc. Israel deserts Yahweh for Baal, Yahweh hands Israel over to oppressors, Israel cries to Yahweh, Yahweh sends Israel a saviour, and the cycle begins again.

<sup>12</sup> The NJB lacks 'to anger', here following the NRSV.

<sup>13</sup> The 'Ashtars' were local manifestations of the goddess Astarte; some English translations simply transliterate the plural Hebrew term (עֲשֵׁתָרוֹת) = 'Ashtaroth', cf. NAB, NASB), pluralise the transliterated Hebrew singular form ('Ashtoreths', cf. NIV), or use a variation of the name ('Astartes', cf. NRSV). In the Bible, the phrase, 'Baal and Astarte' or, in the plural, 'the Baals and Astartes', is the common expression for the Canaanite

וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ לַבַּעַל וּלְעִשְׁתָּרוֹת: <sup>14</sup> וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּיַד־שָׂסִים וַיִּשְׁסוּ אוֹתָם וַיִּמְכְּרֵם  
בְּיַד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם מִסָּבִיב וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ עוֹד לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי  
אוֹיְבֵיהֶם: <sup>15</sup> בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ יַד־יְהוָה הִיתָה־בָּם  
לְרָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לָהֶם  
וַיַּצֵּר לָהֶם מָאָד:

<sup>16</sup> וַיָּקָם יְהוָה שֹׁפְטִים וַיּוֹשִׁיעוּם מִיַּד שִׁסִּיהֶם: <sup>17</sup> וְגַם  
אֶל־שֹׁפְטֵיהֶם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי זָנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים  
אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם סָרוּ מִהַר מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר  
הָלְכוּ אֲבוֹתָם לִשְׁמֹעַ מִצְוֹת־יְהוָה לֹא־עָשׂוּ כֵן:  
<sup>18</sup> וְכִי־הָקִים יְהוָה לָהֶם שֹׁפְטִים וְהָיָה יְהוָה עִם־  
הַשֹּׁפֵט וְהוֹשִׁיעַם מִיַּד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם כָּל־יְמֵי הַשּׁוֹפֵט כִּי־  
יִנָּחֵם יְהוָה מִנֶּאֱקָתָם מִפְּנֵי לַחֲצִיָּהֶם וּדְחָקֵיהֶם:  
<sup>19</sup> וְהָיָה בְּמוֹת הַשּׁוֹפֵט יֵשְׁבוּ וְהִשְׁחִיתוּ מֵאֲבוֹתָם  
לָלֶכֶת אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לַעֲבֹדָם וּלְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת

and the Ashtars. <sup>14</sup> Then Yahweh's anger flamed out against Israel. He handed them over to plunderers who plundered them; he delivered them to the enemies surrounding them, and they were not able to resist them. <sup>15</sup> Whenever they marched out, the hand of Yahweh was there to foil them, as Yahweh had warned, as Yahweh had sworn to them. Thus, he reduced them to dire distress.

<sup>16</sup> Then Yahweh raised up judges, who saved them from the hands of their plunderers. <sup>17</sup> Yet, they did not listen to their judges. They prostituted themselves to other gods and bowed down to them. They quickly left the path their fathers had walked in obedience to the orders of Yahweh; they did not follow their example. <sup>18</sup> When Yahweh appointed judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and saved them from the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for, Yahweh felt pity in their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. <sup>19</sup> But when the judge died, they relapsed and behaved worse than their

divinities. 'Baal' ('the Lord'), is the divine male principle, often regarded as owner of the soil; 'Astarte' (the Assyrian 'Ishtar') is the goddess of love and fecundity. The name, 'Asherah', another female divinity of the same type (see #Ex 34:13), is sometimes used instead (3:7, 2K 23:4).

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'plunderers', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'pillagers' and NETB has 'robbers'.

<sup>15</sup> The NJB has 'in every warlike venture' in place of 'whenever they marched out', here following the NRSV.

<sup>16</sup> The 'judges', regarded as divinely chosen, were rulers and governors who led a tribe or group of tribes in war, rather than administrators of justice: see #3:7.

<sup>17</sup> 'To prostitute oneself to other gods' is a customary figure of speech for idol worship (see Lv 17:7, Dt 31:16, Is 1:21, Ezk 16:16, Ho 1:2).

<sup>18</sup> The NJB ends this verse, here following the NRSV, with, "... for them as they groaned under the iron grip of their oppressors."

<sup>19</sup> The NJB ends this verse, here following the NRSV, with, "they would not give up the practices and stubborn ways of their ancestors at all."

לָהֶם לֹא הִפִּילוּ מִמַּעַלְלֵיהֶם וּמִדַּרְכָּם הַקָּשָׁה:  
 בַּיַּחֲרָאֵף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר יְעֹן אֲשֶׁר עָבְרוּ  
 הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם וְלֹא  
 שָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלִי: כֹּא גַם־אֲנִי לֹא אוֹסִיף לְהוֹרִישׁ אִישׁ  
 מִפְּנֵיהֶם מִן־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־עָזַב יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיָּמָת:  
 כִּי לִמְעַן נִסּוֹת בָּם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַשְׁמָרִים הֵם אֶת־  
 דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה לָלֶכֶת בָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ אֲבוֹתָם אִם־  
 לֹא: כִּי־וַיִּנַּח יְהוָה אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה לְבִלְתִּי הוֹרִישָׁם  
 מִהָרָ וְלֹא נָתַנָּם בְּיַד־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: {פ}

fathers, following other gods, serving them and bowing to them; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. <sup>20</sup> Then Yahweh's anger flamed out against Israel, and he said, "Since this people has broken the Covenant I laid down for their fathers, since they have not obeyed my voice, <sup>21</sup> I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died." <sup>22</sup> In order to test Israel, whether or not they would take care to walk in the way of Yahweh as their fathers did, <sup>23</sup> Yahweh had left those nations, not driving them out immediately, and had not handed them over to Joshua.

<sup>20</sup> According to vv. 11–15 (see also v. 3), the foreign nations were left as a punishment for the infidelities of Israel. Here, however, their presence is explained as a way of putting Israel's fidelity to the test (vv. 22–23, 3:1, 4). The gloss of 3:2 offers another explanation: to maintain the warrior spirit. Other reasons are given in Ex 23:29 and Dt 7:22: to prevent the country from being overrun with wild animals; and, in Ws 12:3–22, to allow the former inhabitants time to repent.

<sup>21</sup> After 'left', the NJB adds 'in the land' and NETB adds 'unconquered'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

<sup>22</sup> The NJB (and NETB) translates this verse, here following the MT & NRSV, highly interpretively: "This was to test them by means of these nations; to see whether Israel would or would not tread the paths of Yahweh as once their ancestors had trodden them."

<sup>23</sup> In place of 'immediately', here following NETB, the NRSV has 'at once'.

## שופטים פרק ג

א וְאֵלֶּה הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיחַ יְהוָה לְנִסּוֹת בָּם אֶת־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ אֶת כָּל־מִלְחָמוֹת  
בְּנֵעֵן: ב רַק לְמַעַן דַּעַת דִּרוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְלַמֶּדֶם  
מִלְחָמָה רַק אֲשֶׁר־לִפְנֵים לֹא יָדְעוּם: ג חֲמִשָּׁתָּה  
סִרְיֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים וְכָל־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַצִּידֹנִי וְהַחִוִּי יָשָׁב  
הָר הַלְבָנוֹן מֵהָר בְּעַל חֶרְמוֹן עַד לְבֹוא חֲמַת:  
ד וַיְהִי לְנִסּוֹת בָּם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדַעַת הִישְׁמָעוּ  
אֶת־מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם בְּיַד־  
מֹשֶׁה: ה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשָׁבוּ בְּקֶרֶב הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַחֲתִי  
וְהָאֲמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי: ו וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־  
בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם לָהֶם לְנָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיהֶם נָתַן  
לְבָנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: {פ}

## JUDGES 3

<sup>1</sup> These are the nations that Yahweh let remain, to use them to test all those in Israel who had never known war in Canaan <sup>2</sup> (it was only that successive generations of Israelites might know war, to teach those who had no experience of it before): <sup>3</sup> the five chiefs of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in the range of Lebanon, from the uplands of Baal-Hermon to the pass of Hamath. <sup>4</sup> They were to test Israel and see if they would keep the orders of Yahweh, which he had given their fathers through Moses. <sup>5</sup> The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; <sup>6</sup> they married the daughters of these peoples, gave their own daughters in marriage to their sons, and served their gods.

## JUDGES 3

- <sup>1</sup> For this verse, here following the NJB, NETB has, "These were the nations the Lord permitted to remain so he could use them to test Israel – he wanted to test all those who had not experienced battle against the Canaanites." The stated purpose for leaving the nations (to teach the subsequent generations ... how to conduct holy war) seems to contradict 2:22 and 3:4, which indicate the nations were left to test Israel's loyalty to God. However, the two stated purposes can be harmonised: the willingness of later generations to learn and engage in holy war would measure their allegiance to Yahweh.
- <sup>2</sup> The syntax of this verse is difficult: the MT reads literally, "Only in order that the generations of the Israelites might know, to teach them war – only those who formerly did not know them."
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'Hivites', the NJB has 'Hittites' (following Jos 11:3 and 2S 24:6).
- <sup>4</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... to know if they would hear the commands of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses."
- <sup>5</sup> The NJB omits a number of occurrences of the definite article preceding the names of tribes in this verse; here, we follow the NRSV.
- <sup>6</sup> Marriage outside the Israelite community leads to weakening of Israel's bonds with Yahweh.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ  
אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־הַבַּעַלִּים וְאֶת־  
הָאֲשֵׁרוֹת: <sup>ח</sup> וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּמְכְּרֵם בְּיַד  
כּוּשָׁן רִישַׁתַּיִם מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם נַהֲרַיִם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ בְנֵי־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־כּוּשָׁן רִישַׁתַּיִם שְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנִים: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּזְעַקוּ  
בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּקַּם יְהוָה מוֹשִׁיעַ לְבְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁיַעֵם אֶת עֲתַנִּיאֵל בֶּן־קִנְזִי אַחִי כָלָב  
הַקָּטָן מִמֶּנּוּ: <sup>י</sup> וַתְּהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ־יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁפָּט אֶת־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּצֵא לְמַלְחָמָה וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־כּוּשָׁן  
רִישַׁתַּיִם מֶלֶךְ אֲרָם וַתֵּעַז יָדוֹ עַל כּוּשָׁן רִישַׁתַּיִם:  
<sup>יא</sup> וַתִּשְׁקֹט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבַּעַיִם שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת עֲתַנִּיאֵל בֶּן־  
קִנְזִי: {פ}

<sup>יב</sup> וַיִּסְפּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה  
וַיַּחֲזֹק יְהוָה אֶת־עֲגִלּוֹן מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־

<sup>7</sup> The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh. They forgot Yahweh their god and served the Baals and Asherahs. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, Yahweh's anger flamed out against Israel; he sold them into the hands of Cushan-Rishathaim the king of Aram-Naharaim, and the Israelites served Cushan-Rishathaim for eight years. <sup>9</sup> But the Israelites cried to Yahweh, and Yahweh raised up for the Israelites a deliverer who rescued them, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. <sup>10</sup> The spirit of Yahweh came upon him and he became judge in Israel and set out to fight. Yahweh delivered the king of Aram, Cushan-Rishathaim, into his hands, and his hand prevailed against Cushan-Rishathaim. <sup>11</sup> Then the land enjoyed rest for forty years. Then Othniel son of Kenaz died.

<sup>12</sup> Once again, the men of Israel began to do what displeases Yahweh, and Yahweh gave Eglon king of Moab power over Israel, because they

<sup>7</sup> It is customary to call those judges 'major' whose history is related in some detail: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah (and Barak), Gideon, Jephthah, Samson; and those judges 'minor' who receive only a brief mention: Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon and Abdon.

<sup>8</sup> The NJB uses 'Edom' in place of 'Aram-Naharaim' (see #9).

<sup>9</sup> The brief account of Othniel (vv. 7-11) is puzzling: 'Othniel' is certainly the same man as the conqueror of Debir, at the time of the settlement. The oppressor is Cushan-Rishathaim ('Rishathaim' means 'Double Trouble'), king of Aram-Naharaim ('Naharaim' means 'of the two rivers') according to the MT, that is to say, of Upper Mesopotamia. Presented thus, the episode is improbable. More probably, the name 'Aram' is an early misreading for Edom, to which Naharaim has been added later under the influence of Genesis.

<sup>10</sup> An alternative reading for 'prevailed' is 'was strong'.

<sup>11</sup> This verse follows a type of editorial formula that occurs repeatedly in the book (see v. 30, 5:31, 8:28).

<sup>12</sup> The story of Ehud (vv. 12-30) postulates that the Moabites have crossed the River Arnon, occupied the 'Plains of Moab' and crossed the Jordan.



כִּי־עָשׂוּ אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: י<sup>ג</sup> וַיֹּאסֶף אֵלָיו אֶת־  
בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְעַמְלֶק וַיִּלָּךְ וַיֹּךְ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּירָשׁוּ אֶת־  
עִיר הַתְּמָרִים: י<sup>ד</sup> וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֲגִלּוֹן  
מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר שָׁנָה:

טו וַיִּזְעַקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּקָּם יְהוָה לָהֶם  
מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־אֱהוּד בֶּן־גֵּרָא בֶן־הִימִנִי אִישׁ אֲטָר  
יְד־יְמִינוֹ וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּידוֹ מִנְחָה לְעֲגִלּוֹן  
מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב: טז וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ אֱהוּד חֶרֶב וְלָהּ שְׁנֵי פִּיּוֹת  
גֹּמֵד אַרְבֵּה וַיַּחְגֹּר אוֹתָהּ מִתַּחַת לְמַדְיוֹ עַל יָרֵךְ  
יְמִינוֹ: יז וַיִּקְרַב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה לְעֲגִלּוֹן מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב  
וְעֲגִלּוֹן אִישׁ בָּרִיא מְאֹד: יח וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה  
לְהַקְרִיב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעָם נֹשְׂאֵי

had done what displeases Yahweh. <sup>13</sup> Eglon formed alliances with the sons of Ammon and Amalek marched against Israel, conquered them and took possession of the City of Palm Trees. <sup>14</sup> The Israelites served Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years.

<sup>15</sup> But, when the Israelites cried to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a deliverer for them, Ehud the son of Gera the Benjaminite; he was a left-handed man. The men of Israel appointed him to take their tribute to Eglon the king of Moab. <sup>16</sup> Ehud made a dagger – it was double-edged and a cubit long – and strapped it on under his clothes, over his right thigh. <sup>17</sup> He presented the tribute to Eglon the king of Moab. This Eglon was a very fat man. <sup>18</sup> Having presented the tribute, Ehud went off again, with the men who had carried the tribute; <sup>19</sup> but he himself turned

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of 'formed alliances with' is 'gathered to him'. The 'City of Palm Trees' is Jericho.

<sup>14</sup> In place of 'served', here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'were subject to'.

<sup>15</sup> The phrase, 'left-handed', which refers to Ehud, literally reads 'bound in the right hand' – a Hebrew idiom for a left-handed person: see 20:16, where 700 Benjaminites are described in this way (perhaps the Benjaminites purposely trained several of their young men to be left-handed warriors by restricting the use of the right hand from an early age so the left hand would become dominant, as left-handed men would have a distinct military advantage, especially when attacking city gates).

<sup>16</sup> The term גֹּמֵד denotes a unit of linear measure, perhaps a cubit (the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger – approximately 45 cm); some suggest it is equivalent to the short cubit (the distance from the elbow to the knuckles of the clenched fist – approximately 33 cm) or to the span (the distance from the end of the thumb to the end of the little finger in a spread hand – approximately 23 cm).

<sup>17</sup> NETB places the last sentence in parentheses.

<sup>18</sup> The NJB & NETB have the pronoun 'it' in place of the 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence of 'the tribute', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>19</sup> These stone idols (פְּסִילִים), well known to local tradition, occur as landmarks, here and in v. 26. We do not know what they were, but the stones set up by Joshua (Jos 4:19–20) would hardly have acquired so disrespectful a name.



הַמִּנְחָה: י<sup>ט</sup> וְהוּא שָׁב מִן־הַפְּסִילִים אֲשֶׁר אֶת־  
הַגִּלְגָּל וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר־סֵתֶר לִי אֱלִיָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר  
הֵס וַיֵּצְאוּ מֵעָלָיו כָּל־הָעַמִּידִים עָלָיו: כ<sup>י</sup> וְאַהוּד | בָּא  
אֵלָיו וְהוּא יָשָׁב בַּעֲלִית הַמִּקְרָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ לְבָדּוֹ  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהוּד דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים לִי אֱלִיָּה וַיִּקָּם מֵעַל  
הַפֶּסֶס: כֵּא וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶהוּד אֶת־יָד שְׁמָאלוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־  
הַחֶרֶב מֵעַל יָרֵךְ יָמִינוֹ וַיִּתְקַעָה בְּבִטְנוֹ: כב<sup>י</sup> וַיִּבֹא  
גַם־הַנֶּצֶב אַחֵר הַלֵּהָב וַיִּסְגֹּר הַחֹלֶב בְּעַד הַלֵּהָב כִּי  
לֹא שָׁלַף הַחֶרֶב מִבִּטְנוֹ וַיֵּצֵא הַפֶּרֶשְׁדָּנָה: כג<sup>י</sup> וַיֵּצֵא  
אַהוּד הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה וַיִּסְגֹּר דִּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה בַּעֲדוֹ  
וַיָּנַעַל:

כד<sup>י</sup> וְהוּא יָצָא וַעֲבָדָיו בָּאוּ וַיֵּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה דִלְתוֹת  
הָעֲלִיָּה נִעְלוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִךְ מִסִּיד הוּא אֶת־רַגְלָיו  
בַּחֲדָר הַמִּקְרָה: כה<sup>י</sup> וַיַּחֲלִילוּ עַד־בֹּשׁ וְהִנֵּה אֵינָנו

back on reaching the Idols that are near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." The king replied, "Silence!" and all who were with him went out. <sup>20</sup> Then Ehud went in. The king sat in his cool upper room; he was alone. Ehud said to him, "I have a message from God for you, O king." The king immediately stood up from his seat. <sup>21</sup> Then Ehud, using his left hand, drew the dagger he was carrying on his right thigh and thrust it into the king's belly. <sup>22</sup> The hilt too went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for Ehud left the dagger in his belly; then he went out through the window. <sup>23</sup> Ehud went out by the vestibule; he had shut and locked the doors of the upper room behind him.

<sup>24</sup> When he had gone, the servants came and saw the locked doors of the upper room; they thought, "He must be covering his feet in the inner part of the cool room." <sup>25</sup> They waited until they were embarrassed;

<sup>20</sup> The 'cool upper room' probably refers to a room with latticed windows which allowed the breeze to pass through.

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'the king's belly', here following the NJB, the NRSV & NETB have 'Eglon's belly'; the MT has simply 'his belly' – almost all English translations clarify the subject of the pronoun.

<sup>22</sup> The NRSV ends with 'and the dirt came out' in place of 'then he went out through the window'; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain (the meaning of פֶּרֶשְׁדָּנָה, which occurs only here in the OT, is uncertain – the noun has the article prefixed and directive suffix.); it is possibly a doublet of the beginning of the next verse. Following the LXX, the NJB omits the clause.

<sup>23</sup> In place of 'vestibule', here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'privies'; again, the precise meaning of the Hebrew word, used only here in the OT, is uncertain; however, since it is preceded by the verb 'went out' and the next clause refers to Ehud closing doors, the noun is probably an architectural term

<sup>24</sup> 'Covering his feet' is a euphemism for relieving himself.

<sup>25</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "See, their master, fallen to the ground, dead."

פָּתַח דְּלֹתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַמִּפְתָּח וַיִּפְתְּחוּ  
וַהֲנִיחַ אֲדֹנֵיהֶם נָפֶל אֶרֶצָה מָת:

כ<sup>ו</sup> וְאַהוּד נִמְלֹט עַד הַתְּמַהֲמָהּ וְהוּא עָבַר אֶת־  
הַפְּסִילִים וַיִּמְלֹט הַשְּׁעִירָתָה: כ<sup>ז</sup> וַיְהִי בְּבֹאוֹ וַיִּתְּקֶה  
בְּשׁוֹפָר בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם וַיֵּרְדּוּ עִמּוֹ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־  
הַהָר וְהוּא לִפְנֵיהֶם: כ<sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם רִדְפוּ אַחֲרַי  
כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה אֶת־אִיְבֵיכֶם אֶת־מוֹאָב בְּיַדְכֶם וַיֵּרְדּוּ  
אַחֲרָיו וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְמוֹאָב וְלֹא־  
נָתַנוּ אִישׁ לַעֲבָד: כ<sup>ט</sup> וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־מוֹאָב בַּעֲת הַהִיא  
כַּעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ כָּל־שָׁמָן וְכָל־אִישׁ חֵיל וְלֹא  
נִמְלֹט אִישׁ: ל וַתִּכְנַע מוֹאָב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא תַּחַת יַד  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתִּשְׁקַט הָאָרֶץ שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

ל<sup>א</sup> וְאַחֲרָיו הָיָה שַׁמְגָר בֶּן־עֲנַת וַיִּדּ אֶת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים  
שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת אִישׁ בְּמִלְחָמָה הַבָּקָר וַיּוֹשֶׁעַ גַּם־הוּא  
אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

when he still did not open the doors of the upper room, they took the key and unlocked them; their master lay on the ground, dead.

<sup>26</sup> While they were waiting, Ehud had fled. He passed the Idols and escaped to safety in Seirah. <sup>27</sup> When he arrived, he sounded the horn in the highlands of Ephraim, and the Israelites came down with him from the hills, with him at their head. <sup>28</sup> He said to them, “Follow me, because Yahweh has delivered your enemy Moab into your hands.” So, they followed him, cut Moab off from crossing the fords of the Jordan and let no one across. <sup>29</sup> On that occasion, they beat the Moabites, some ten thousand men, all tough and seasoned fighters, and not one escaped. <sup>30</sup> That day, Moab was humbled under the hand of Israel, and the land has rest for eighty years.

<sup>31</sup> After him came Shamgar son of Anath. He routed six hundred of the Philistines with an ox-goad; and, like him, he was a deliverer of Israel.

<sup>26</sup> On the nature of these ‘Idols’, see #19.

<sup>27</sup> In place of ‘arrived’, here following the MT & NRSV, NETB has ‘reached Seirah’ and the NJB has ‘reached the territory of Israel’.

<sup>28</sup> The verb form translated ‘has delivered’ (a Hebrew perfect, indicating completed action from the standpoint of the speaker) emphasises the certainty of the event: though it had not yet taken place, Yahweh speaks of it as a ‘done deal’.

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of ‘beat the Moabites’ is ‘struck Moab’.

<sup>30</sup> The NJB has ‘enjoyed peace’ in place of ‘had rest’, here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>31</sup> This verse is an addition (see 4:1). ‘Shamgar’ does not seem to be an Israelite: his name is foreign and he is apparently a resident of Beth-Anath in Galilee, which was still Canaanite (1:33); his insertion in the list of Judges is probably due to a misunderstanding of 5:6.

## JUDGES 4

## שופטים פרק ד

א וַיִּסְפּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה  
וְאַהוּד מָתָּה: ב וַיִּמְכְּרֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד יָבִין מֶלֶךְ-כְּנָעַן  
אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ בַּחצֹר וּשְׂרָצָבָאֻ סִיסְרָא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב  
בְּחָרְשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם: ג וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה כִּי  
תָשַׁע מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב-בְּרֹזֶל לוֹ וְהוּא לֹחֵץ אֶת-בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲזָקָה עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

ד וּדְבוֹרָה אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה אָשֶׁת לַפִּידוֹת הִיא שֹׁפְטָה  
אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּעֵת הַהִיא: ה וְהָיָא יוֹשֶׁבֶת תַּחַת-  
תְּמָר דְּבוֹרָה בִּין הָרְמָה וּבֵין בֵּית-אֵל בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם  
וַיַּעֲלֻ אֵלֶיהָ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפָּט: ו וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא  
לְבָרַק בֶּן-אֲבִינֵעַם מִקְדֵּשׁ נַפְתָּלִי וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
הֲלֹא צוּהָ | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵךְ וּמַשְׁכַּת בְּהַר  
תָּבוֹר וּלְקַחְתָּ עִמָּךְ עֲשָׂרֹת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי

1 The Israelites again began to do what displeases Yahweh after Ehud's death, 2 so Yahweh handed them over to Jabin the king of Canaan who reigned at Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-Goiim. 3 Then the Israelites cried to Yahweh; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots plated with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. 4 At that time, Deborah the wife of Lappidoth, a prophetess, judged Israel. 5 She used to sit under Palm Tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the highlands of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for judgement. 6 She summoned and sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. And she said to him, "This is the order of Yahweh, the God of Israel: "march to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and the sons of

## JUDGES 4

<sup>1</sup> The NJB rearranges this verse, opening with 'when Ehud died'; here, we follow the MT, NRSV & NETB.

<sup>2</sup> 'Jabin' (יָבִין), see Jos 11:1, compare Ps 83:9) plays no role in this story; his title as 'king of Canaan' is inaccurate: Jos 11 calls him 'king of Hazor'. Hazor was an important city in Galilee because of its proximity to trade routes; it is 14 km north of the Sea of Galilee. 'Sisera' (סִיסְרָא) is not a Semitic name; he may have been a Philistine in the service of Jabin. 'Harosheth-ha-Goiim' (חָרְשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם) means 'Harosheth of the Pagan Nations' (cf. KJV: 'Harosheth of the Gentiles').

<sup>3</sup> The number of chariots is unusually high and reflects the hopelessness of the situation.

<sup>4</sup> A prophetess like Miriam (Ex 15:20) and Huldah (2K 22:14), Deborah dispenses justice in Yahweh's name.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase, 'Palm Tree' (תְּמָר) is a conjectural translation of תְּמָרָה.

<sup>6</sup> Mount Tabor (564 m) is a lone mountain standing in the northwest corner of the Plain of Jezreel.

נִפְתָּלִי וּמִבְנֵי זִבְלוֹן: <sup>ז</sup>וּמִשְׁכַּתִּי אֵלַיךְ אֶל־נַחַל  
קִישׁוֹן אֶת־סִיסְרָא שֶׁר־צָבָא יָבִין וְאֶת־רֶכְבּוֹ וְאֶת־  
הַמּוֹנֹ וּנְתַתִּיהוּ בְיָדְךָ: <sup>ח</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָה בָרַק אִם־  
תֵּלְכִי עִמִּי וְהִלַּכְתִּי וְאִם־לֹא תֵלְכִי עִמִּי לֹא אֵלַיךְ:  
<sup>ט</sup>וַתֹּאמֶר הֲלֹךְ אֵלַיךְ עִמָּךְ אָפֶס כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה  
תַּפְאֲרֶתְךָ עַל־הַדָּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ כִּי בִיד־  
אִשָּׁה יִמָּכַר יְהוָה אֶת־סִיסְרָא וְתִקַּם דְּבוּרָה וְתִלָּךְ  
עִם־בָּרַק קְדֻשָּׁה: <sup>י</sup>וַיִּזְעַק בָּרַק אֶת־זִבְלוֹן וְאֶת־  
נִפְתָּלִי קְדֻשָּׁה וַיַּעַל בְּרִגְלָיו עֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפֵי אִישׁ  
וַתַּעַל עִמּוֹ דְּבוּרָה:

<sup>יא</sup>וַחֲבֵר הַקֵּינִי נִפְרָד מִקֵּין מִבְנֵי חֲבִיב חֵתָן מֹשֶׁה  
וַיֵּט אָהָלוֹ עַד־אֵילָוִן בְּצַעֲנִים בְּצַעֲנִים אֲשֶׁר אֶת־  
קְדֻשָּׁה: <sup>יב</sup>וַיִּגְדּוּ לְסִיסְרָא כִּי עָלָה בָרַק בֶּן־אֲבִינֵעַם  
הַר־תָּבוֹר: <sup>יג</sup>וַיִּזְעַק סִיסְרָא אֶת־כָּל־רֶכְבּוֹ תִשָּׁע  
מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בְּרִזָּל וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ

Zebulun. <sup>7</sup> I will draw out Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, to encounter you at the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his huge army; and I will put him into your power.'"<sup>8</sup> Barak answered her, "If you come with me, I will go; if you will not come, I will not go."<sup>9</sup> "I will surely go with you," she said; "however, the way you are going about it, the glory will not be yours; for, Yahweh will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." Then Deborah stood up and went with Barak to Kedesh,<sup>10</sup> and Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors marched behind him, and Deborah marched with him.

<sup>11</sup> Heber the Kenite had cut himself off from the tribe of Kain and the clan of the sons of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses; he had pitched his tent near the Oak of Zanaanim, not far from Kedesh. <sup>12</sup> When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, <sup>13</sup> Sisera summoned all his chariots (nine hundred chariots plated with

<sup>7</sup> The *Wadi Kishon* is a stream that flows westward through the Plain of Jezreel, which runs from the Carmel range to the Jordan.

<sup>8</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τῇν ἡμέραν, ἐν ᾗ ἡ εὐδοκία κύριος τὸν ἄγγελον μετ' ἐμοῦ), adds 'for, I do not know how to choose the day when the Angel of Yahweh will grant me success'.

<sup>9</sup> The NRSV translates the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Deborah's speech more literally: 'the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory'; the translation here ('the way you are going about it', following the NJB) makes direct reference to Barak's hesitancy as the reason for his loss of glory.

<sup>10</sup> Zebulun and Naphtali are two tribes from Galilee.

<sup>11</sup> The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>12</sup> The NJB has 'heard' in place of 'was told', here following the NRSV; the literal translation of the MT is 'and they told Sisera'.

<sup>13</sup> In place of 'Sisera', the NJB has simple 'he'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

מִחֲרֹשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם אֶל-נַחַל קִישׁוֹן: י' וְתֹאמַר דְּבָרָה  
 אֶל-בָּרַק קוֹם כִּי זֶה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֶת-  
 סִסְרָא בְיָדְךָ הֲלֹא יְהוָה יֵצֵא לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֵּרֶד בָּרַק  
 מֵהַר תְּבוֹר וְעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ אַחֲרָיו: ט' וַיְהִי  
 יְהוָה אֶת-סִסְרָא וְאֶת-כָּל-הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת-כָּל-  
 הַמַּחֲנֶה לְפִי-חֶרֶב לְפָנֵי בָרַק וַיֵּרֶד סִסְרָא מֵעַל  
 הַמֶּרְכָּבָה וַיֵּנֶס בְּרַגְלָיו: ט"ו וּבָרַק רָדַף אַחֲרֵי הָרֶכֶב  
 וְאַחֲרֵי הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד חֲרֹשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם וַיִּפֹּל כָּל-מַחֲנֶה  
 סִסְרָא לְפִי-חֶרֶב לֹא נִשְׁאַר עַד-אַחַד:

י"ז וְסִסְרָא נָס בְּרַגְלָיו אֶל-אֶהֱלָי יַעֲלֵ אֵשֶׁת חֶבֶר  
 הַקֵּינִי כִּי שָׁלוֹם בֵּין יִבְיָן מִלְד־חֲצוֹר וּבֵין בֵּית חֶבֶר  
 הַקֵּינִי: י"ח וְתֵצֵא יַעֲלֵ לְקִרְאֵת סִסְרָא וְתֹאמַר אֵלָיו  
 סוּרָה אֲדֹנִי סוּרָה אֵלַי אֶל-תִּירָא וַיִּסֶּר אֵלֶיהָ  
 הָאֶהֱלָה וְתִכְסְּהוּ בַשְּׂמִיכָה: יט' וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ  
 הַשְׁקִינִי-נָא מְעַט-מַיִם כִּי צָמָאתִי וְתַפְתָּח אֶת-  
 נְאוֹד הַחֲלָב וְתִשְׁקֶהוּ וְתִכְסְּהוּ: כ' וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ  
 עֲמֵד פֶּתַח הָאֶהֱלָ וְהִיא אִם-אִישׁ יָבֹא וְשִׂאֲלֶךָ

iron) and all the troops he had, from Harosheth-ha-Goiim to the Wadi Kishon. <sup>14</sup> Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For today is the day Yahweh has put Sisera into your power. Yes, Yahweh marches at your head." So, Barak charged down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men behind him. <sup>15</sup> At Barak's advance, Yahweh struck terror into Sisera, all his chariots and his entire army by the edge of the sword before Barak. Sisera leapt down from his chariot and fled on foot. <sup>16</sup> Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-ha-Goiim. Sisera's whole army fell by the edge of the sword; not one man was left.

<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Sisera fled away on foot towards 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. <sup>18</sup> And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, "My lord, stay here with me; do not be afraid!" He stayed there in her tent, and she covered him with a rug. <sup>19</sup> He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." She opened the skin that had milk in it, gave him some to drink and covered him up again. <sup>20</sup> Then he said to her, "Stand at the tent entrance and, if

<sup>14</sup> For the last sentence, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "The LORD is indeed going out before you."

<sup>15</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, omits 'by the edge of the sword before Barak'; the NRSV has, instead 'into a panic before Barak'.

<sup>16</sup> The NJB has 'escaped' in place of 'was left', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>17</sup> The NRSV has 'clan' in place of 'family', here following the NJB.

<sup>18</sup> NETB has 'blanket' in place of 'rug', here following the NJB & NRSV.

<sup>19</sup> 'Milk' translates הַחֲלָב – the sour milk of the nomad.

<sup>20</sup> In place of 'stand', here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has the more explicit 'stand watch'.



וַאֲמַר הַיֵּשֶׁכָּה אִישׁ וְאָמְרָתָּ אֵין: <sup>כא</sup> וְתִקַּח יָעֵל  
 אֶשֶׁת־חֶבֶר אֶת־יִתְד הָאֵהָל וַתִּשֶׂם אֶת־הַמַּקְבֵּת  
 בַּיָּדָהּ וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו בַּלָּאט וַתִּתְקַע אֶת־הַיִּתְד  
 בְּרִקְתּוֹ וַתַּצֵּנָה בָּאָרֶץ וְהוּא־נֹרֵדִים וַיַּעַף וַיָּמָת:  
<sup>כב</sup> וְהִנֵּה בָרַק רָדָף אֶת־סִיסְרָא וַתֵּצֵא יָעֵל לִקְרֹאתוֹ  
 וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ וְאַרְאֶךָ אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה  
 מִבְקֵשׁ וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ וְהִנֵּה סִיסְרָא נָפַל מֵת וְהַיִּתְד  
 בְּרִקְתּוֹ:

<sup>כג</sup> וַיִּכְנַע אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יָבִין מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן  
 לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>כד</sup> וַתִּלָּךְ יָד בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַלּוֹךְ  
 וְקֹשֶׁה עַל יָבִין מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן עַד אֲשֶׁר הִכְרִיתוּ אֶת  
 יָבִין מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן:  
 {ש}

anyone comes and asks you, "Is there a man here?" say, "No.""

<sup>21</sup> However, Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and picked up a mallet; she crept up softly to him and drove the peg into his temple right through to the ground. He was lying fast asleep, worn out; and so he died. <sup>22</sup> Then, as Barak came up in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said, "Come in, and I will show you the man you are looking for." He went into her tent; Sisera lay dead, with the tent peg through his temple.

<sup>23</sup> Thus, it was, on that day, that God humbled Jabin the king of Canaan before the Israelites. <sup>24</sup> Then the hand of the Israelites bore down harder and harder on Jabin the king of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

<sup>21</sup> Another option is to understand the phrase 'worn out' as a reference to the result of the fatal blow; in this case, the phrase could be translated, 'and he breathed his last'.

<sup>22</sup> No reason is given for Jael's switch of loyalty from Sisera to Barak.

<sup>23</sup> The NJB opens this verse with 'thus, on that day', the NRSV has 'so, on that day' and NETB has just 'that day'.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB has the pronoun, 'him' in place of the final 'King Jabin of Canaan', here following the MT & NRSV.



## שופטים פרק ה

א וְתִשָּׁר דְּבוּרָה וּבָרַק בֶּן־אֲבִינוֹם {ס}  
 בִּיּוֹם הַהוּא {ר} לֵאמֹר: {ס}  
 ב בִּפְרָע פְּרָעוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}  
 ג בְּהִתְנַדֵּב {ר} עַם בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה: {ס}  
 ד שָׁמְעוּ מַלְכִּים הָאֲזִינוּ {ר} רִזְזִים {ס}  
 ה אֲנֹכִי לַיהוָה אֲנֹכִי אֲשִׁירָה {ס} אֲזַמֵּר {ר}  
 ו לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}  
 ז יְהוָה בְּצֵאתְךָ {ר} מִשְׁעִיר {ס}  
 ח בְּצַעֲדְךָ מִשְׁדֵּה אֲדוֹם {ס} אֶרֶץ {ר}  
 ט רָעָשָׁה גַם־שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ {ס}  
 י גַּם־עָבִים נָטְפוּ {ר} מַיִם: {ס}  
 יא הָרִים נָזְלוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה {ס} זֶה {ר}  
 יב סִינֵי מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}  
 יג בִּימֵי שִׁמְגַר בֶּן־ {ר} עֲנַת {ס}  
 יד בִּימֵי יָעֵל חָדְלוּ אֲרָחוֹת {ס} וְהִלְכִי {ר}

## JUDGES 5

1 Then Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:  
 2 When locks are long in Israel, answering the call, bless Yahweh!  
 3 Listen, O kings! Give ear, O princes! From me to Yahweh, from me comes a song. I will sing to Yahweh, God of Israel.  
 4 Yahweh, when you set out from Seir, when you marched from the fields of Edom, earth shook, the heavens quaked, the clouds pelted down water.  
 5 The mountains melted before Yahweh, the One of Sinai; before Yahweh, the God of Israel.  
 6 In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, caravans ceased;

## JUDGES 5

- <sup>1</sup> For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'sang a song'.
- <sup>2</sup> The meaning of the expression בִּפְרָע פְּרָעוֹת is uncertain; the translation here follows the NRSV: the NJB has 'the warriors unbound their hair' and NETB has 'when the leaders took the lead'.
- <sup>3</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, the 1PS pronoun is used twice, even though a 1P finite verbal form is employed.
- <sup>4</sup> In this context, 'Seir' means 'Sinai'. The God who comes from the barren regions of the southeast showed an ability to give rain.
- <sup>5</sup> The phrase 'the One of Sinai' is a divine title, perhaps indicating that Yahweh rules from Sinai.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Caravans' is a conjectural translation (אֲרָחוֹת) of אֲרָחוֹת ('roads').

נְתִיבוֹת יִלְכוּ אַרְחוֹת עֲקֻלָּוֹת: {ס}		travellers took their way along winding side-roads.
חָדְלוּ פְּרוֹזֹן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ר} חָדְלוּ {ס}	ז	7 Scarce were warriors in Israel, scarce,
עַד שֶׁקָּמְתִי דְבוֹרָה שֶׁקָּמְתִי אִם		until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}		in Israel.
יִבְחַר {ר}	ח	8 Then,
אֱלֹהִים חֲדָשִׁים אִזּוּ לַחֵם שַׁעְרִים {ס}		when God chose new leaders, war appeared in the city gates:
מִגֵּן אִם־יִרְאֶה {ר} וְרֶמַח {ס}		not a spear or shield could be found
בְּאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}		from forty thousand in Israel!
לְבִי {ר} לְחוֹקְקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}	ט	9 My heart beats fast for Israel's chieftains,
הַמִּתְנַדְּבִים בָּעַם בָּרְכוּ {ר} יְהוָה: {ס}		for the people who answered the call to war. Bless Yahweh.
רֹכְבֵי אֲתָנוֹת צֹהֲרוֹת {ס} יֹשְׁבֵי {ר}	י	10 Sing, you who ride on the white she-asses,
עַל־מִדְּיָן וְהַלְכִי עַל־דָּרֶךְ שִׁיחוּ: {ס}		and sit on saddle-blankets, and you who go on foot.
מְקוֹל מְחַצְצִים בֵּין {ר} מְשֹׁאֲבִים {ס}	יא	11 Hear the sound of the shepherds at the watering places!
שֵׁם יִתְּנוּ צִדְקוֹת יְהוָה {ס} צִדְקַת {ר}		There they extol Yahweh's blessings,
פְּרוֹזֹנוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}		his saving acts for his warriors in Israel.
אִזּוּ יִרְדּוּ לַשַּׁעְרִים עִם־ {ר} יְהוָה: {ס}		Then Yahweh's people marched down to the gates.

<sup>7</sup> For the 1<sup>st</sup> line, here following *NETB*, the *NJB* has 'dead, dead were Israel's villages' and the *NRSV* has 'the peasantry prospered in Israel, they grew fat on plunder' (split over 2 lines); the meaning of the noun פְּרוֹזֹן ('warriors') is uncertain: some understand the meaning as 'leaders' or 'those living in rural areas' (cf. *NRSV*); the singular noun appears to be collective (note the accompanying plural verb).

<sup>8</sup> For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, the *NJB* reads, 'those that should stand for God were dumb'. In the last line, *NETB* takes אֶלֶף ('thousand') as a 'military unit'.

<sup>9</sup> In the *MT*, the last sentence has simply the Divine Name.

<sup>10</sup> The meaning of the word מִדְּיָן ('saddle-blankets', here following the *NJB* & *NETB*) is uncertain; the *NRSV* has 'rich carpets'.

<sup>11</sup> The *NRSV* has 'musicians' in place of 'shepherds', here following the *NJB* & *NETB*; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The last line (parenthesised in the *NJB*) represents the correct reading of the beginning of v. 13, which was corrupt; but it is inserted in the wrong place.

יב עֹרִי עֹרִי דְבוּרָה {ס}  
 עֹרִי {ר} עֹרִי דְבַר־שִׁיר {ס}  
 קוּם בָּרַק וְשִׁבְהָ שְׁבִיךָ בֶן־ {ר}  
 אַבִּינוֹם: {ס}  
 יג אֲזַ יֵרֵד שָׁרִיד לְאֲדִירִים עַם {ס}  
 יְהוָה {ר} יֵרֵד־לִי בַּגְּבוּרִים: {ס}  
 יד מִנֵּי אֶפְרַיִם שָׁרָשׁ {ר} בַּעַמְלֶק {ס}  
 אַחֲרָיִךְ בְּנִימִין בַּעַמְמִיךָ {ס} מִנֵּי {ר}  
 מַכִּיר יֵרְדוּ מַחֲקָיִם {ס}  
 וּמִזְבֻּלָּן מַשְׁכִּים בְּשֶׁבֶט {ר} סֶפֶר: {ס}  
 טו וְשָׂרֵי בִישָׁשְׁכָר עַם־דְּבֹרָה {ס} וַיִּשְׁשָׁכָר {ר}  
 בֶּן בָּרַק בַּעַמְקָ שֶׁלַח בְּרִגְלָיו {ס}  
 בְּפִלְגֹת רְאוּבֵן גְּדֹלִים חֲקָקִי־ {ר} לֵב: {ס}  
 טז לָמָּה יִשְׁבֹּת בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפָּתִים {ס}  
 לִשְׁמֹעַ {ר} שְׂרָקוֹת עֲדָרִים {ס}  
 לְפִלְגֹת רְאוּבֵן גְּדֹלִים חֲקָקִי־ {ר} לֵב: {ס}

12 Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake; awake, declaim a song!

Arise, Barak! Lead away your captives, son of  
Abinoam!

13 Then Israel marched down to the gates;

Yahweh's people, like heroes, marched down to fight for me.

14 From Ephraim they came, who uprooted Amalek.

Following you is Benjamin, with your kin;

From Machir, captains have come down,

and from Zebulun, those who wield the commander's staff.

15 The princes of Issachar are with Deborah; and Issachar,

faithful to Barak, into the valley they rushed out at his feet.

Among the clans of Reuben, there was much searching of heart.

16 Why did you linger among the sheepfolds

listening for whistles, with the flocks?

Among the clans of Reuben, there was much searching of heart.

<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, the NJB, following the LXX (ἐνισχύων), adds 'take heart'.

<sup>13</sup> The NJB emends the 1<sup>st</sup> line after the last line of v. 11 (see #11) to 'then Israel marched down to the gates'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV. The NJB ends with a conjectural 'for him' in place of 'for me'.

<sup>14</sup> For this verse, here following NETB, the NJB, following the LXX (λαὸς Εφραιμ ἐτιμωρήσατο αὐτοὺς ἐν κοιλάδι), has 'Ephraim's princes came into the valley'; literally translated, the MT reads, 'from Ephraim their root in Amalek'.

<sup>15</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, the NJB has 'Naphtali' in place of 'Issachar', which it presumes to be a copyist's error.

<sup>16</sup> The Reubenites, a pastoral people, stayed at home to guard their flocks from nomadic raiders: the 'whistles' are the alarm signal and the method of calling the sheep (see Is 5:26, 7:18, Zc 10:8). The NJB parenthesises the last line, which repeats that of v. 15.

ז' גִּלְעָד בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן שָׁכַן {ס} וְדָן {ר}  
 לָמָּה יָגוּר אֲנִיּוֹת {ס}  
 אֲשֶׁר יֵשֵׁב לַחֹף {ר}  
 יָמִים {ס} וְעַל מִפְּרָצָיו יִשְׁכֹּן: {ס}  
 יח זְבֻלֹן {ר} עַם חֲרָף נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוֹת {ס}  
 וְנַפְתָּלִי עַל מְרוֹמָיו {ר} שְׂדֵה: {ס}  
 יט בָּאוּ מְלָכִים נִלְחָמוּ {ס} אֲזִי {ר}  
 נִלְחָמוּ מֶלֶכַי כְּנָעַן {ס}  
 בְּתַעְנָךְ עַל־מֵי {ר} מִגְדּוֹ {ס}  
 בָּצַע כֶּסֶף לֹא לָקָחוּ: {ס}  
 כ מִן־ {ר} שָׁמַיִם נִלְחָמוּ {ס}  
 הַכּוֹכָבִים מִמְּסֻלּוֹתָם נִלְחָמוּ עִם־ {ר}  
 סִיסְרָא: {ס}  
 כא נָחַל קִישׁוֹן גָּרַפָם {ס} נָחַל {ר}  
 קְדוּמַיִם נָחַל קִישׁוֹן {ס}  
 תִּדְרָכִי נַפְשִׁי {ר} עֲזֵ: {ס}

- 17 Gilead stayed on the other side of the Jordan,  
and why should Dan have stayed aboard ship?  
Asher remained by the sea,  
peacefully living within his ports.
- 18 Zebulun is a people who have braved death,  
Naphtali too, on the high ground of the country.
- 19 The kings came, they fought;  
they fought, those kings of Canaan,  
at Taanach, by Megiddo's waters,  
yet bore away no silver spoils.
- 20 From high in heaven fought the stars,  
from their courses, the fought against  
Sisera.
- 21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,  
the torrent, onrushing; the torrent of Kishon.  
March on, be strong my soul!

17 'Gilead' does not refer to a tribe of this name, but Gad, indicated by the name of its tribal territory (see Nb 32:1ff), Reuben and Gad, the Transjordanian tribes, being normally mentioned together. By this time, Dan had presumably migrated northwards (see 1:34–35, 17–18 and #Jos 19:40). Apparently, the men of Dan hired out their labour to Phoenician shipmasters.

18 This verse is in a different metre from the rest of the poem and is a proverbial saying about these two tribes, after the style of Gn 49, apparently referring to the battle of the Waters of Merom (Jos 11).

19 'Taanach' and 'Megiddo' were two large cities that guarded the northern approaches to passes through Mount Carmel.

20 The NJB has 'orbits' in place of 'courses', here following the NRSV.

21 The meaning of קְדוּמַיִם, here translated as 'onrushing' (following the NRSV) is not clear; the NJB uses 'torrent of old'.

כב אֲז הִלְמוּ עֲקֵב־סוּס {ס}  
 מִדֶּהֲרוֹת {ר} דֶּהֲרוֹת אֲבִירָיו: {ס}  
 כג אֲזָרוּ מִרוֹז אִמֵּל מִלֶּאֲד יְהוָה  
 אֲרוּ אֲרוֹר {ר} יִשְׁבִּיָּה {ס}  
 כִּי לֹא־בָאוּ לְעֶזְרַת יְהוָה {ס}  
 לְעֶזְרַת {ר} יְהוָה בַּגְּבוּרִים: {ס}  
 כד תְּבָרַךְ מִנָּשִׁים יֵעַל אִשְׁתְּ חֶבֶר {ר}  
 הַקִּינִי {ס}  
 מִנָּשִׁים בְּאֶהֱל תְּבָרַךְ: {ס}  
 כה מִיָּם {ר} שָׁאַל חֶלֶב נָתַנָּה {ס}  
 בְּסִפָּל אֲדִירִים הִקְרִיבָה {ר} חֲמָאָה: {ס}  
 כו יָדָהּ לִיתֵּד תִּשְׁלַחְנָה {ס} וַיִּמְיֶנָּה {ר}  
 לְהִלְמוֹת עַמָּלִים {ס}  
 וְהִלְמָה סִיסְרָא מַחֲקָה {ר}  
 רָאשׁוֹ {ס} וּמַחֲצָה וַחֲלָפָה רָקְתּוּ: {ס}  
 כז בֵּין {ר} רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע נָפַל שָׁכַב {ס}  
 בֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע {ר} נָפַל {ס}

22 The horses' hoofs beat the ground  
 with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.  
 23 "Curse Meroz," said the Angel of Yahweh,  
 "curse bitterly its inhabitants,  
 for not having come to the help of Yahweh,  
 to the help of Yahweh as warriors."  
 24 Blessed be Jael among women the wife of Heber  
 the Kenite;  
 of tent-dwelling women, may she be most blessed!  
 25 He asked for water; she gave him milk;  
 she offered him curds in a lordly dish.  
 26 She reached her hand out to seize the peg,  
 her right hand to seize the workman's mallet.  
 She struck Sisera, crushed his head,  
 pierced his temple and shattered it.  
 27 At her feet he tumbled, he fell, he lay;  
 at her feet he tumbled, he fell.

22 The MT as it stands has a singular noun for 'horses' but, if one moves the prefixed מ from the beginning of the next word to the end of סוּס, the expected plural form is achieved; another option is to assume an error of haplography here, where the letter מ should appear in both places.

23 'Meroz' is an unknown place or group; according to a note in the Oxford NRSV, it was a nearby Israelite village that did not join the battle.

24 The 3<sup>rd</sup> line (parenthesised in the NJB) may be a gloss derived from 4:11, 17 & 21. A non-Israelite woman delivered the mortal blow to Sisera.

25 In place of 'lordly dish', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'lordly dish' and NETB has 'bowl fit for a king'.

26 'She reached out' follows the LXX (ἐξέτεινε); the MT uses a plural form.

27 The NRSV has 'sank' in place of 'tumbled' (thrice in this verse), here following the NJB.

בְּאֲשֶׁר כָּרַע שָׁם נָפַל שָׁדוּד: {ס}  
כח בַּעַד {ר} הַחֲלוֹן נִשְׁקָפָה וַתִּיבֹב  
אִם סִיסְרָא בַּעַד הָאֲשָׁנָב {ס}  
מְדוּעַ בָּשָׁשׁ רָכְבוֹ {ר} לָבוֹא {ס}  
מְדוּעַ אַחֲרָיו פָּעַמִּי מִרְכָּבוֹתָיו: {ס}  
כט חֲכָמוֹת {ר} שְׁרוּתֶיהָ תַּעֲנִינָה {ס}  
אִי־הִיא תָשִׁיב אֲמָרֶיהָ {ר} לָהּ: {ס}  
ל הֲלֹא יִמָּצְאוּ יַחְלִקוּ שָׁלָל {ס} רַחֵם {ר}  
רַחֲמָתִים לָרֹאשׁ גִּבּוֹר {ס} שָׁלָל צַבָּעִים {ר}  
לְסִיסְרָא {ס} שָׁלָל צַבָּעִים רַקְמָה {ס}  
צַבַּע {ר} רַקְמָתִים לְצוּאֵרִי שָׁלָל: {ס}  
לא כֵּן יֵאבְדוּ כָּל־אוֹיְבֵיךָ יְהוָה {ר}  
וְאֶהְיוּ כַצֶּאֱת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ {ס}  
וַתִּשְׁקֹט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה: {ר}  
{ש}

Where he tumbled, there he fell dead.

28 Through her window she looked,

Sisera's mother cried out

through the lattice: "Why is his chariot long in coming?

Why are the harnessed horses slow?"

29 The wisest of her ladies answers;

indeed, she answers the question herself:

30 They are gathering, doubtless, sharing the spoil:

a girl, two girls, for each man of war;

spoil of dyed stuff for Sisera, spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered;

two embroidered cloths for my neck as spoil!"

31 So, perish all your enemies, Yahweh!

But may your friends be like the sun as it rises in its might!

Then the land had peace for forty years.

28 The *NJB*, following the *LXX*, has 'watches' in place of 'cried out', here following the *MT* & *NRSV*. The final scene (vv. 28–31) is a poignant description of the conflicting emotions felt by the women who awaited the return of the Canaanite army.

29 For the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, here following the *NRSV*, the *NJB* has, 'and she to herself repeats'.

30 The end of this verse is probably corrupt and overloaded.

31 The literal translation of 'your friends' (here following the *NRSV*) is 'those who love him'; the *NJB*, following the *LXX* (οἱ ἀγαπῶντες αὐτόν), amends this to 'those who love you'.



## JUDGES 6

## שופטים פרק ו

<sup>א</sup> וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּתֶּנֶם יְהוָה  
בְּיַד־מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים: <sup>ב</sup> וַתַּעַז יַד־מִדְיָן עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן עָשׂוּ לָהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַמְּנָהֲרוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר בַּהָרִים וְאֶת־הַמְּעָרוֹת וְאֶת־הַמְּצֻדֹת: <sup>ג</sup> וְהָיָה  
אִם־זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעָלָה מִדְיָן וְעַמְלֵק וּבְנֵי־קֶדֶם  
וְעָלוּ עֲלָיו: <sup>ד</sup> וַיַּחֲנוּ עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ אֶת־יִבּוֹל  
הָאָרֶץ עַד־בּוֹאֵךְ עֲזָה וְלֹא־יִשְׁאִירוּ מַחֲיָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְשָׂה וְשׂוֹר וְחֻמּוֹר: <sup>ה</sup> כִּי הֵם וּמִקְנֵיהֶם יָעָלוּ  
וַאֲהַלֵּיהֶם יָבֹאוּ וּבָאוּ כְּדִי־אֲרָבָה לָרֹב וּלְהֵם  
וּלְגַמְלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר וַיָּבֹאוּ בָאָרֶץ לִשְׁחַתָּה: <sup>ו</sup> וַיִּדּוֹל  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מְאֹד מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן וַיִּזְעֻקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־  
יְהוָה: {פ}

<sup>ז</sup> וַיְהִי כִּי־יִזְעֻקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה עַל אֲדוֹת  
מִדְיָן: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אִישׁ נָבִיא אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

<sup>1</sup> The Israelites did what displeases Yahweh; Yahweh gave them over for seven years into the hands of Midian, <sup>2</sup> and Midian bore down heavily on Israel. To escape from Midian the Israelites used the mountain clefts and the caves and shelters. <sup>3</sup> Whenever Israel sowed seed, Midian would march up with Amalek and the sons of the East; they would march up against Israel, <sup>4</sup> encamp on their territory and destroy the produce of the country as far as Gaza. They left Israel nothing to live on, not a sheep or ox or donkey, <sup>5</sup> for they came up as thick as locusts with their own cattle and their tents; they and their camels were past counting, they overran and pillaged the country. <sup>6</sup> Thus, Midian brought Israel to great distress, and the Israelites cried to Yahweh.

<sup>7</sup> When the children of Israel cried out to Yahweh for help because of Midian, <sup>8</sup> Yahweh sent a prophet to the children of Israel. And he said

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- <sup>1</sup> 'Midian' was among the descendants of Abraham (Gn 25:2-4, 1Ch 1:32-33).  
<sup>2</sup> Behind the text of vv. 2-6 may be the harvest season taxes imposed on peasants by groups with the military power to make such impositions.  
<sup>3</sup> The Midianites were a nomadic people living in north-western Sinai (see #Ex 2:11). The Amalekites, (Gn 36:12), were mainly settled in southern Palestine but the name here may apply vaguely to nomadic groups. The 'sons of the East' were desert tribes living to the east of the Jordan.  
<sup>4</sup> 'Gaza' is a Philistine city some 72 km south of Jaffa.  
<sup>5</sup> The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here (possible *yod/vav* confusion) would benefit from an explanation.  
<sup>6</sup> The NRSV opens this verse, here following the NJB, with, "Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian."  
<sup>7</sup> This paragraph recounts the first appearance of a prophet in Israelite history.  
<sup>8</sup> The NJB swaps the words 'led' and 'brought', here following the NRSV.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנֹכִי  
הָעֵלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאָצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִבֵּית  
עַבְדִּים: <sup>ט</sup> וְאֶצֵּל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל-  
לְחָצִיכֶם וְאֶגְרַשׁ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶתְּנָה לָכֶם אֶת-  
אֶרֶצָם: <sup>י</sup> וְאָמַרְהָ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא  
תִירְאוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יוֹשְׁבִים  
בָּאֶרֶץ וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי: {פ}

<sup>יא</sup> וַיָּבֹא מִלֶּאדָּי יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר  
בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאָשׁ אֲבִי הָעֲזָרִי וְגִדְעוֹן בֶּן־חַבִּט  
חֲטִים בָּגַת לְהִנִּים מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו מִלֶּאדָּי  
יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה עִמָּךְ גִּבּוֹר הַחֵיל: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלָיו גִּדְעוֹן בִּי אֲדֹנָי וַיֵּשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מִצָּאֲתָנוּ  
כָּל-זֹאת וְאֵיךְ כָּל-נַפְלֹאֲתָיו אֲשֶׁר סָפְרוּ-לָנוּ  
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֵאמֹר הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם הָעֵלָנוּ יְהוָה וְעַתָּה  
נִטְשָׁנוּ יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵנוּ בְּכַף-מִדְיָן: <sup>יד</sup> וַיַּפֵּן אֵלָיו יְהוָה

to them, "Thus Yahweh speaks, the God of Israel. "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery. <sup>9</sup> I rescued you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all who oppressed you; and I drove them out before you and gave you their land, <sup>10</sup> and I said to you: I am Yahweh your God. Do not reverence the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live. But you have not listened to my words."

<sup>11</sup> The Angel of Yahweh came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash of Abiezer. Gideon his son was threshing wheat in the winepress to hide it from Midian; <sup>12</sup> the Angel of Yahweh appeared to him and said, "Yahweh is with you, valiant warrior!" <sup>13</sup> Gideon answered him, "But sir, if Yahweh is with us, then why is all this happening to us? And where are all the wonders our ancestors tell us of when they say, "Did not Yahweh bring us out of Egypt?" But now Yahweh has deserted us; he has abandoned us to Midian." <sup>14</sup> Then

<sup>9</sup> The literal translation of 'power' (twice in this verse) is 'hand'.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'words' is 'voice'.

<sup>11</sup> Vv. 11–24 combine an account of the calling of Gideon, continued in vv. 36–40, and an account of the founding of a sanctuary, in the manner of those in Genesis, with a theophany, message of salvation and inauguration of the cult. The 'Angel of Yahweh' is simply called Yahweh in vv. 14, 16 & 23. In v. 22, Gideon identifies Yahweh with his Angel (see #Gn 16:7). The 'oak' (the NJB uses 'terebinth') was a sacred tree (see 4:5, 11, 9:37, Jos 24:26). The location of this particular 'Ophrah' is unknown.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'valiant', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'mighty' and NETB has 'courageous'.

<sup>13</sup> The NJB opens Gideon's reply, here following the NRSV, with 'forgive me, my lord'.

<sup>14</sup> Some equate Yahweh and the angel here but they are likely distinct; in vv. 22–23, Yahweh and Gideon talk after the angel has vanished (v. 21).

וַיֹּאמֶר לָךְ בְּכַחֲךָ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף  
מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּידָּ: טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בִּי אֲדֹנָי בְּמָה  
אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה אֲלֹפִי הַדָּל בַּמִּנְשָׁה וְאַנְכִי  
הַצָּעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי: טז וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה כִּי אֵתִיהָ  
עִמָּךְ וְהָבִיתָ אֶת־מִדְיָן כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד: יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
אֶסְנֶא מַצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת שְׂאֵתָהּ  
מִדְּבַר עָמִי: יח אֶל־נָא תִמַּשׁ מִזֶּה עַד־בֹּאִי אֵלֶיךָ  
וְהִצָּאתִי אֶת־מִנְחָתִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי  
אֲשֻׁב עַד שׁוֹבֶךָ: יט וְגִדְעוֹן בָּא וַיַּעַשׂ גְּדִי־עֲזִים  
וַאֲיִפַת־קֶמַח מִצֹּת הַבָּשָׂר שֵׁם בֶּסֶל וְהִמָּרַק שֵׁם  
בִּפְרוֹר וַיֹּצֵא אֵלָיו אֶל־תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה וַיַּגֵּשׁ: {פ}

כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֱךָ הָאֱלֹהִים קַח אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר  
וְאֶת־הַמִּצֹּת וְהִנַּח אֶל־הַסֶּלַע הַלֵּז וְאֶת־הִמָּרַק  
שִׁפּוֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: כא וַיִּשְׁלַח מִלֶּאֱךָ יְהוָה אֶת־קָצֶה

Yahweh turned to him and said, "Go in this strength of yours and rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Do I not send you myself?" <sup>15</sup> He answered, "But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh and I am the least in my family." <sup>16</sup> Yahweh answered him, "I will be with you and you shall crush Midian as one man." <sup>17</sup> He said to him, "If I have found favour in your sight, give me a sign that it is, indeed, you who speak to me. <sup>18</sup> Do not go away until I come back, I will bring you my present and set it down before you." He said, "I will stay until you return." <sup>19</sup> Gideon went away, prepared a kid and unleavened cakes with an ephah of flour. He put the meat into a basket and the broth into a pot, and brought it all to him under the oak.

<sup>20</sup> The Angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and unleavened cakes, put them on this rock and pour the broth over them." And he did so.

<sup>21</sup> Then the Angel of Yahweh reached out the tip of the staff in his hand

<sup>15</sup> The NJB opens with 'Gideon' in place of 'he', here following the MT & NRSV. Here, אֲדֹנָי ('Adonai') is translated as 'sir'.

<sup>16</sup> The idiom 'as one man' emphasises the unity of a group (see 20:8, 11); here, it may carry the force, 'as if they were just one man' (cf. NJB).

<sup>17</sup> The NJB opens with 'Gideon' in place of 'he', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>18</sup> The precise nuance of the word מִנְחָה ('present') is uncertain in this context; it may refer to a gift offered as a sign of goodwill or submission or, in some cases, it is used of a gift offered to appease an offended party; the word can also carry a sacrificial connotation (cf. NJB, 'offering').

<sup>19</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB adds 'as he came near' as a new sentence, linked to v. 20. 1 ephah is about 22L or 2/3 of a bushel.

<sup>20</sup> The NJB has 'Yahweh' in place of 'God', but the Divine Name is not used here in the MT (but cf. v. 21, where it is).

<sup>21</sup> The meal prepared by Gideon for the Angel of Yahweh – whether it has a sacrificial character or not – is turned into a burnt offering by the divine fire; compare Manoah's sacrifice (13:15–20). The rock is thus consecrated and Gideon builds an altar on it. The literal translation of 'vanished before his eyes' is 'went from his eyes'.

הַמִּשְׁעָנָה אֲשֶׁר בִּידּוֹ וַיִּגַּע בַּבָּשָׂר וּבַמִּצּוֹת וַתֵּעַל  
הָאֵשׁ מִן־הַצּוֹר וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת־הַמִּצּוֹת  
וּמִלֶּאֱדָן יְהוָה הִלָּךְ מֵעֵינָיו: <sup>כב</sup> וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן כִּי־מִלֶּאֱדָן  
יְהוָה הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אָהֵה אֲדָנִי יְהוָה כִּי־עַל־כֵּן  
רָאִיתִי מִלֶּאֱדָן יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים: <sup>כג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם לָךְ אֶל־תִּירָא לֹא תָמוּת: <sup>כד</sup> וַיִּבֶן שָׁם  
גִּדְעוֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא־לּוֹ יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם עַד הַיּוֹם  
הַזֶּה עוֹדָנוּ בְּעַפְרַת אֲבֵי הָעִזְרִי: {ס}

<sup>כה</sup> וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה קַח אֶת־פָּר־  
הַשּׁוֹר אֲשֶׁר לְאַבְיָךְ וּפָר הַשְּׁנִי שִׁבַּע שָׁנִים וְהַרְסֵתָ  
אֶת־מִזְבַּח הַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר לְאַבְיָךְ וְאֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה  
אֲשֶׁר־עָלָיו תִּכְרֹת: <sup>כו</sup> וּבִנִיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
עַל רֹאשׁ הַמַּעֲזוֹ הַזֶּה בַּמַּעֲרָכָה וּלְקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַפָּר  
הַשְּׁנִי וְהַעֲלִיתָ עוֹלָה בַּעֲצֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּכְרֹת:  
<sup>כז</sup> וַיִּקַּח גִּדְעוֹן עֲשָׂרָה אַנְשִׁים מֵעַבְדָּיו וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר  
דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרָא אֶת־בֵּית אָבִיו  
וְאֶת־אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר מַעֲשׂוֹת יוֹמָם וַיַּעַשׂ לַיְלָה:

and touched the meat and unleavened cakes. Fire sprang from the rock and consumed the meat and unleavened cakes, and the Angel of Yahweh vanished before his eyes. <sup>22</sup> Then Gideon knew this was the Angel of Yahweh, and he said, “Alas, my Lord Yahweh! I have seen the Angel of Yahweh face to face!” <sup>23</sup> But Yahweh answered him, “Peace be with you; have no fear; you will not die.” <sup>24</sup> Gideon built an altar there to Yahweh and called it Yahweh-Peace. This altar still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

<sup>25</sup> Now that night Yahweh said to Gideon, “Take your father’s bull and a second, seven-year-old bull, and pull down the altar to Baal your father has and cut down the sacred pole by it. <sup>26</sup> Then, on top of this bluff, build a carefully constructed altar to Yahweh your God. Then take the second bull and make a high-offering on the wood of the sacred pole you have cut down.” <sup>27</sup> Then Gideon chose ten of his servants and did as Yahweh had ordered him; but since he stood too much in fear of his family and the townspeople to do this by day, he did it by night. <sup>28</sup> Next morning, when the townspeople got up, the altar to Baal had been

<sup>22</sup> ‘Lord Yahweh’ (traditionally, ‘Lord GOD’) translates אֲדָנִי יְהוָה; the 1<sup>st</sup> word is the same title used in v. 15, but here it is part of a Divine Title.

<sup>23</sup> For a similar use of the phrase, ‘Peace be with you’, to introduce a reassuring word, see Gn 43:23.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB has simply ‘of Abiezer’ in place of ‘which belongs to the Abiezrites’, here following the NRSV. ‘Peace’ translates שְׁלוֹם.

<sup>25</sup> In place of ‘and a second, seven-year old bull’, here following the MT, the NJB reads ‘the seven-year old bull’.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Sacred pole’ is a translation of אֲשֵׁרָה (‘Asherah’).

<sup>27</sup> The literal translation of ‘ten of his servants’ is ‘ten men from among his servants’.

<sup>28</sup> Before ‘the altar to Baal’, the MT has ‘look’: the narrator uses this word to invite his readers to view the scene through the eyes of the men.

כח וישפִּימוּ אֲנָשִׁי הָעִיר בַּבֶּקֶר וְהִנֵּה נִתָּן מִזְבֵּחַ  
הַבָּעַל וְהָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו כָּרְתָהּ וְאֵת הַפֶּר הַשְּׂנִי  
הָעֵלָה עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַבְּנוּי: כט וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-  
רֵעֵהוּ מִי עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּדְרְשׁוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן-יֹאָשׁ עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲנָשִׁי  
הָעִיר אֶל-יֹאָשׁ הוֹצֵא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ ויָמָת כִּי נָתַן אֶת-  
מִזְבֵּחַ הַבָּעַל וְכִי כָרַת הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו:  
לא וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹאָשׁ לְכָל אֲשֶׁר-עָמְדוּ עָלָיו הָאֲתָם  
תָּרִיבוּן לַבָּעַל אִם-אַתֶּם תּוֹשִׁיעוֹן אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָרִיב  
לֹא יוֹמָת עַד-הַבֶּקֶר אִם-אֱלֹהִים הוּא יָרֵב לוֹ כִּי  
נָתַן אֶת-מִזְבְּחוֹ: לב וַיִּקְרָא-לוֹ בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא יִרְבֵּעַל  
לֵאמֹר יָרֵב בּוֹ הַבָּעַל כִּי נָתַן אֶת-מִזְבְּחוֹ: {ס}  
לג וְכָל-מִדְיָן וְעַמְלָק וּבְנֵי-קֶדֶם נֹאֲסָפוּ יַחְדָּו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ  
וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעַמֶּק יִזְרְעֵאל: לד וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבָשָׁה אֶת-  
גִּדְעוֹן וַיִּתְקַע בַּשּׁוֹפָר וַיִּזְעַק אַבְיָעֶזֶר אַחֲרָיו:

destroyed, the sacred pole that stood beside it was now cut down, and the fattened calf had been burnt as a holocaust on the newly built altar.  
<sup>29</sup> Then they said to each other, "Who has done this?" They searched, made enquiries, and declared, "Gideon son of Joash has done it." <sup>30</sup> Then the townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son for he must die, since he has destroyed the altar to Baal and cut down the sacred pole that stood beside it." <sup>31</sup> Joash answered all those who mustered round him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you champion his cause? Anyone who pleads for Baal must be put to death before dawn. If he is a god, let him plead for himself, now that Gideon has destroyed his altar." <sup>32</sup> That day Gideon was given the name of Jerubbaal, because, they said, "Baal must plead against him, seeing that he has destroyed his altar."

<sup>33</sup> Then all Midian and Amalek and the sons of the East joined forces, crossed the Jordan, and encamped in the Plain of Jezreel; <sup>34</sup> but the spirit of Yahweh came on Gideon; he sounded the horn and Abiezer rallied

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of 'to each other' is 'each one to his neighbour'.

<sup>30</sup> Literally translated, 'for he must die' is 'and let him die', but the jussive form with *vav* after the imperative is best translated as a purpose clause.

<sup>31</sup> The sentence, "Anyone who pleads ... before dawn," may be a warning to the crowd that Joash intends to defend his son and to kill anyone who tries to execute Gideon; alternatively, it may be a sarcastic statement about Baal's apparent inability to defend his own honour: anyone who takes up Baal's cause may end up dead, perhaps by the same hand that pulled down the pagan god's altar.

<sup>32</sup> The etymology explaining Gideon's second name (יִרְבֵּעַל, see 7:1, etc.) is of the popular kind; the name in fact has the opposite sense: 'May Baal strive for,' i.e. defend (the one who bears the name). A Yahwistic shrine replaces the Canaanite one.

<sup>33</sup> On the 'Plain of Jezreel', see #4:7.

<sup>34</sup> The 'spirit of Yahweh' empowered Gideon, so the victory belongs to God.



לָהֶם וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּכָל־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּזְעַק גַּם־הוּא  
 אַחֲרָיו וּמַלְאָכִים שָׁלַח בְּאַשֶׁר וּבְזִבְלוֹן וּבְנַפְתָּלִי  
 וַיֵּצְאוּ לִקְרָאתָם: <sup>ל</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אִם־  
 יִשְׁדֹּךְ מוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:  
<sup>ל</sup>זֶה הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מַצִּיג אֶת־גִּזְתְּ הַצֹּמֶר בַּגֶּרֶן אִם טֹל־  
 יִהְיֶה עַל־הַגִּזָּה לְבָדָה וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ חָרֵב וַיִּדְעָתִי  
 כִּי־תוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיָדִי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:  
<sup>ל</sup>ח וַיְהִי־כֵן וַיִּשְׁכֹּם מִמָּחָרֶת וַיִּזֹּר אֶת־הַגִּזָּה וַיִּמָּץ טֹל־  
 מִן־הַגִּזָּה מְלֹא הַסֶּפֶל מֵיָם: <sup>ט</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־  
 הָאֱלֹהִים אֵל־יִחָר אַפִּי בִּי וְאִדְבָּרָה אִךְ הַפֶּעַם  
 אֲנִסָּה נְאֻר־קֶה־פֶּעַם בַּגִּזָּה יִהְיֶנָּה חָרֵב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה  
 לְבָדָה וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה־טֹל: <sup>מ</sup>וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים כֵּן  
 בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיְהִי־חָרֵב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה לְבָדָה וְעַל־כָּל־  
 הָאָרֶץ הָיָה טֹל: {פ}

behind him. <sup>35</sup> He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they too were called out to follow him; he sent messenger to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they too marched out to meet him. <sup>36</sup> Gideon said to God, “If you really mean to deliver Israel by my hand, as you have declared, <sup>37</sup> see now, I spread out a fleece on the threshing-floor; if there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is left dry, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have declared.” <sup>38</sup> And so it happened. Gideon rose the next morning, squeezed the fleece, and wrung enough dew out of the fleece to fill a drinking cup. <sup>39</sup> Then Gideon spoke to God again, “Do not be angry with me if I speak once again. Let me make trial with the fleece just once more. Let the fleece alone be dry and let there be dew on the ground all round it.” <sup>40</sup> God did so that night. The fleece alone stayed dry, and there was dew on the all the ground.

<sup>35</sup> In place of ‘they too were called out to follow him’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘and Manasseh too rallied behind him’.

<sup>36</sup> The fleece is the sign asked for by Gideon in v. 17; cf. Ex 4:17, where two signs authenticate the mission of Moses. Similar tests are common in folklore.

<sup>37</sup> NETB has ‘the ground around it’ in place of ‘all the ground’, here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>38</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “...dew dripped from the fleece – a bowl full of water.”

<sup>39</sup> Gideon’s request, literally translated, opens, “Let your anger not rage at me, so that I might speak only this once.”

<sup>40</sup> In place of ‘all the ground’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘the ground all round it’ (cf. #37).



## JUDGES 7

## שופטים פרק ז

א וַיִּשְׁכֶּם יִרְבָּעֵל הוּא גִדְעוֹן וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל־עֵין חָרֹד וּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן הָיָה־לּוֹ מִצְפּוֹן מִגְבְּעַת הַמּוֹרָה בְּעַמְקָא: {ס}

ב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן רַב הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתְּךָ מִתַּתִּי אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּיָדָם פְּרוֹי־תִפְאָר עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־מֶר יָדִי הוֹשִׁיעָה לִּי: ג וַעֲתָה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי־יֵרָא וַחֲרֹד יֵשֶׁב וַיִּצְפֹּר מִהָר הַגִּלְעָד וַיֵּשֶׁב מִן־הָעָם עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אָלֶף וַעֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים נִשְׁאַרוּ: {ס}

ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן עוֹד הָעָם רַב הוֹרֵד אוֹתָם אֶל־הַמַּיִם וְאַצְרִפֵּנוּ לָךְ שֵׁם וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ זֶה יֵלֶךְ אִתְּךָ הוּא יֵלֶךְ אִתְּךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ זֶה לֹא־יֵלֶךְ עִמָּךְ הוּא לֹא יֵלֶךְ: ה וַיּוֹרֵד אֶת־הָעָם אֶל־הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִלָּק

<sup>1</sup> Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) got up very early, as did all the people with him; he pitched camp at En-Harod; the camp of Midian was north of his, under the Hill of Moreh in the valley.

<sup>2</sup> Then Yahweh said to Gideon, "You have too many men for me to put Midian into their power; Israel might brag, saying, "My own hand has rescued me." <sup>3</sup> Therefore, make this proclamation now to the people: "Let anyone who is frightened or fearful go home, and leave Mount Gilead!"' Twenty-two thousand men went home, and ten thousand remained.

<sup>4</sup> Yahweh said to Gideon, "There are still too many people. Take them down to the waterside and I will sift them there. If I say of a man: He is to go with you, then that man is to go with you. And if I say of a man: He is not to go with you, then that man is not to go." <sup>5</sup> So Gideon took the people down to the waterside, and Yahweh said to him, "All those

## JUDGES 7

<sup>1</sup> 'En-Harod' (עֵין חָרֹד) means 'spring of trembling' (see v. 3); it lies at the foot of Mount Gilboa in the Plain of Jezreel.

<sup>2</sup> Victory over the Midianites was not to be attributed to the military strength of Israel: it was a holy war, in which God was the giver of victory.

<sup>3</sup> Many interpreters (including the NRSV) reject the MT reading 'and leave Mount Gilead' for geographical reasons; a possible alternative, involving rather radical emendation of the text (which the NRSV uses), would be 'thus Gideon sifted them out' (i.e., thinned the ranks in this manner). The NJB uses the conjectural translation 'and watch from Mount Gilboa'.

<sup>4</sup> In place of 'people', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has 'troops' and NETB has 'men'.

<sup>5</sup> The MT has 'putting their hands to their mouths' after 'lapped' in v. 6 but this makes no sense as dog-like lappers (who would not use their hands to drink) are here distinguished from those who kneel (who would use their hands).

בְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ מִן־הַמַּיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק הַכֶּלֶב תִּצְיֵג אוֹתוֹ  
 לִבָּד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יִכְרַע עַל־בִּרְכָּיו לִשְׁתּוֹת: <sup>ו</sup>וַיְהִי  
 מִסְפַּר הַמִּלְקָקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל־פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת  
 אִישׁ וְכָל יֵתֶר הָעָם כָּרְעוּ עַל־בִּרְכֵיהֶם לִשְׁתּוֹת  
 מַיִם: {ס}

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן בְּשֹׁלֶשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ  
 הַמִּלְקָקִים אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּיָדְךָ  
 וְכָל־הָעָם יֵלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמִקְמוֹ: <sup>ח</sup>וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־צִדָּה  
 הָעָם בְּיָדָם וְאֵת שׁוֹפְרֵיהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 שָׁלַח אִישׁ לְאַהֲלָיו וּבְשֹׁלֶשׁ־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַחֲזִיק  
 וּמַחֲנֶה מִדְיָן הָיָה לוֹ מִתַּחַת בְּעֵמֶק: {פ}

<sup>ט</sup>וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה קוּם רֵד  
 בַּמַּחֲנֶה כִּי נָתַתִּיו בְּיָדְךָ: <sup>י</sup>וְאִם־יֵרָא אֶתָּה לָרֶדֶת  
 רֵד אֶתָּה וּפְרָה נַעֲרָךְ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה: <sup>יא</sup>וְשָׁמַעְתָּ מִה־  
 יִדְבָּרוּ וְאַחֲרֵי תַחֲזֹקְנָה יָדֶיךָ וַיִּרְדַּת בַּמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְדֹּ  
 הוּא וּפְרָה נַעֲרֹ אֶל־קֶצֶה הַחֲמִשִּׁים אֲשֶׁר בַּמַּחֲנֶה:  
<sup>יב</sup>וּמִדְיָן וְעַמְלֵק וְכָל־בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם נָפְלִים בְּעֵמֶק

who lap the water with their tongues, as a dog laps, place these on one side; and all those who kneel down to drink, putting their hands to their mouths, place these on the other side.” <sup>6</sup> The number of those who lapped with their tongues was three hundred; all the rest of the people had knelt to drink.

<sup>7</sup> Then Yahweh said to Gideon, “With the three hundred who lapped the water I will rescue you and put Midian into your power. Let all the others go back, every man to his own home.” <sup>8</sup> Gideon made the people give him what pitchers and horns they had, and then sent away all the Israelites, each to his own tent, keeping only the three hundred with him. The camp of Midian was below his own in the valley.

<sup>9</sup> That same night, Yahweh said to him, “Get up and attack the camp. I am putting it into your power. <sup>10</sup> But if you fear to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah; <sup>11</sup> listen to what they are saying; you will be encouraged by it and then you will march against the camp.” Then, with his servant Purah, he went down to the outposts of the camp.

<sup>12</sup> Midian and Amalek, and all the sons of the East stretched through the

<sup>6</sup> See #5 regarding the transposition of the phrase ‘putting their hands to their mouths’.

<sup>7</sup> The pronoun ‘you’ is here plural (perhaps referring to the entire army) but ‘your’ is singular (referring to Gideon).

<sup>8</sup> The literal translation of ‘his own’ is ‘him’.

<sup>9</sup> Dreams were believed to be a means of divine-human communication.

<sup>10</sup> After ‘go down’, the NJB adds ‘first’; here, we follow the NRSV.

<sup>11</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “...to the edge of the ones in battle array who were in the camp.”

<sup>12</sup> The NRSV has ‘The Midianites and the Amalekites’ in place of ‘Midian and Amalek’, here following the MT (מִדְיָן וְעַמְלֵק) & NJB.

כַּאֲרֵבָה לָרֹב וּלְגַמְלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר בַּחוּל שְׁעַל-  
 שִׁפְתַּת הַיָּם לָרֹב: י' וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ מִסְפָּר  
 לָרַעְהוּ חֲלוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חֲלוֹם חֲלֹמְתִי וְהִנֵּה צָלִיל  
 לֶחֶם שְׁעָרִים מִתְהַפֵּךְ בַּמַּחֲנֶה מִדִּין וַיָּבֹא עַד-  
 הָאֶהָל וַיִּכְּהוּ וַיִּפֹּל וַיִּהְיֶה לְמַעַלָּה וּנְפֹל הָאֶהָל:  
 י" וַיֵּעַן רַעְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין זֹאת בִּלְתִּי אִם-חֶרֶב גִּדְעוֹן  
 בֶּן-יֹזָאֵשׁ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָתַן הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ אֶת-מִדְיָן  
 וְאֶת-כָּל-הַמַּחֲנֶה: {פ}

טו וַיְהִי כַשְׁמַע גִּדְעוֹן אֶת-מִסְפָּר הַחֲלוֹם וְאֶת-  
 שִׁבְרוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וַיָּשֻׁב אֶל-מַחֲנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר  
 קוּמוּ כִּי-נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיַדְכֶם אֶת-מַחֲנֶה מִדִּין: טז וַיַּחַץ  
 אֶת-שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ שְׁלֹשָׁה רִאשִׁים וַיִּתֵּן  
 שׁוֹפְרוֹת בְּיַד-כָּלֶם וּכְדִים רִיקִים וּלְפָדִים בְּתוֹךְ  
 הַכְּדִים: יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִמְּנִי תִרְאוּ וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ  
 וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בָא בְּקֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהִיא כְּאֲשֶׁר-אֲעֲשֶׂה  
 בֵּן תַּעֲשׂוּ: יח וְתִקְעֹתִי בַשּׁוֹפָר אֲנֹכִי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר אִתִּי

valley as thick as locusts; their camels were innumerable like the sand on the seashore. <sup>13</sup> Gideon came up just as a man was telling his comrade a dream; he was saying, "I had a dream; a cake made of barley bread came rolling through the camp of Midian; it reached the tent, struck against it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, and the tent lay flat."

<sup>14</sup> His comrade answered, "This can be nothing else but the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has put Midian and all the camp into his power."

<sup>15</sup> When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he fell to his knees; then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "On your feet, for Yahweh has put the camp of Midian into your power!"

<sup>16</sup> He then divided his three hundred men into three companies and, to each man, he gave a trumpet and an empty pitcher, with a torch inside each pitcher. <sup>17</sup> He said to them, "Watch me, and do as I do. When I reach the outskirts of the camp, whatever I do, you do too. <sup>18</sup> When I sound the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you too must sound

<sup>13</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, omits, 'and it fell' and 'and the tent lay flat'. The tent symbolises the nomad; the barley cake the agricultural Israelites. Hence the reply in v. 14, the dream being recognised as a divine revelation (cf. Gn 20:3).

<sup>14</sup> For the last sentence, here following the NJB, the NRSV has, "into his hand God has given Midian and all the army."

<sup>15</sup> Other interpretations of 'fell to his knees' (here following the NJB) are 'worshipped' (NRSV), 'praised God' (NETB) and 'bowed down'.

<sup>16</sup> They hid the torches inside the earthenware jars to disguise their approach and to keep the torches from being extinguished by the breeze.

<sup>17</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "Look! I am going to the outskirts of the camp. Do as I do!"

<sup>18</sup> In place of 'around the whole camp', here following the NRSV, the NJB & NETB have 'all around the camp'.

וּתְקַעְתֶּם בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת גַּם-אַתֶּם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל-הַמַּחֲנֶה  
וְאָמַרְתֶּם לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: {פ}

י<sup>ט</sup> וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וּמֵאֵה-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-אַתּוֹ בִּקְצֵה  
הַמַּחֲנֶה רָאשׁ הָאֲשֻׁמֵּרִים הַתִּיכוֹנָה אֶדְ הַקֶּס  
הַקִּימוּ אֶת-הַשְּׁמֵרִים וַיִּתְּקֻם בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת וְנִפְּזוּ  
הַכִּדִּים אֲשֶׁר בִּידָם: כ<sup>ו</sup> וַיִּתְּקֻם שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָרָאשִׁים  
בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ הַכִּדִּים וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ בִיד־שְׁמָאוֹל  
בְּלַפְדִּים וּבִיד־יָמִינָם הַשׁוֹפְרוֹת לְתַקּוֹעַ וַיִּקְרְאוּ  
חֶרֶב לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: כא וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ אִישׁ תַּחְתּוֹ סְבִיב  
לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרָץ כָּל-הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְעוּ וַיִּנִּסּוּ וַיָּנוּסוּ:  
כב וַיִּתְּקֻם שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת הַשׁוֹפְרוֹת וַיִּשֶׁם יְהוָה אֶת  
חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ וּבְכָל-הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּנָּס הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד-  
בֵּית הַשָּׁטָה צָרְתָּה עַד שַׁפַּת-אֲבֵל מְחֹלָה עַל-  
טַבַּת: כג וַיִּצְעַק אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנַּפְתָּלִי וּמִן-אֲשֶׁר  
וּמִן-כָּל-מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרֵי מִדְיָן: כד וּמִלֹּאכִים  
שָׁלַח גִּדְעוֹן בְּכָל-הָר אֶפְרַיִם לֵאמֹר רְדּוּ לְקִרְיַת

your trumpets around the whole camp and shout, "For Yahweh and for Gideon!"

<sup>19</sup> Gideon and his hundred companions reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when they had just set the watch; they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands. <sup>20</sup> The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed their pitchers; with their left hands they grasped the torches, with their right hands the horns ready to blow; and they shouted, "For Yahweh and for Gideon!" <sup>21</sup> Every man stood in his place all round the camp. Then the whole camp woke and the Midianites fled, shouting. <sup>22</sup> While the three hundred kept sounding their horns, Yahweh made every man in the camp turn his sword against his comrade. They all fled as far as Beth-ha-Shittah towards Zererah, as far as the bank of Abel-Meholah opposite Tabbath. <sup>23</sup> The men of Israel were called from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh, and pursued Midian. <sup>24</sup> Gideon sent messengers throughout the highlands of Ephraim to say, "Come down and fight

<sup>19</sup> The NJB omits 'that were' before 'in their hands'.

<sup>20</sup> The NJB has 'sounded their horns' in place of 'blew the trumpets', here following the NRSV (as also in v. 19).

<sup>21</sup> In place of 'stood in his place', the NJB has 'stood still'. The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>22</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> sentence recounts another characteristic of the holy war: the Israelites do not have to fight; God sows panic in the enemy ranks (cf. Ex 14:14, Jos 6:20). In place of 'Zererah' (which some read as 'Zeredah'), here following the MT (צָרְתָּה), NRSV & NETB, the NJB (following 1K 4:12) has 'Zarethán'; the Midianites flee towards one of the fords of the Jordan.

<sup>23</sup> The NJB has 'mustered' in place of 'were called from', here following the NRSV & NETB.

<sup>24</sup> After the 1<sup>st</sup> instance of 'the Jordan', the NJB adds 'before they reach them'.

מִדְיָן וְלִכְדּוֹ לָהֶם אֶת־הַמַּיִם עַד בֵּית בָּרָה וְאֶת־  
הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּצְעֲקוּ כָּל־אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם  
עַד בֵּית בָּרָה וְאֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן: כה וַיִּלְכְּדוּ שְׁנֵי־שָׂרֵי  
מִדְיָן אֶת־עֹרֵב וְאֶת־זֵעֵב וַיַּהַרְגוּ אֶת־עֹרֵב בְּצוּר־  
עֹרֵב וְאֶת־זֵעֵב הָרְגוּ בִּיקְבֵּי־זֵעֵב וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶל־מִדְיָן  
וְרֹאשׁ־עֹרֵב וְזֵעֵב הֵבִיאוּ אֶל־גִּדְעֹן מַעְבַּר לַיַּרְדֵּן:

Midian, seize the water-points as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan.” All the men of Ephraim were called out and seized the water-points as far as Beth-Barah and the Jordan. <sup>25</sup> They captured the two Midianite chieftains, Oreb and Zeeb; they killed Oreb at Oreb’s Rock and Zeeb at Zeeb’s Winepress. They pursued Midian; and they brought Gideon the heads of Oreb and of Zeeb beyond the Jordan.

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Oreb’ (עֹרֵב) means ‘the raven’ (see Is 10:26) and ‘Zeeb’ (זֵעֵב) means ‘the wolf’. This incident, mentioned again in 8:3, comes from an independent, probably Ephraimite, tradition, attached to two place names.



## שופטים פרק ח

א וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם מִה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָשִׂיתָ  
לָנוּ לְבַלְתִּי קָרְאוֹת לָנוּ כִּי הִלַכְתָּ לְהִלָּחֵם בְּמִדְיָן  
וַיִּרְיֹבוּן אִתּוֹ בַּחֲזָקָה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִה־עָשִׂיתִי  
עִתָּה כָכֶם הֲלֹא טוֹב עָלְלוֹת אֶפְרַיִם מִבָּצִיר  
אֲבִיעֶזֶר: ג בִּידְכֶם נָתַן אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שָׁרֵי מִדְיָן אֶת־  
עֶרֶב וְאֶת־זַבָּח וּמִה־יִּכְלָתִי עֲשׂוֹת כָכֶם אִם רָפַתָּה  
רוּחַם מֵעַלְיוֹ בַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ד וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן  
הַיִּרְדְנָה עֲבָרָה הוּא וּשְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ  
עֵיפִים וְרֹדְפִים: ה וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֲנָשֵׁי סָכּוֹת תְּנוּ־נָא  
כֶּכָרוֹת לֶחֶם לָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלִי כִי־עֵיפִים הֵם וְאֲנֹכִי  
רֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי זַבָּח וְצַלְמֻנֶּעַ מֶלֶכִי מִדְיָן: ו וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂרֵי  
סָכּוֹת הֶכֱף זַבָּח וְצַלְמֻנֶּעַ עִתָּה בִידְךָ כִּי־נָתַן  
לְצַבָּאָךְ לֶחֶם: ז וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן לָכֵן בָּתַת יְהוָה אֶת־

## JUDGES 8

<sup>1</sup> Now, the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, "What do you mean by treating us like this, not to call us when you went to fight Midian?" They reproached him bitterly. <sup>2</sup> He answered, "What have I done when compared to you? Is not the gleanings of Ephraim's grapes better than the vintage of Abiezer? <sup>3</sup> Into your power, Yahweh has given the chieftains of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. Can what I achieved compare with what you have done?" When he said these words, their anger against him subsided. <sup>4</sup> Gideon reached the Jordan and crossed it, but he and his three hundred companions were tired out and famished. <sup>5</sup> So, he said to the men of Succoth, "Please give my followers a few loaves of bread, because they are tired out, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian." <sup>6</sup> The chieftains of Succoth answered, "Give bread to our army? Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your

### JUDGES 8

- <sup>1</sup> Ephraim here appears in a subordinate role to Manasseh (see 7:24, 25), but the Ephraimites do not care to play second fiddle. Ultimately, Ephraim will become much more powerful than Manasseh, hence Jacob's preferential treatment of the former in Gn 48:17.
- <sup>2</sup> Gideon employs an agricultural metaphor: he argues that Ephraim's mopping up operations, though seemingly like the inferior grapes which are missed initially by the harvesters or left for the poor, are actually more noteworthy than the military efforts of Gideon's family.
- <sup>3</sup> Literally translated, the last sentence reads, "Then their spirits relaxed from against him, when he spoke this word."
- <sup>4</sup> This campaign is represented as the sequel to that of 7:1-22 but comes originally from an independent tradition, probably about another Midianite raid. It is, in any case, quite distinct from the incident in 7:25, where the Midianite 'chieftains' have different names from the Midianite 'kings' (v. 5). Geographical details about Succoth, Peniel and Transjordan indicate a Transjordanian tradition.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Zebah' (זַבָּח, 'victim') and 'Zalmunna' (צַלְמֻנֶּעַ, 'wandering shade') are mocking distortions of the kings' names, cf. 7:25.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Succoth', a Transjordanian city east of Shechem, is identified with Tell Deir Alla.



זָבַח וְאֶת־צַלְמֻנָּע בְּיָדִי וְדָשַׁתִּי אֶת־בְּשָׂרְכֶם אֶת־  
 קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרֻקָּנִים: <sup>ח</sup> וַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם פְּנוּאֵל  
 וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם כִּזֹּאת וַיַּעֲנוּ אוֹתוֹ אַנְשֵׁי פְנוּאֵל  
 כַּאֲשֶׁר עָנוּ אַנְשֵׁי סֻכּוֹת: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־לְאַנְשֵׁי  
 פְּנוּאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתֶּן אֶת־הַמִּגְדָּל  
 הַזֶּה: {פ}

<sup>י</sup> וְזָבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע בִּקְרָקֹר וּמַחֲנֵיהֶם עִמָּם כַּחֲמֶשֶׁת  
 עָשָׂר אָלֶף כָּל הַנּוֹתָרִים מִכָּל מַחֲנֶה בְּנֵי־קֶדֶם  
 וְהַנִּפְלָאִים מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אָלֶף אִישׁ שְׁלֹף־חֶרֶב:  
<sup>יא</sup> וַיַּעַל גִּדְעוֹן דֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂכוּנִי בְּאֵהָלִים מִקֶּדֶם לְנֹבַח  
 וַיִּגְבְּהָה וַיֵּד אֶת־הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהַמַּחֲנֶה הָיָה בִּטָּח:  
<sup>יב</sup> וַיִּנָּסוּ זָבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע וַיִּרְדּוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־  
 שְׁנֵי מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן אֶת־זָבַח וְאֶת־צַלְמֻנָּע וְכָל־  
 הַמַּחֲנֶה הִחָרִיד: <sup>יג</sup> וַיָּשָׁב גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ מִן־

grasp?" <sup>7</sup> Gideon answered, "Very well! When Yahweh has put Zebah and Zalmunna into my power, I will thresh your skin with desert thorn and briar." <sup>8</sup> From there, he went up to Penuel and made a similar request of them; they answered as those of Succoth had done. <sup>9</sup> So, to the people of Penuel, he made a similar reply, "When I return victoriously, I will destroy this tower."

<sup>10</sup> Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their army, about fifteen thousand men, all who remained of the army of the sons of the East; for, a hundred and twenty thousand fighting men had fallen. <sup>11</sup> Gideon went up the nomads' way, eastwards of Nobah and Jogbehah, and routed the army when it was off-guard. <sup>12</sup> Zebah and Zalmunna fled. He pursued them; he took the kings of Midian prisoner, both Zebah and Zalmunna; and he routed the entire army. <sup>13</sup> When Gideon returned from the battle by the Ascent of Heres, <sup>14</sup> he seized a young man, one of the people of

<sup>7</sup> Threshing was usually done on a hard threshing floor: as farm animals walked over the stalks, pulling behind them a board embedded with sharp stones, the stalks and grain would be separated. Gideon threatens to use thorns and briars on his sledge. The word 'with' is apparently a rare instrumental use of the preposition **אֶת**; some, however, argue that **אֶת** more naturally indicates accompaniment ('together with').

<sup>8</sup> In place of 'made a similar request of them', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'asked the men of Penuel the same thing'.

<sup>9</sup> Alternative readings for 'victoriously' are 'safely' and 'in peace'.

<sup>10</sup> Literally translated, the verse ends, "About fifteen thousand [in number] were all the ones remaining from the army of the sons of the east. The fallen ones were a hundred and twenty thousand [in number], men drawing the sword."

<sup>11</sup> The term, **בִּטָּח** ('off-guard', literally 'secure'), probably means the army was undefended, not suspecting an attack at that time and place.

<sup>12</sup> In place of 'routed', here following the MT (literally, 'caused to panic') and NRSV, the NJB has 'destroyed'.

<sup>13</sup> The NJB makes this verse a complete sentence: "After the battle, Gideon returned..."

<sup>14</sup> Before 'the chieftains', the NJB adds 'the names of'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

הַמִּלְחָמָה מִלְמַעְלָה הַחֶרֶס: <sup>ד</sup> וַיִּלְכְּדוּ גֵעֵר מֵאֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ וַיִּכְתֹּב אֵלָיו אֶת־שְׂרֵי סְכוֹת וְאֶת־זִקְנֵיהָ שִׁבְעִים וּשְׁבַעָה אִישׁ: <sup>טו</sup> וַיִּבֹּא אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע אֲשֶׁר חֲרַפְתֶּם אוֹתִי לֵאמֹר הֲכֹף זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע עָתָה בְּיָדְךָ כִּי נָתַן לְאֲנָשֶׁיךָ הַיְעָפִים לֶחֶם: <sup>טז</sup> וַיִּקַּח אֶת־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר וְאֶת־קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרֻקָּנִים וַיֵּדַע בָּהֶם אֵת אֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת: <sup>יז</sup> וְאֶת־מִגְדָּל פְּנוּאֵל נָתַן וַיַּהַרֵּג אֶת־אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־זָבַח וְאֶל־צִלְמֻנֶּע אֵיפֹה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הֲרַגְתֶּם בְּתַבּוּר וַיֹּאמְרוּ כַּמוֹד כַּמוֹהֶם אֶחָד כְּתָאֵר בֶּנִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ: <sup>יט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲחִי בֶנִי־אֲמִי הֵם חִי־יְהוֹזֵה לֹו הַחִיתִּים אוֹתָם לֹא הֲרַגְתִּי אֹתָכֶם: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לִיתֵּר בְּכוֹרוֹ קוֹם הֲרֵג אוֹתָם וְלֹא־שָׁלַף הַנֶּעַר חֶרְבּוֹ כִּי יָרָא כִּי עוֹדְנֵנוּ נֶעַר: <sup>כא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע קוֹם אֲתָה וּפָגַע־בָּנוּ כִּי כָאִישׁ גְּבוּרָתוֹ

Succoth, and questioned him, and he listed for him the chieftains and elders of Succoth – seventy-seven men. <sup>15</sup> Then Gideon came to the people of Succoth and said: “Look! Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me and said, “Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your grasp, for us to give bread to your tired troops?”” <sup>16</sup> Then he seized the elders of the city and took desert thorn and briar and tore the men of Succoth to pieces with them. <sup>17</sup> He also destroyed the tower of Penuel and killed the townsmen. <sup>18</sup> Then he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “The men you killed at Tabor – what were they like?” They said, “They looked like you. Every one of them carried himself like the son of a king.” <sup>19</sup> Gideon said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother; as Yahweh lives, if you had spared their lives, I would not kill you.” <sup>20</sup> Then he ordered Jether his firstborn: “Go kill them!” But the boy did not draw his sword; he dared not; he was still only a lad. <sup>21</sup> Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Stand up and strike us down; for, as a man

<sup>15</sup> Gideon changes their actual statement (see v. 6) by saying ‘tired men’ rather than ‘army’; in this way he emphasises the crisis his men were facing and highlights the insensitivity of the men of Succoth.

<sup>16</sup> The translation here follows the reading of the LXX, Peshitta & Vg in assuming the form וַיִּדֹּשׁ from the verb דָּוַשׁ (‘thresh’) as in v. 7; the MT reads the form וַיֵּדַע (‘make known’), a Hiphil form of יָדַע, in which case one could translate, ‘he used them to teach the men of Succoth a lesson’.

<sup>17</sup> The NJB omits ‘also’, here following the NRSV & NETB.

<sup>18</sup> ‘What were they like?’ follows the Vg (*Quales fuerunt viri*); the MT has, ‘where were they?’ We know nothing else about this battle of Tabor.

<sup>19</sup> Gideon informs the kings that they have killed his brothers, and hence justifies his actions as avenger of blood (see #Nb 35:19).

<sup>20</sup> In place of ‘go kill them’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘stand up and kill them’.

<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of ‘as a man is, so is his strength’ is ‘for as the man is his strength’.

וַיָּקָם גִּדְעֹן וַיַּהַרֵג אֶת־זִבְחָה וְאֶת־צִלְמֻנָּע וַיִּקַּח  
אֶת־הַשְּׁהֲרָנִים אֲשֶׁר בַּצֹּואָרִי גְמֻלֵיהֶם: {פ}

כב וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־גִּדְעֹן מִשְׁל־בָּנוּ גַם־  
אַתָּה גַם־בְּנֶךָ גַם בֶּן־בְּנֶךָ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן:  
כג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעֹן לֹא־אֶמְשָׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם וְלֹא־  
יִמְשָׁל בְּנִי בָכֶם יְהוָה יִמְשָׁל בָּכֶם: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם  
גִּדְעֹן אֲשַׁאֲלֶה מִכֶּם שְׂאֵלָה וּתְנוּ־לִי אִישׁ גִּזָּם  
שְׁלָלוּ כִּי־נִזְמִי זֶהָב לָהֶם כִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֲלִים הֵם:  
כה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן נָתַן וַיִּפְרְשׁוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ  
שָׁמָּה אִישׁ גִּזָּם שְׁלָלוּ: כו וַיְהִי מִשְׁקַל גִּזְמֵי הַזָּהָב  
אֲשֶׁר שָׂאֵל אֵלָּף וּשְׁבַע־מֵאוֹת זָהָב לָבָד מִן־  
הַשְּׁהֲרָנִים וְהַנְּטִיפֹת וּבִגְדֵי הָאֶרְגָּמָן שֶׁעַל מַלְכֵי  
מִדְיָן וּלְבָד מִן־הָעֲנָקוֹת אֲשֶׁר בַּצֹּואָרִי גְמֻלֵיהֶם:  
כז וַיַּעַשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעֹן לְאַפֹּד וַיַּצַּג אוֹתוֹ בְּעִירוֹ  
בְּעַפְרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו שֵׁם וַיְהִי לְגִדְעֹן

is, so is his strength." Then Gideon stood up and killed Zebah and Zalmunna; and he took the crescents from their camels' necks.

<sup>22</sup> The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson, for you have rescued us from the power of Midian."

<sup>23</sup> Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, nor my son; Yahweh will rule over you." <sup>24</sup> Then Gideon said to them, "Let me make a request of you: each of you give me an earring out of his spoils." (For, they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) <sup>25</sup> They answered, "Gladly." So, they spread out a cloak and, on it, they threw, each of them, an earring taken from their spoils. <sup>26</sup> The weight of the golden earrings he had asked for reached seventeen hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescents and the pendants and purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars round their camels' necks, too. <sup>27</sup> Of all this, Gideon made an ephod and put it in his own city of Ophrah. All Israel, following his example, prostituted themselves

<sup>22</sup> The NJB has 'sons' and 'grandsons' in place of 'son' and 'grandson', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>23</sup> This verse follows the NRSV; the NJB has, "Gideon answered them, "It is not I who shall rule over you, nor my son; Yahweh must be your lord.""

<sup>24</sup> In place of 'for they had', here following the MT, the NJB has 'for the vanquished army had' and the NRSV has 'for the enemy had' and NETB has 'for the Midianites had'.

<sup>25</sup> The phrase, 'they spread out a cloak' follows the MT & NRSV; the NJB, following the LXX (καὶ ἀνέπτυξεν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ), reads, 'he spread out his cloak', with the singular pronouns referring to Gideon rather than the Israelites.

<sup>26</sup> 1,700 shekels would be about 19.4 Kg of gold.

<sup>27</sup> The 'ephod' mentioned was not a loincloth (Ex 28:6-14, 39:2-7), but a cultic object used for divination (see #1S 2:28). Gideon evidently intended it for the worship of Yahweh, but the Deuteronomic editor condemns it, as he later condemns Micah's ephod (17:3ff).

וּלְבֵיתוֹ לְמוֹקֶשׁ: כֹּחַ וַיִּפְנֶעַ מִדִּין לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְלֹא יָסִפּוּ לָשֹׂאת רֹאשׁם וַתִּשְׁקֹט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים  
שָׁנָה בִּימֵי גִדְעוֹן: {פ}

כֹּחַ וַיֵּלֶךְ יִרְבֵּעַל בֶּן־יֹאשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ: ל וַלְגִדְעוֹן הָיוּ  
שִׁבְעִים בָּנִים יִצְאֵי יֶרְכּוֹ בִּינָשִׁים רַבּוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ:  
לֹא וּפִילָגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁכֶם יִלְדָהּ לוֹ גַּם־הִיא בֶן וַיִּשֶׁם  
אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ: לֵב וַיָּמָת גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאשׁ  
בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּקִבְרֵ יוֹאֵשׁ אָבִיו בְּעֹפְרָה  
אָבִי הָעֹזְרִי: {פ}

לֵב וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר מָת גִּדְעוֹן וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּזְנוּ  
אֲחֵרֵי הַבְּעָלִים וַיִּשְׁיֻמוּ לָהֶם בַּעַל בְּרִית לָאֱלֹהִים:  
לֵד וְלֹא זָכְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הַמַּצִּיל  
אוֹתָם מִיַּד כָּל־אֲבִייהֶם מִסָּבִיב: לֵה וְלֹא־עָשׂוּ חֶסֶד  
עִם־בֵּית יִרְבֵּעַל גִּדְעוֹן כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

to it, and it was a snare for Gideon and his family. <sup>28</sup> Thus, Midian was humbled before the Israelites. They did not lift up their heads again, and the land enjoyed rest for forty years, as long as Gideon lived.

<sup>29</sup> Jerubbaal son of Joash went to live in his own house. <sup>30</sup> Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. <sup>31</sup> His concubine, who lived in Shechem, bore him a son too, and he named him Abimelech. <sup>32</sup> Gideon son of Joash was blessed in his old age; he died and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, at Ophrah of Abiezer.

<sup>33</sup> After Gideon's death, the people of Israel again began to prostitute themselves to the Baals and took Baal-Berith for their god. <sup>34</sup> The Israelites no longer remembered Yahweh their God, who had rescued them from all the enemies round them; <sup>35</sup> and towards the family of Jerubbaal – Gideon – they remained ungrateful for all its good deeds to Israel.

<sup>28</sup> The literal translation of 'as long as Gideon lived' is 'in Gideon's days'.

<sup>29</sup> In place of 'went to live', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'withdrew and lived'.

<sup>30</sup> Vv. 30–32 are stylistically similar to the notices on the 'minor' judges (see 10:1–5, 12:8–15) and perhaps come from the same terse register.

<sup>31</sup> The name, 'Abimelech' (אֲבִימֶלֶךְ), means 'my father is king'.

<sup>32</sup> For this verse, the NRSV has, "Then Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash at Ophrah of the Abiezrites."

<sup>33</sup> 'Baal-Berith' (or 'El-Berith') was the god of oaths and contracts, venerated by the mercantile Canaanites at Shechem (9:46).

<sup>34</sup> Freed from the Midianite threat, Israel returns to its familiar faults.

<sup>35</sup> The literal translation of 'remained ungrateful to' is 'did not do loyalty with'.

## JUDGES 9

## שופטים פרק ט

א וַיֵּלֶךְ אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בֶּן־יִרְבֵּעַל שְׁכֶמָה אֶל־אָחִי אָמֹ  
וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וְאֶל־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחַת בֵּית־אָבִי אָמֹ  
לֵאמֹר: ב וְדַבְּרוּ־נָא בְּאָזְנִי כָל־בְּעָלֵי שְׁכֶם מִה־טוֹב  
לָכֶם הַמֶּשֶׁל בְּכֶם שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ כָּל בְּנֵי יִרְבֵּעַל אִם־  
מֶשֶׁל בְּכֶם אִישׁ אֶחָד וּזְכַרְתֶּם כִּי־עַצְמְכֶם  
וּבְשַׁרְכֶם אָנִי: ג וַיְדַבְּרוּ אַחֲרֵי־אָמֹ עָלָיו בְּאָזְנֵי כָל־  
בְּעָלֵי שְׁכֶם אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֵּט לָבָם אַחֲרֵי  
אֲבִימֶלֶךְ כִּי אָמְרוּ אַחֲנֵנו הוּא: ד וַיִּתְּנוּ־לוֹ שִׁבְעִים  
כֶּסֶף מִבֵּית בַּעַל בְּרִית וַיִּשְׁכֹּר בָּהֶם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ  
אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים וּפְחָזִים וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו: ה וַיָּבֹא בֵּית־  
אָבִיו עֶפְרָתָה וַיַּהַרֵּג אֶת־אָחָיו בְּנֵי־יִרְבֵּעַל שִׁבְעִים  
אִישׁ עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת וַיּוֹתֵר יוֹתָם בֶּן־יִרְבֵּעַל הַקָּטָן  
כִּי נִחְבָּא: {ס}

ו וַיֵּאסְפוּ כָל־בְּעָלֵי שְׁכֶם וְכָל־בֵּית מְלֹא וַיֵּלְכוּ  
וַיִּמְלִיכוּ אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְמֶלֶךְ עַם־אֵלֹן מִצֵּב אֲשֶׁר

<sup>1</sup> Abimelech son of Jerubbaal came to his mother's brothers at Shechem and said to them and the whole clan of his mother's family, <sup>2</sup> "Please put this question to the leading men of Shechem: Which is better for you, to be ruled by seventy – I mean all the sons of Jerubbaal – or to be ruled by one? Remind yourselves also that I am your own flesh and blood."

<sup>3</sup> His mother's brothers spoke of him to all the leading men of Shechem in these terms, and their hearts inclined towards Abimelech, for they told themselves, "He is our brother." <sup>4</sup> They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and with this Abimelech paid worthless scoundrels to follow him. <sup>5</sup> He went to his father's house at Ophrah and murdered his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. Only the youngest son of Jerubbaal escaped, for he had gone into hiding; this was Jotham.

<sup>6</sup> Then all the leading men of Shechem and all Beth-Millo gathered, and proclaimed Abimelech king at the oak of the pillar at Shechem. <sup>7</sup> When

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<sup>1</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...to all the extended family of the house of the father of his mother."

<sup>2</sup> The literal translation of 'your own flesh and blood' is 'your bone and your flesh'.

<sup>3</sup> In place of 'brother', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'close relative'.

<sup>4</sup> The god, 'Baal-Berith' (בַּעַל בְּרִית, 'the lord of the covenant') is otherwise unknown.

<sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'escaped' is 'remained'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Pillar' (following the NRSV & NETB) is a conjectural translation (מִצֵּבָה) of the MT's מִצֵּב (meaning uncertain); the NJB uses 'cultic stone'.

<sup>7</sup> The subjected of the plural verb, 'reported', is indefinite.



בְּשִׁכְמִי: <sup>ז</sup> וַיִּגְדּוּ לְיוֹתָם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּרֹאשׁ הָר־  
גֵּרִזִּים וַיִּשָּׂא קוֹלוֹ וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמְעוּ אֵלַי  
בְּעָלִי שִׁכְמִי וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים:

<sup>ח</sup> הַלֹּדֶז הֵלְכוּ הָעֵצִים לְמִשַּׁח עֲלֵיהֶם מֶלֶךְ  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לַזֵּית מְלוּכָה מֶלֶכָה עָלֵינוּ:

<sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַזֵּית הַחֲדַלְתִּי אֶת־דִּשְׁנִי  
אֲשֶׁר־בִּי יִכְבְּדוּ אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים  
וְהִלְכֹתִי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:

<sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לַתְּאֵנָה  
לְכִי־אֵת מֶלְכִי עָלֵינוּ:

<sup>יא</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַתְּאֵנָה הַחֲדַלְתִּי  
אֶת־מִתְקִי וְאֶת־תְּנוּבָתִי הַטּוֹבָה  
וְהִלְכֹתִי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לַגֶּפֶן  
לְכִי־אֵת מְלוּכִי עָלֵינוּ:

<sup>יג</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַגֶּפֶן הַחֲדַלְתִּי  
אֶת־תִּירוֹשִׁי הַמְּשַׁמֵּחַ אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים

this was reported to Jotham, he came and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and shouted aloud for them to hear: Hear me, leaders of Shechem, so that God may also hear you!

<sup>8</sup> One day the trees went out to anoint a king to rule them.  
They said to the olive tree, “Rule over us!”

<sup>9</sup> The olive tree replied, “Must I forego my oil,  
which gives honour to gods and men,  
to stand and sway over the trees?”

<sup>10</sup> Then the trees said to the fig tree,  
“You come and rule over us!”

<sup>11</sup> The fig tree replied, “Must I forego my sweetness,  
forego my excellent fruit,  
to go and sway over the trees?”

<sup>12</sup> Then the trees said to the vine,  
“You come and rule over us!”

<sup>13</sup> The vine replied, “Must I forego my wine,  
which cheers the heart of gods and men,

<sup>8</sup> The poem of vv. 8–15 is the earliest example in the Bible of a fable using plants or animals to point a human moral (see 2S 12:1–4, 2K 14:9, Ezk 17:3–10). The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>9</sup> The ‘olive tree’ is the noblest tree, while the ‘bramble’ (v. 14) is a useless bush.

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this poem, the *NJB* has ‘be our king’ in place of ‘rule over us’, here following the *MT* & *NRSV*.

<sup>11</sup> *NETB* translates the rhetorical question as a negative statement, “I will not forego...”

<sup>12</sup> The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>13</sup> *NETB* translates the rhetorical question as a negative statement, “I will not forego...”



וְהִלַּכְתִּי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:  
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל־הָעֵצִים אֶל־הָאֶטֶד יד  
 לֵךְ אִתָּה מֶלֶךְ־עָלֵינוּ:  
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֶטֶד אֶל־הָעֵצִים טו  
 אִם בָּאֵמֶת אַתֶּם מְשִׁחִים אֹתִי לְמֶלֶךְ עָלֵיכֶם  
 בָּאוּ חֲסוּ בְצִלִּי  
 וְאִם־אֵין תֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִן־הָאֶטֶד  
 וְתֹאכַל אֶת־אַרְזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן :

טז וְעַתָּה אִם־בָּאֵמֶת וּבְתָמִים עָשִׂיתֶם וְתַמְלִיכוּ  
 אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וְאִם־טוֹבָה עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־יִרְבֵּעֵל וְעִם־  
 בִּיתוֹ וְאִם־כְּגִמּוּל יָדָיו עָשִׂיתֶם לוֹ: י" אֲשֶׁר־נָלַחַם  
 אָבִי עָלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ מִמֶּנֶּד וַיִּצֹל אֶתְכֶם  
 מִיַּד מִדְיָן: י" וְאַתֶּם קָמְתֶם עַל־בֵּית אָבִי הַיּוֹם  
 וְתִהְיֶה אֶת־בָּנָיו שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת  
 וְתַמְלִיכוּ אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ בֶּן־אִמָּתוֹ עַל־בְּעֻלִּי שְׁכֶם כִּי  
 אַחִיכֶם הוּא: ט" וְאִם־בָּאֵמֶת וּבְתָמִים עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־

to go and sway over the trees?"

14 Then the trees all said to the bramble,

"You come and rule over us!"

15 And the bramble answered the trees,

"If you are anointing me in good faith to be your king,  
 come and shelter in my shade.

But, if not, fire will come out of the bramble  
 and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

16 "Now then, if you have acted in sincerity and good faith in making  
 Abimelech king, if you have dealt honourably with Jerubbaal and his  
 family, and have treated him as his actions deserved, 17 my father having  
 fought for you, risked his life and rescued you from the hand of Midian;  
 18 but you have today risen up against my father's family, killed his sons  
 – seventy of them on one stone – and appointed Abimelech, his slave-  
 girl's son, to rule the leading men of Shechem, because he is your  
 brother! 19 If, I say, you have acted in sincerity and good faith towards

14 In place of 'bramble', here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'thorn bush'.

15 The NJB & NETB have 'thorn bush' in place of 'bramble', here following the NRSV (cf. #14).

16 Vv. 16–20 apply the fable to the situation produced by Abimelech's reign and conclude with an appeal to 'good faith', in one long turgid sentence, of which any outdoor orator might be proud.

17 The literal translation of 'risked his life' is 'threw his life out in front'; the form מִמֶּנֶּד ('from before') should probably be read as מִמֶּנֶּדוֹ ('from before him') – haplography of *vav* has likely occurred here in the MT.

18 The literal translation of 'family' is 'house'.

19 Literally translated, this verse ends, "...then rejoice in Abimelech, and may he also rejoice in you."

יִרְבָּעַל וְעַם־בֵּיתוֹ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שָׂמְחוּ בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ  
וַיִּשְׂמַח גַּם־הוּא בָכֶם: <sup>כ</sup> וְאִם־אֵין תֵּצֵא אֵשׁ  
מֵאַבִּימֶלֶךְ וְתֹאכַל אֶת־בְּעָלֵי שָׁכֶם וְאֶת־בֵּית מְלֹוא  
וְתֵצֵא אֵשׁ מִבְּעָלֵי שָׁכֶם וּמִבֵּית מְלֹוא וְתֹאכַל אֶת־  
אַבִּימֶלֶךְ: <sup>כא</sup> וַיֵּנָס יוֹתָם וַיִּבְרַח וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּאֶרֶץ וַיֵּשֶׁב  
שָׁם מִפְּנֵי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אָחִיו: {פ}

<sup>כב</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁר אַבִּימֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים:  
<sup>כג</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ רָעָה בֵּין אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וּבֵין בְּעָלֵי  
שָׁכֶם וַיִּבְגְּדוּ בְּעַל־יִשְׁכֶם בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: <sup>כד</sup> לְבֹא חֲמָס  
שְׁבָעִים בְּנֵי־יִרְבָּעַל וּדְמָם לָשׁוּם עַל־אַבִּימֶלֶךְ  
אָחִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הָרַג אוֹתָם וְעַל בְּעָלֵי שָׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר־  
חִזְקוּ אֶת־יָדָיו לַהֲרֹג אֶת־אָחִיו: <sup>כה</sup> וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ לוֹ בְּעַלֵּי  
שָׁכֶם מֵאַרְבָּים עַל רֹאשֵׁי הַהָרִים וַיִּגְזְלוּ אֶת כָּל־  
אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲבֹר עֲלֵיהֶם בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: {פ}

Jerubbaal and his family, then may Abimelech be your joy and may you be his! <sup>20</sup> If not, may fire come out of Abimelech and devour the leading men of Shechem and Beth-Millo, and fire come out of the leading men of Shechem and Beth-Millo to devour Abimelech!" <sup>21</sup> Then Jotham ran away and fled; he escaped and made his way to Beer; and there he remained, to be out of reach of his brother Abimelech.

<sup>22</sup> Abimelech ruled Israel for three years. <sup>23</sup> Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem, and the leaders of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech. <sup>24</sup> This was so that the violence done to Jerubbaal's seventy sons should be avenged, and their blood recoil on their brother Abimelech, who murdered them, and on the leaders of Shechem who helped him to murder his brothers. <sup>25</sup> To spite him, the leaders of Shechem put men in ambush on the mountaintops; these robbed anyone passing that way. Abimelech was told of this.

<sup>20</sup> In place of 'leading men' (twice in this verse), here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'lords' and NETB has 'leaders'.

<sup>21</sup> The NJB has 'took flight' in place of 'ran away and fled', here following the MT & NRSV. 'Beer' is Hebrew for 'well'.

<sup>22</sup> This verse is an editorial note: 'Israel' here means only Shechem and a few Israelite tribes; Abimelech did not rule Israel. The verb translated 'ruled' (שָׁרָה), which appears only here in Judges, differs from those employed earlier in this chapter (מָשַׁל and מָלַךְ).

<sup>23</sup> A nonphysical, spirit being is in view, like the one who volunteered to deceive Ahab (1K 22:21). The translation, 'evil spirit', implies the being is inherently wicked, perhaps even demonic, but this is not necessarily the case. The adjective, רָעָה, can have a non-ethical sense ('harmful', 'or 'calamitous') and, when modifying רוּחַ ('spirit'), it may simply indicate that the being in view causes harm to the object of God's judgment.

<sup>24</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "This was so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be placed on Abimelech, their brother, who murdered them, and upon the leaders of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to murder his brothers."

<sup>25</sup> This piracy certainly interrupted or discouraged trade, and probably deprived Abimelech of tariffs or tribute.

כז וַיָּבֹא גָעַל בֶּן-עֶבֶד וְאָחִיו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ בְּשָׂכָם וַיִּבְטְחוּ-  
 בּוֹ בַּעֲלֵי שָׂכָם: כז וַיֵּצְאוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּבְצְרוּ אֶת-  
 כַּרְמֵיהֶם וַיִּדְרְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הַלּוּלִים וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית  
 אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיִּקְלְלוּ אֶת-אַבִּימֶלֶךְ:  
 כח וַיֹּאמֶר גָּעַל בֶּן-עֶבֶד מִי-אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וּמִי-שָׂכָם כִּי  
 נַעֲבֹדְנוּ הֲלֹא בֶן-יִרְבָּעֵל וְזַבּוּל פִּקְדּוֹ עֲבָדוּ אֶת-  
 אֲנָשֵׁי חָמּוֹר אָבִי שָׂכָם וּמִדּוּעַ נַעֲבֹדְנוּ אֲנַחְנוּ:  
 כט וְלִמִּי יִתֵּן אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה בְּיָדִי וְאֶסִּירָה אֶת-  
 אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ רַבָּה צָבָאָךְ וְצֵאָה:  
 ל וַיִּשְׁמַע זַבּוּל שֶׁר־הָעִיר אֶת-דִּבְרֵי גָעַל בֶּן-עֶבֶד  
 וַיַּחֲר אַפּוֹ: לא וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל-אַבִּימֶלֶךְ  
 בְּתַרְמָה לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה גָעַל בֶּן-עֶבֶד וְאָחִיו בָּאִים  
 שְׂכָמָה וְהֵנָּם צָרִים אֶת-הָעִיר עֲלֶיךָ: לב וְעַתָּה קוּם  
 לַיְלָה אֲתָה וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אִתָּךְ וְאַרְבַּ בַּשָּׂדֶה:

26 When Gaal son of Ebed, with his brothers, passed through Shechem, the leaders of Shechem put their confidence in him. 27 They went out into the fields to harvest their vineyards; they trod the grapes, celebrated, and went into the temple of their god. They ate and drank there and cursed Abimelech. 28 Gaal son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his delegate serve the men of Hamor, father of Shechem? Why should we serve him? 29 Who will put this people under my command? I would drive Abimelech out and say to him: Reinforce your army and come out.” 30 Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, and he was furious. 31 He sent messengers to Abimelech at Tormah, saying, “Look! Gaal son of Ebed has come to Shechem with his brothers and they are stirring up the town against you. 32 Move, therefore, at night, with your men, and lie in wait

26 Throughout this section, the NJB uses ‘Obed’ (following the Vg) in place of ‘Ebed’, here following the MT (עֶבֶד) & NRSV. ‘Ebed’ means ‘slave’.

27 This verse describes a religious festival at the end of the harvest.

28 The NJB has ‘be his slaves’ in place of ‘serve him’ (twice in this verse), here following the NRSV & NETB.

29 The phrase ‘and say to him’ follows the LXX (καὶ ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτόν), NJB & NRSV; the MT has ‘he said to Abimelech’.

30 The literal translation of ‘he was furious’ is ‘his anger burned’.

31 The NJB replaces ‘at Tormah’ with ‘secretly’: the form, בְּתַרְמָה, which occurs only here, has traditionally been understood to mean ‘secretly’ and, if this is correct, it is derived from תַּרְמָה (‘to deceive’). Some interpreters object, pointing out that this would imply Zebul was trying to deceive Abimelech, which is clearly not the case in this context. The NRSV assumes an emendation to ‘in Arumah’ (בְּאַרְוִמָּה), a site mentioned in v. 41 as the headquarters of Abimelech; orthographic confusion between א and ת in the paleo-Hebrew script, while uncommon, is certainly not unimaginable.

32 The literal translation of ‘with your men’ is ‘you and the men you have with you’.

לֹג וְהָיָה בִּבְקָר כְּזֶרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּשְׁכְּבוּ וּפִשְׁטָה עַל-  
הָעִיר וְהִנֵּה-הִוא וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אֵתוֹ יֵצְאוּ אֵלָיָךְ  
וַעֲשִׂיתָ לוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ:

לִדְ וַיָּקָם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ לַיְלָה  
וַיֵּאָרְבוּ עַל-שָׁכֶם אַרְבַּעַת רָאשִׁים: <sup>ל</sup>וַיֵּצֵא גָעַל  
בֶּן-עֶבֶד וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח שַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיָּקָם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ  
וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אֵתוֹ מִן-הַמָּאֲרָב: <sup>לו</sup>וַיֵּרָא-גָעַל אֶת-  
הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-זִבְלִי הִנֵּה-עָם יוֹרֵד מִרְאשֵׁי  
הַהָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו זִבְלִי אֵת צֶל הַהָרִים אַתָּה רֹאֶה  
כְּאֲנָשִׁים: <sup>לז</sup>וַיֹּסֶף עוֹד גָּעַל לִדְבֹר וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-עָם  
יוֹרְדִים מֵעַם טַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ וְרֹאשׁ-אֶחָד בָּא מִדֶּרֶךְ  
אֵלּוֹן מְעוֹנָנִים: <sup>לח</sup>וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו זִבְלִי אֵיךְ אֶפּוֹא פִּיךָ  
אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר מִי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ כִּי נַעֲבֹדְנוּ הֲלֹא זֶה הָעָם  
אֲשֶׁר מֵאֲסָתָה בּוֹ צֶאֱנָא עִתָּה וְהִלָּחֵם בּוֹ: <sup>לט</sup>וַיֵּצֵא

in the fields; <sup>33</sup> then in the morning at sunrise leave them quickly and advance against the town. When he and his men come out to meet you, do with him as occasion serves."

<sup>34</sup> So, Abimelech came up at night with all his men and lay in ambush for Shechem, in four companies; <sup>35</sup> when Gaal son of Ebed came out and stood at the entrance to the town gate, Abimelech and his men rose from their ambush. <sup>36</sup> Gaal saw the men and said to Zebul, "Look, men are coming down from the mountaintops!" Zebul said, "You mistake the shadow of the mountains for men." <sup>37</sup> Gaal spoke again and said, "Look, there are men coming down from the Navel of the Earth and another comes by way of Diviners' Oak." <sup>38</sup> Then Zebul said to him, "What has become of your boasting now, you who said, "Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?" Are not these the troops of which you made light? Go out now and fight them." <sup>39</sup> So Gaal went out at the head of

<sup>33</sup> The NJB replaces the pronoun, 'he', with the name, 'Gaal'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

<sup>34</sup> The literal translation of 'companies' is 'heads'.

<sup>35</sup> In place of 'paused', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'stood'.

<sup>36</sup> Literally translated, Zebul's answer is, "The shadow on the hills you are seeing, like men."

<sup>37</sup> The 'Navel of the Earth' (טַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ – the NRSV uses the Hebrew name, 'Tabbur-Erez'), possibly refers to the holy mountain, Mount Gerizim; the same title is apparently applied to Jerusalem in Ezk 38:12. The 'Diviner's Oak' (אֵלּוֹן מְעוֹנָנִים; the NRSV simply transliterates the Hebrew name, reading 'Elon-Meonenim') is presumably the same as the 'Oak of Moreh' (i.e. 'oak of the instructor' or 'of the diviner' – see Gn 12:6, Dt 11:30).

<sup>38</sup> The literal translation of 'boasting' is 'mouth'.

<sup>39</sup> The NRSV has 'lords' in place of 'leaders', here following the NJB.

גָּעַל לִפְנֵי בַעֲלֵי שָׁכֶם וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: <sup>מ</sup> וַיִּרְדְּפֵהוּ  
אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיִּנָּס מִפָּנָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ חֲלָלִים רַבִּים עַד־פֶּתַח  
הַשָּׁעַר: <sup>מא</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבִּימֶלֶךְ בְּאַרְוֹמָה וַיַּגְרֵשׁ זְבֻל  
אֶת־גָּעַל וְאֶת־אָחִיו מִשְׁבֶּת בְּשָׁכֶם: {ס}

<sup>מב</sup> וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרָת וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם הַשָּׂדֶה וַיֵּגְדוּ  
לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: <sup>מג</sup> וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּחֲצֵם לְשִׁלְשָׁה  
רֵאשִׁים וַיֶּאֱרַב בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיֵּרָא וַהֲנִה הָעָם יֹצֵא מִן־  
הָעִיר וַיִּקֶּם עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּכֶּם: <sup>מד</sup> וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְהָרֵאשִׁים  
אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ פָּשְׁטוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ פֶתַח שַׁעַר הָעִיר וּשְׁנֵי  
הָרֵאשִׁים פָּשְׁטוּ עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּכּוּם:  
<sup>מה</sup> וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ נִלָּחַם בָּעִיר כָּל הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּלְכֹּד  
אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּהּ הֶרַג וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־  
הָעִיר וַיִּזְרְעָהּ מֶלַח: {פ}

<sup>מו</sup> וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָּל־בַּעֲלֵי מִגְדַּל־שָׁכֶם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־צִרְיָח  
בֵּית אֵל בְּרִית: <sup>מז</sup> וַיֵּגְדוּ לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ כִּי הִתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל־

the leaders of Shechem and fought Abimelech. <sup>40</sup> Abimelech chased him and he fled before him; and many of his men fell wounded, up to the town gate. <sup>41</sup> So, Abimelech stayed at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers and prevented them from living in Shechem.

<sup>42</sup> Next day the people went out into the country, and Abimelech was told of this. <sup>43</sup> He took his men, divided them into three companies and lay in wait in the fields. When he saw the people leaving the town, he bore down on them and cut them to pieces. <sup>44</sup> While Abimelech and the company with him advanced and took up their post at the entrance to the town gate, the two other companies fell on everyone in the fields and slaughtered them. <sup>45</sup> All that day Abimelech attacked the town. He stormed it and slaughtered the people inside, razed the town and sowed it with salt.

<sup>46</sup> On hearing this, the leading men of Migdal-Shechem took refuge in the crypt of the temple of El-Berith. <sup>47</sup> As soon as Abimelech heard that

<sup>40</sup> The NJB opens this verse with, "But Abimelech drove Gaal before him; Abimelech went in pursuit of Gaal who fled before him."

<sup>41</sup> Some translators (including those of the NJB) revise the vowel pointing on the verb translated as 'stayed at', resulting in the translation 'and he returned to'; the Lucianic recension of the LXX understands the word in this way.

<sup>42</sup> NETB has 'Shechemites' in place of 'people', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>43</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "... and he rose against them and struck them."

<sup>44</sup> Alternative translations for 'took up their post at', here following the NJB, are 'stood at' (as the NRSV) and 'blocked' (as NETB).

<sup>45</sup> The 'sowing with salt' was a symbolic gesture to assure the barrenness of the soil.

<sup>46</sup> An alternative translation of 'crypt' could be 'tower' (the NRSV uses 'stronghold'); the temple served as fortress and refuge.

<sup>47</sup> In place of 'assembled', here following the MT & NETB, the NJB & NRSV have 'gathered there'.



בְּעָלֵי מִגְדַּל־שֶׁכֶם: <sup>מח</sup> וַיַּעַל אַבִּימֶלֶךְ הַר־צֶלְמוֹן  
הוּא וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֶת־  
הַקֶּרְדָּמוֹת בְּיָדוֹ וַיִּכְרֹת שׁוֹכֵת עֵצִים וַיִּשְׁאַף וַיֵּשֶׁם  
עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־עִמּוֹ מָה רָאִיתֶם  
עֲשִׂיתִי מִהֲרֹו עֲשׂוּ כְמוֹנִי: <sup>מט</sup> וַיִּכְרְתוּ גַם־כָּל־הָעָם  
אִישׁ שׁוֹכֵה וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיִּשִׁימוּ עַל־  
הַצִּירִיחַ וַיִּצִּיתוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־הַצִּירִיחַ בָּאֵשׁ וַיָּמָתוּ גַם  
כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי מִגְדַּל־שֶׁכֶם כְּאַלְף אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה: {פ}

<sup>נ</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֶל־תַּבְבֵּץ וַיִּחַן בְּתַבְבֵּץ וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ:  
<sup>נא</sup> וּמִגְדַּל־עֵז הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ־הָעִיר וַיִּנָּסוּ שָׁמָּה כָּל־  
הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְכָל־בְּעָלֵי הָעִיר וַיִּסְגְּרוּ בַּעֲדָם  
וַיַּעֲלוּ עַל־גֹּגַג הַמִּגְדָּל: <sup>נב</sup> וַיָּבֹא אַבִּימֶלֶךְ עַד־הַמִּגְדָּל  
וַיִּלָּחֶם בּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ עַד־פֶּתַח הַמִּגְדָּל לְשַׂרְפוֹ בָּאֵשׁ:  
<sup>נג</sup> וַתִּשְׁלֹךְ אִשָּׁה אֶחָת פֶּלֶחַ רֶכֶב עַל־רֹאשׁ אַבִּימֶלֶךְ  
וַתִּרְצַץ אֶת־גְּלִגְלָתוֹ: <sup>נד</sup> וַיִּקְרָא מִהֲרָה אֶל־הַנַּעֲרָן  
נֶשֶׂא כִלְיוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁלֹף חֶרֶבְךָ וּמוֹתֵתְנִי כֹן־

all the leaders of Migdal-Shechem had assembled, <sup>48</sup> he went up to Mount Zalmon with all his men. Then taking an axe in his hands, he cut off the branch of a tree, picked it up and put it on his shoulder, and said to the men with him, “Do what you have seen me do, and do it quickly.”

<sup>49</sup> So, all his men set to work cutting down branches, one each; then they followed Abimelech and heaped the branches on the crypt and set it on fire over those inside. All the inhabitants of Migdal-Shechem perished too, about a thousand men and women.

<sup>50</sup> Then Abimelech marched against Thebez, besieged Thebez and stormed it. <sup>51</sup> Within the town, there was a fortified tower to which all the men and women and the leaders of the fled and shut themselves in, and went to the roof of the tower. <sup>52</sup> Abimelech reached the tower and attacked it. As he was approaching the door of the tower to set it on fire, <sup>53</sup> a woman threw down an upper millstone on his head and crushed his skull. <sup>54</sup> He called his armour-bearer at once and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, that no one may say of me, “A woman killed

<sup>48</sup> For ‘axe’, the MT has a plural noun.

<sup>49</sup> The burning would avoid the sacrilege of spilling blood in a consecrated sanctuary.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Thebez’ (תַּבְבֵּץ) is modern-day Tubas, about 16 km north of Shechem.

<sup>51</sup> In place of ‘within the town’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘in the middle of the town’.

<sup>52</sup> The literal translation of ‘set it on fire’ is ‘burn it with fire’.

<sup>53</sup> A hand mill consisted of an upper stone and larger lower stone; one turned the upper stone with a handle to grind the grain, which was placed between the stones. An ‘upper millstone’, which was typically about 4 cm thick and 30 cm or so in diameter, probably weighed around 12 Kg.

<sup>54</sup> For ‘armour-bearer’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘young man who carried his armour’.



יֹאמְרוּ לִי אִשָּׁה הִרְגָתָהוּ וַיִּדְקְרָהוּ נַעֲרוֹ וַיָּמָת:  
נִה וַיֵּרְאוּ אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי מָת אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיֵּלְכוּ אִישׁ  
לְמִקְמוֹ: <sup>55</sup> וַיֵּשֶׁב אֱלֹהִים אֶת רַעַת אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר  
עָשָׂה לְאָבִיו לַהֲרֹג אֶת-שִׁבְעִים אָחָיו: <sup>56</sup> וְאֵת כָּל-  
רַעַת אַנְשֵׁי שִׁכְם הֵשִׁיב אֱלֹהִים בְּרֹאשָׁם וַתָּבֹא  
אֲלֵיהֶם קָלֶלֶת יוֹתָם בֶּן-יִרְבָּעֵל: {פ}

him.”” His armour-bearer ran him through, and he died. <sup>55</sup> When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they withdrew, each to his own home. <sup>56</sup> Thus, God made the evil recoil on Abimelech that he had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers, <sup>57</sup> as God made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem recoil on their own heads too; and so, the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal came true for them.

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<sup>55</sup> The NRSV & NETB end this verse, “...they all went home.”

<sup>56</sup> The end of Abimelech was a judgement on his attempt to re-establish the discredited Canaanite socio-political system.

<sup>57</sup> The literal translation of ‘came true for them’ is simple ‘came on them’.

## JUDGES 10

## שופטים פרק י

- <sup>א</sup> וַיָּקָם אַחֲרֵי אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹלַע בֶּן־פּוּאָה בֶּן־דּוֹדוֹ אִישׁ יִשְׁשָׁכָר וְהוּא־יָשָׁב בְּשָׁמִיר בְּהָר אֶפְרַיִם: <sup>ב</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּשָׁמִיר: {פ}
- <sup>ג</sup> וַיָּקָם אַחֲרָיו יָאִיר הַגִּלְעָדִי וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה: <sup>ד</sup> וַיְהִי־לּוֹ שְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנִים רְכָבִים עַל־שְׁלֹשִׁים עִירִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים עִירִים לָהֶם לָהֶם יִקְרָאוּ חֹת יָאִיר עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד: <sup>ה</sup> וַיָּמָת יָאִיר וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּקָמוֹן: {פ}
- <sup>ו</sup> וַיִּסְיֹפוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־הַבַּעַלִּים וְאֶת־הָעַשְׁתָּרוֹת וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָם וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵי צִידוֹן וְאֵת אֱלֹהֵי מוֹאָב וְאֵת אֱלֹהֵי בְנֵי־עַמּוֹן וְאֵת אֱלֹהֵי פְלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־
- <sup>1</sup> After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah, son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, rose to deliver Israel. He lived at Shamir in the mountain country of Ephraim. <sup>2</sup> He judged Israel for twenty-three years; then he died and was buried at Shamir.
- <sup>3</sup> After him rose Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel for twenty-two years. <sup>4</sup> He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys' colts; and they possessed thirty towns, which are still called the Encampments of Jair to this day, in the land of Gilead. <sup>5</sup> Then Jair died and was buried at Kamon.
- <sup>6</sup> Again, the Israelites began to do what was evil in the sight of Yahweh. They served the Baals and the Ashtars, and the gods of Aram and Sidon, the gods of Moab and those of the Ammonites and Philistines. They deserted Yahweh and served him no more. <sup>7</sup> Then anger of Yahweh

## JUDGES 10

- <sup>1</sup> In place of 'a man of Issachar', here following the MT, NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'he belonged to Issachar' at the beginning of the next sentence. On the 'minor' judges, see #3:7.
- <sup>2</sup> The NJB has 'he was judge in Israel' in place of 'he judged Israel', here following the MT & NRSV; NETB has 'he led Israel'.
- <sup>3</sup> It has been suggested that the 'minor' judge, 'Jair' (יָאִיר), was invented on the basis of the clan of Jair, living in northern Gilead (Nb 32:41), but there is no reason why there should not have been a person of this name who actually was a 'judge'. The mention of the 'Encampments of Jair' is presumably an addition, derived from Nb 32:41.
- <sup>4</sup> The NRSV & NETB leave the name 'Havvoth-Jair' (תַּחֲנֵי יָאִיר, 'Encampments of Jair') untranslated; here, we follow the NJB.
- <sup>5</sup> The NRSV omits the opening conjunction, 'then', here following the NJB.
- <sup>6</sup> The 'Ashtars' were local manifestations of the goddess Ashtar (i.e., Astarte).
- <sup>7</sup> The literal translation of 'gave them over into the power' is 'sold them into the hands'.

יְהוָה וְלֹא עֲבָדוּהוּ: וַיַּחַר־אַף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיִּמְכָּרֵם בְּיַד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּבְיַד בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּרְעֲצוּ  
וַיִּרְצְצוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא שְׁמֹנֶה  
עָשָׂר שָׁנָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר  
הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּגִלְעָד: <sup>ט</sup> וַיַּעֲבְרוּ בְנֵי־  
עַמּוֹן אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְהִלָּחֵם גַּם־בִּיהוּדָה וּבְבִנְיָמִן  
וּבְבֵית אֶפְרַיִם וַתֵּצֵר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מָאָד: <sup>י</sup> וַיִּזְעְקוּ בְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר חָטֵאנוּ לָךְ וְכִי עֲזַבְנוּ אֶת־  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנַעֲבֹד אֶת־הַבַּעַל: {פ}

<sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִן־  
הָאֱמֹרִי וּמִן־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וּמִן־פְּלִשְׁתִּים: <sup>יב</sup> וְצִידוֹנִים  
וְעַמְלָק וּמַעֲזֹן לָחֲצוּ אֶתְכֶם וַתִּצְעַקוּ אֵלַי וְאוֹשִׁיעָה  
אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדָם: <sup>יג</sup> וְאַתֶּם עֲזַבְתֶּם אוֹתִי וַתַּעֲבְדוּ  
אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לָכֵן לֹא־אוֹסִיף לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם:  
<sup>יד</sup> לָכֵן וַזְעַקוּ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתֶּם בָּם הִמָּה  
יוֹשִׁיעוּ לָכֶם בְּעֵת צָרְתְּכֶם: <sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

flamed out against Israel and he gave them over into the power of the Philistines and the power of the Ammonites, <sup>8</sup> who from that year onward crushed and oppressed the men of Israel for eighteen years – all the Israelites who lived beyond the Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. <sup>9</sup> The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight Judah, Benjamin and the House of Ephraim, and Israel's distress was very great. <sup>10</sup> Then the Israelites cried to Yahweh and said, "We have sinned against you, because we have turned from Yahweh our God to serve the Baals."

<sup>11</sup> Yahweh said to the Israelites, "Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites, and from the Philistines? <sup>12</sup> The Sidonians also, and Amalek and the Maon oppressed you and you cried to me; did I not rescue you from their power? <sup>13</sup> Yet, you on your part have turned from me and served other gods; therefore, I shall rescue you no more. <sup>14</sup> Go and cry to the gods whom you have chosen. Let them rescue you in the time of your distress." <sup>15</sup> And the

<sup>8</sup> NETB translates שְׁמֹנֶה עָשָׂר שָׁנָה ('for eighteen years') as 'that eighteenth year'; here, we follow the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>9</sup> Here, perhaps, the phrase, 'Israel's distress was very great', has the nuance, 'Israel was hemmed in'.

<sup>10</sup> The act of repentance in v. 16 is the only such act in the book.

<sup>11</sup> The MT lacks the phrase 'did I not deliver you from', here following the NRSV & NETB.

<sup>12</sup> The NJB & NETB, following the LXX (*Madiaμ*), have 'Midian' in place of 'Maon' (מַעֲזֹן).

<sup>13</sup> God's refusal showed the degree of Israel's failures; this foretold the tragedy to come, as God was no longer swayed by a claim of repentance.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of 'the time of your distress' is 'your time of trouble'.

<sup>15</sup> Literally translated, 'whatever seems good to you' is 'according to all whatever is good in your eyes'.

אֶל־יְהוָה חָטְאוּנוּ עָשָׂה־אֵתָּה לָנוּ כְּכֹל־הַטּוֹב  
 בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדָהּ הַצִּילֵנוּ נָא הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: <sup>טז</sup> וַיִּסְרוּ אֶת־  
 אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַח מִקִּרְבָּם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וַתִּקְצֹר  
 נַפְשׁוֹ בַּעֲמַל יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

<sup>יז</sup> וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי עַמּוֹן וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּגִלְעָד וַיֵּאסְפוּ בְנֵי  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנוּ בַּמִּצְפָּה: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעָם שָׂרֵי גִלְעָד  
 אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ מִי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַחֲלֵ לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבְנֵי  
 עַמּוֹן יִהְיֶה לְרֹאשׁ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי גִלְעָד: {פ}

Israelites answered Yahweh, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever seems good to you; only do rescue us today." <sup>16</sup> They got rid of the foreign gods that they had, and served Yahweh, and he could bear Israel's suffering no longer.

<sup>17</sup> The Ammonites mustered and pitched their camp in Gilead. The Israelites rallied and camped at Mizpah. <sup>18</sup> The people, the chieftains of Gilead, said to each other, "Who will volunteer to fight the sons of Ammon? He shall be made leader of all the inhabitants of Gilead."

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of the end of this verse is, "And his spirit grew short with the suffering of Israel."

<sup>17</sup> The 'Ammonites' were an Aramaean group that settled along the River Jabbok in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. 'Gilead' is the territory east of the River Jordan, west of Ammonite territory.

<sup>18</sup> The NRSV has 'the commanders of the people' in place of 'the people, the chieftains', here following the MT & NJB.

## JUDGES 11

## שופטים פרק יא

א ויפתח הגלעדי היה גבור חיל והוא בן-אשה זונה ויולד גלעד את-יפתח: ב ותלד אשת-גלעד לו בנים ויגדלו בניה-אשה ויגרשו את-יפתח ויאמרו לו לא-תנחל בבית-אבינו כי בן-אשה אחרת אתה: ג ויברח יפתח מפני אחיו וישב בארץ טוב ויתלקטו אלי-יפתח אנשים ריקים ויצאו עמו: {פ}

ד ויהי מימים וילחמו בני-עמון עם-ישראל: ה ויהי כאשר-נלחמו בני-עמון עם-ישראל וילכו זקני גלעד לקחת את-יפתח מארץ טוב: ו ויאמרו ליפתח לכה והייתה לנו לקצין ונלחמה בבני עמון: ז ויאמר יפתח לזקני גלעד הלא אתם שנאתם אותי ותגרשוני מבית אבי ומדוע באתם אלי עתה כאשר צר לכם: ח ויאמרו זקני גלעד

1 Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior. He was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was Jephthah's father, 2 but Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and the sons of this wife, when they grew up, drove Jephthah out, saying, "You are to have no share in our father's inheritance, because you are the son of another woman." 3 Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob. Jephthah enlisted a group of outlaws who used to go raiding with him.

4 Some time after this, the Ammonites took up arms against Israel; 5 and when the Ammonites had attacked Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6 "Come," they said to Jephthah, "and be our commander, and we can fight the Ammonites." 7 But Jephthah answered the elders of Gilead, "Was it not you who hated me and drove me out of my father's house? Why come to me when you are in trouble?" 8 The elders of Gilead answered Jephthah, "Nevertheless,

## JUDGES 11

- 1 'Gilead' is clearly a geographical name in 10:18 and 11:8 but the name is used here as a personal name, as in the genealogies (see Nb 26:29).
- 2 The NJB has 'an alien woman' in place of 'another woman', here following the NRSV & NETB.
- 3 The NJB has 'adventurers' in place of 'outlaws', here following the NRSV; the literal translation is 'empty men'.
- 4 The NRSV has 'made war with' in place of 'took up arms against', here following the NJB.
- 5 The literal translation of 'attacked' is 'fought with'.
- 6 The NJB omits 'to Jephthah', here following the MT (לִי־יִפְתָּח) & NRSV.
- 7 The literal translation of 'drove me out of' is 'made me leave'.
- 8 For 'nevertheless', the NJB has 'that is exactly why'; the literal translation is 'even so' (לְכֵן) but the LXX has 'not so' (Οὐχ οὕτως), reading לֹא כֵן.



אֶל־יִפְתָּח לָכֵן עָתָה שָׁבָנוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ עִמָּנוּ  
וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיִיתָ לָּנוּ לְרֹאשׁ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי  
גִלְעָד: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח אֶל־זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד אִם־מְשִׁיבִים  
אַתֶּם אוֹתִי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְנָתַן יְהוָה אוֹתָם  
לְפָנַי אֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לְרֹאשׁ: <sup>י</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי־גִלְעָד  
אֶל־יִפְתָּח יְהוָה יְהִי שְׁמֹעַ בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ אִם־לֹא  
כַּדְּבָרְךָ בֶּן נַעֲשֶׂה: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ יִפְתָּח עִם־זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד  
וַיְשִׁימוּ הָעָם אוֹתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם לְרֹאשׁ וּלְקַצֵּין וַיְדַבֵּר  
יִפְתָּח אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרָיו לְפָנָי יְהוָה בַּמִּצְפָּה: {פ}

<sup>יב</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח יִפְתָּח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן לֵאמֹר  
מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ כִּי־בָאתָ אֵלַי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּאַרְצִי: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר  
מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן אֶל־מַלְאָכָיו יִפְתָּח כִּי־לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶת־אַרְצִי בְּעֻלוֹתָיו מִמִּצְרַיִם מֵאַרְנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֵּק  
וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעַתָּה הֵשִׁיבָה אֹתָהּ בְּשָׁלוֹם: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֹּסֶף  
עוֹד יִפְתָּח וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:

we have come back to you. Come with us; fight the Ammonites and be our leader, leader of all the inhabitants of Gilead.” <sup>9</sup> Jephthah answered the elders of Gilead, “If you take me home to fight the Ammonites and Yahweh puts them at my mercy, I am to be your chief?” <sup>10</sup> The elders of Gilead answered Jephthah, “Yahweh will be witness between us. May we be accursed if we do not do as you have said!” <sup>11</sup> Therefore, Jephthah set off with the elders of Gilead. The people set him at their head as leader and commander; and Jephthah repeated all his conditions at Mizpah in Yahweh’s presence.

<sup>12</sup> Jephthah sent messengers to Ammonite king to say to him, “What is between us, for you to come and make war on my land?” <sup>13</sup> The king of the Ammonites answered Jephthah’s messengers: “Because when Israel came up from Egypt, they seized my land from the Arnon to the Jabbok and the Jordan. Return it peaceably now.” <sup>14</sup> Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites <sup>15</sup> with this answer: “Jephthah says this:

<sup>9</sup> This concrete example possibly shows one of the ways in which a ‘judge’ of Israel was chosen; Jephthah had saved the people and had charismatic qualities as well (11:29). These characteristics are also found in one of the traditions about how Saul was elected as king (1S 11).

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of ‘will be witness’ is ‘will be the one who hears’; on the idiom **שָׁמַע בֵּין** (‘to hear between’), see Dt 1:16

<sup>11</sup> Evidently, there was a sanctuary at Mizpah, where Yahweh was invoked as witness of oaths.

<sup>12</sup> The historical survey of vv. 12–28 is a secondary composition based on Nb 20–21 and Dt 2 and confusing the Ammonites with the Moabites. The territory taken by Israel (vv. 13 & 26) had belonged to the Moabites (#24).

<sup>13</sup> The translation ‘return it’ assumes a singular suffix; the MT has a plural suffix, which, if retained, might refer to the cities of the land.

<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of this verse, the NRSV adds ‘once again’.

<sup>15</sup> In place of ‘seize’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘take away’ and NETB has ‘steal’.

<sup>טו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה אָמַר יִפְתָּח לֹא-לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-  
 אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: <sup>טז</sup> כִּי בַעֲלוֹתָם  
 מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר עַד-יַם-סוּף וַיָּבֹא  
 קַדְשָׁה: <sup>יז</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָאכִים | אֶל-מֶלֶךְ  
 אֱדוֹם | לֵאמֹר אֶעֱבְרָה-נָּא בְּאֶרְצְךָ וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ  
 אֱדוֹם וְגַם אֶל-מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב שָׁלַח וְלֹא אָבָה וַיֵּשֶׁב  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקַדְשׁ: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיָּסֹב אֶת-אֶרֶץ  
 אֱדוֹם וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וַיָּבֹא מִמִּזְרַח-שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאֶרֶץ  
 מוֹאָב וַיַּחֲנוּן בַּעֲבַר אֲרֻנוֹן וְלֹא-בָאוּ בְּגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב  
 כִּי אֲרֻנוֹן גִּבּוֹל מוֹאָב: <sup>יט</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָאכִים  
 אֶל-סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ-הָאֱמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל נֵעֱבְרָה-נָּא בְּאֶרְצְךָ עַד-מִקּוֹמִי: <sup>כ</sup> וְלֹא-  
 הֶאֱמִין סִיחֹן אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עָבַר בְּגִבּוֹלוֹ וַיֹּאסֹף סִיחֹן  
 אֶת-כָּל-עַמּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ בִּיהֶצָה וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
<sup>כא</sup> וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-סִיחֹן וְאֶת-כָּל-  
 עַמּוֹ בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּכּוּם וַיִּירֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ

“Israel seized neither the land of Moab nor the land of the Ammonites.

<sup>16</sup> When Israel left Egypt, they marched through the desert to the Sea of Reeds and reached Kadesh. <sup>17</sup> Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom saying, “Let us pass through your land,” but the king of Edom would not listen. They sent similarly to the king of Moab, but he refused, and Israel remained at Kadesh; <sup>18</sup> they made their way through the desert, skirting the countries of Edom and Moab until they were to the east of Moab territory. The people camped beyond the Arnon but did not cross the border of Moab, for the Arnon itself is Moab’s boundary. <sup>19</sup> Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon the king of the Amorites, who ruled at Heshbon. Israel’s message was: “Let us pass through your land to our country.” <sup>20</sup> But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; he mustered his whole army; they encamped at Jahaz, and he then joined battle with Israel. <sup>21</sup> Yahweh the God of Israel delivered Sihon and his whole army into the power of Israel; Israel defeated them and took possession of the whole country of the Amorites who lived in that

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of ‘left’ is ‘went up from’.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Nb 20:14–21.

<sup>18</sup> The pronoun here translated as ‘they’ is a (collective) singular in the MT; the referent is Israel.

<sup>19</sup> The NJB ends this verse, here following the NRSV, with, “...pass through your country to our destination.”

<sup>20</sup> “Sihon did not trust Israel to pass...” follows the MT and NRSV; the NJB, following the LXX (καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελῆσεν Σηων διελθεῖν τὸν Ἰσραὴλ διὰ), reads, “Sihon would not let Israel pass...”

<sup>21</sup> The NRSV ends this verse, here following the NJB, with, “...so Israel occupied all the land of the Amorites, who inhabited that country.”

הָאֲמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא: כִּי וַיִּירָשׁוּ אֶת כָּל-גִּבּוֹל  
הָאֲמֹרִי מֵאֲרֻנוֹן וְעַד-הַיַּבֹּק וּמִן-הַמִּדְבָּר וְעַד-  
הַיַּרְדֵּן: כִּי וַעֲתָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-  
הָאֲמֹרִי מִפְּנֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַתָּה תִירָשֶׁנּוּ: כִּי הֲלֹא  
אֶת אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִישֶׁךָ כְּמוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אוֹתוֹ תִירֶשׁ וְאַתָּה  
כָּל-אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ אוֹתוֹ נִירֶשׁ:  
כִּי וַעֲתָה הֲטוֹב טוֹב אֲתָה מִבָּלַק בֶּן-צִפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ  
מוֹאָב הַרּוֹב רַב עַם-יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם-נִלְחַם נִלְחַם בָּם:  
כִּי בִשְׁבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲשֹׁבֹן וּבְבִנְיָתָהּ וּבְעֶרְעוֹר  
וּבְבִנְיָתָהּ וּבְכָל-הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-יְדֵי אֲרֻנוֹן שְׁלֹשׁ  
מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּמִדּוֹעַ לֹא-הִצַּלְתָּם בָּעֵת הַהִיא:  
כִּי וְאַנְכִּי לֹא-חָטָאתִי לָךְ וְאַתָּה עָשִׂה אֵתִי רָעָה  
לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה הַשֹּׁפֵט הַיּוֹם בֵּין בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: כִּי וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן  
אֶל-דְּבָרֵי יִפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח אֵלָיו: {פ}

region. <sup>22</sup> Thus, they came to occupy the whole land of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the desert to the Jordan. <sup>23</sup> Now that Yahweh the God of Israel had driven the Amorites out before his people Israel, will one such as you dispossess us? <sup>24</sup> Do you not possess all that Chemosh your god took from its owners? In the same fashion, whatever Yahweh our God took from its owners, that we possess too. <sup>25</sup> Are you better than Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab is? Did he challenge Israel? Did he make war against them? <sup>26</sup> Israel settled in Heshbon and its outlying villages, or in Jazer and its villages, or in any of the towns on the banks of the Jordan three hundred years ago; why did you not recover those places then? <sup>27</sup> I for my part have committed no sin against you; but you have sinned against me by making war on me. Let Yahweh the Judge give judgement today between the sons of Israel and the king of the Ammonites.”” <sup>28</sup> But the king of the Ammonites took no notice of the message Jephthah had sent him.

<sup>22</sup> Throughout this section NETB adds the word ‘River’ after the names, ‘Arnon’ and ‘Jabbok’.

<sup>23</sup> The NRSV ends this verse, here following the NJB, with, “Do you intend to take their place?”

<sup>24</sup> Milcom was in fact the god of Ammonites; ‘Chemosh’ was the principal god of the Moabites. Jephthah speaks of Chemosh as if he is on a par with Yahweh: this does not necessarily mean that Jephthah is polytheistic or that he recognises Yahweh as only a local deity; he may simply be assuming the Ammonite king’s perspective for the sake of argument.

<sup>25</sup> On ‘Balak’, see Nb 22–24.

<sup>26</sup> The MT lacks the word ‘ago’ after ‘three hundred years’.

<sup>27</sup> In place of ‘you have sinned against me’, the NJB has ‘rather, you for your part are wronging me’.

<sup>28</sup> The Ammonites reject the Israelite contention that the fact of conquest determines the legitimacy of a territorial claim.

כט וַתְּהִי עַל־יִפְתָּח רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד  
וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־מִצְפָּה גִלְעָד וּמִמִּצְפָּה  
גִלְעָד עָבַר בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: ל וַיָּדַר יִפְתָּח נָדָר לַיהוָה  
וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָתַן תִּתֶּן אֶת־בְּנִי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדִי: לא וְהָיָה  
הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדֹּלְתִי בֵּיתִי לִקְרָאתִי בְּשׁוּבִי  
בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהָעֲלִיתִיהוּ  
עֹלָה: {פ}

לב וַיַּעֲבֹר יִפְתָּח אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהִלָּחֵם בָּם וַיִּתְּנֵם  
יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ: לג וַיִּכּוּם מַעְרֹזֶר וְעַד־בֶּאֱדָ מִנִּית  
עֲשָׂרִים עִיר וְעַד אָבֵל כְּרָמִים מִכָּה גְדֹלָה מְאֹד  
וַיִּכְנְעוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

לד וַיָּבֹא יִפְתָּח הַמִּצְפָּה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנֵּה בָתּוֹ יֹצֵאת  
לִקְרָאתוֹ בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחֲלוֹת וְרַק הִיא יְחִידָה אֵין

29 The spirit of Yahweh came on Jephthah, who crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through to Mizpah in Gilead, and from Mizpah in Gilead made his way to the rear of the Ammonites. 30 Jephthah made a vow to Yahweh, saying “If you deliver the Ammonites into my hands, 31 then the first person to meet me from the door of my house when I return in triumph from fighting the Ammonites shall belong to Yahweh, and I will offer him up as a holocaust.”

32 Jephthah marched against the Ammonites to attack them, and Yahweh gave them into his hand. 33 He harassed them from Aroer almost to Minnith (twenty towns) and to Abel-Keramim. It was a very severe defeat, and the Ammonites were humbled before the Israelites.

34 As Jephthah returned to his house at Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him; she was dancing to the sound of tambourines. This was his

29 The story of Jephthah’s vow (vv. 30–31, 34–40) was intended to explain an annual festival celebrated in Gilead (v. 40), the real significance of which was unknown. In plain terms, Jephthah immolates his daughter (v. 39) rather than break the vow that he has made (v. 31).

30 The NJB omits the word, ‘saying’, here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

31 The literal translation of ‘the first person to meet me’ is ‘the one coming out, who comes out from’; the text uses a masculine singular participle with prefixed article, followed by a relative pronoun and 3MS verb. The participle הַיּוֹצֵא is used elsewhere of inanimate objects (such as a desert, Nb 21:13, or a word, Nb 32:24) or persons (Jr 5:6, 21:9, 38:2); in each case, context must determine the referent: Jephthah may have envisioned an animal meeting him, since the construction of Iron Age houses would allow for an animal coming through the doors of a house, but the fact that he actually does offer up his daughter indicates the language of the vow is fluid enough to encompass human beings, including women.

32 The NJB has ‘delivered them into his power’ in place of ‘gave them into his hand’, here following the MT & NRSV.

33 The literal translation of ‘very severe defeat’ is ‘very great slaughter’.

34 The literal translation of ‘his daughter came out to meet him’ is ‘Look! His daughter was coming out’.

לֹא מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אִו־בַּת: לֵה וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָיו אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרַע  
אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָהָה בְּתִי הַכְרַע הַכְרַעַתִּי וְאֵת  
הַיִּית בְּעֶכְרִי וְאֲנֹכִי פָּצִיתִי פִּי אֶל־יְהוָה וְלֹא אוּכַל  
לָשׁוּב: לֵה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אָבִי פָּצִיתָה אֶת־פִּיךָ אֶל־  
יְהוָה עָשָׂה לִי כַאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּיךָ אַחֲרַי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
לָךְ יְהוָה נִקְמוֹת מֵאִיְבֶיךָ מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: לֵה וַתֹּאמֶר  
אֶל־אָבִיהָ יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמֶּנִּי שְׁנַיִם  
חֳדָשִׁים וְאֶלְכָה וַיֵּרְדֹתִי עַל־הַהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶּה עַל־  
בְּתוּלִי אֲנֹכִי וְרַעֲיוֹתַי וְרַעֲיוֹתַי: לֵה וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח  
אוֹתָהּ שְׁנֵי חֳדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרַעֲיוֹתֶיהָ וַתִּבְדֹּךְ עַל־  
בְּתוּלֶיהָ עַל־הַהָרִים: לִט וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים  
וַתָּשָׁב אֶל־אָבִיהָ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֶת־נִדְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָדָר  
וְהִיא לֹא־יָדְעָה אִישׁ וַתְּהִי־חֹק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: מ מִיָּמִים  
יָמִימָה תֵּלַכְנָה בָּנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת־יִפְתָּח  
הַגִּלְעָדִי אַרְבַּעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה: {פ}

only child; he had no son or daughter except her.<sup>35</sup> When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, “Oh my daughter, what sorrow you are bringing me! Must it be you, the cause of my ill fortune! I have given a promise to Yahweh, and I cannot take back my vow.”<sup>36</sup> She answered him, “My father, you have given a promise to Yahweh; treat me as the vow you took binds you to, since Yahweh has given you vengeance on your enemies the Ammonites.”<sup>37</sup> Then she said to her father, “Grant me one request. Let me be free for two months. I shall go and wander in the hills, and with my companions bewail my virginity.”<sup>38</sup> He answered, “Go,” and let her depart for two months. So, she went away with her companions and bewailed her virginity in the hills.<sup>39</sup> After two months, she returned to her father and he treated her as his vow bound him. She had never known a man. From this comes the custom in Israel<sup>40</sup> for the daughters of Israel to leave home every year and lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days every year.

<sup>35</sup> The literal translation of ‘I have given a promise to Yahweh and I cannot take back my vow’ is ‘I opened my mouth to Yahweh and I am not able to return’.

<sup>36</sup> The literal translation of ‘treat me as the vow you took binds you to’ is ‘do to me according to [what] went out from your mouth’.

<sup>37</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>38</sup> The NJB has ‘mountains’ in place of ‘hills’ (as also in v. 37).

<sup>39</sup> Similar rites elsewhere were disapproved, see Ezk 8:14, Zc 12:11. As the Israelite cult got an identity more detached from its Canaanite roots, practices such as human sacrifice and ritual mourning were censured (Jr 7:31, Mi 6:6–8, see Ps 106:37) and fell into disuse.

<sup>40</sup> The NRSV & NETB omit the 2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence of ‘every year’, here following the MT & NJB.



## JUDGES 12

## שופטים פרק יב

א וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיַּעֲבֹר צָפוֹנָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לִיִּפְתָּח  
מְדוּעָ עָבַרְתָּ לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבְנֵי-עַמּוֹן וְלָנוּ לֹא קָרָאתָ  
לָלֶכֶת עִמָּךְ בֵּיתְךָ נִשְׂרַף עָלֶיךָ בָּאֵשׁ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר  
יִפְתָּח אֲלֵיהֶם אִישׁ רִיב הָיִיתִי אֲנִי וְעַמִּי וּבְנֵי-עַמּוֹן  
מֵאָד וְאִזְעַק אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא-הוֹשַׁעְתֶּם אוֹתִי מִיָּדָם:  
ג וְאַרְאֶה כִּי-אֵינֶךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ וְאַשִּׁימָה נַפְשִׁי בַכְּפִי  
וְאֶעְבְּרָה אֶל-בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וַיִּתְּנֻם יְהוָה בְּיָדִי וְלָמָּה  
עָלִיתָם אֵלַי הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי: ד וַיִּקְבֹּץ יִפְתָּח  
אֶת-כָּל-אֲנָשֵׁי גִלְעָד וַיִּלָּחֶם אֶת-אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּכּוּ אֲנָשֵׁי  
גִלְעָד אֶת-אֶפְרַיִם כִּי אָמְרוּ פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם אַתֶּם  
גִּלְעָד בְּתוֹךְ אֶפְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ מְנַשֶּׁה: ה וַיִּלְכְּדוּ גִלְעָד  
אֶת-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְאֶפְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ  
פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם אֶעְבְּרָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֲנָשֵׁי-גִלְעָד  
הָאִפְרַתִּי אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר | לֹא: וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֱמָר-נָא

<sup>1</sup> The men of Ephraim mobilised; they crossed the Jordan, making for Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, “Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without asking us to go with you? We shall burn you and your house.”  
<sup>2</sup> Jephthah said, “My people and I were engaged in conflict with the Amorites. But when I called you, you did not rescue me from their hands. <sup>3</sup> When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and marched against the Ammonites, and Yahweh handed them over to me. Why then today come up against me to fight me?” <sup>4</sup> Then Jephthah mustered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim, and the men of Gilead routed Ephraim, because they said, “You are fugitives from Ephraim, you Gileadites in the heart of Ephraim and Manasseh.”  
<sup>5</sup> So, Gilead took the fords of the Jordan from Ephraim and whenever an Ephraimite fugitive said, “Let me cross,” the men of Gilead asked him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he answered, “No,” <sup>6</sup> then they said,

## JUDGES 12

<sup>1</sup> The episode of vv. 1–7 is parallel to that in 8:1–3 but is independent.

<sup>2</sup> The NRSV, following the *Peshitta*, adds ‘who oppressed us’ at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence.

<sup>3</sup> The NJB, following the LXX (*Codex Alexandrinus*, εἰδὼν ὅτι οὐκ ἦν ὁ σῶζων) opens with: “When I saw that no one was coming to rescue me ...”

<sup>4</sup> The LXX omits the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the verse (beginning with ‘because’). The words אָמְרוּ פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם may have been accidentally copied from the next verse (cf. כִּי יֹאמְרוּ פְּלִיטֵי אֶפְרַיִם) and the following words (‘you Gileadites ... Manasseh’) then added in an attempt to make sense of the verse. If the MT is retained, the Ephraimites insult the Gileadites by calling them refugees, squatting on Ephraim’s and Manasseh’s land.

<sup>5</sup> The word here translated ‘fugitive’ is plural in the MT.

<sup>6</sup> The word, ‘shibboleth’ (שִׁבְלֹת), means ‘ear of wheat’. Local variations in pronunciation aid in identifying the origin of the speaker (Mt 26:73).

שְׁבֹלֶת וַיֹּאמֶר סְבֹלֶת וְלֹא יָכִין לְדַבֵּר כֵּן וַיֹּאחֲזוּ  
אוֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁחָטוּהוּ אֶל-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּפֹּל בַּעַת  
הַהִיא מֵאַפְרַיִם אַרְבַּעַיִם וּשְׁנָיִם אָלֶף: <sup>7</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט  
יִפְתָּח אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וַיָּמָת יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי  
וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּעָרֵי גִלְעָד: {פ}

<sup>8</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבָצָן מִבֵּית לָחֶם:  
<sup>9</sup> וַיְהִי-לּוֹ שְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנוֹת שֶׁלַח  
הַחוּצָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנוֹת הֵבִיא לְבָנָיו מִן-הַחוּץ  
וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים: <sup>10</sup> וַיָּמָת אֲבָצָן  
וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּבֵית לָחֶם: {פ}

<sup>11</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵילֹן הַזְּבוּלֹנִי וַיִּשְׁפֹּט  
אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים: <sup>12</sup> וַיָּמָת אֵילֹן הַזְּבוּלֹנִי  
וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּאֵילֹן בְּאֶרֶץ זְבוּלֹן: {פ}

<sup>13</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֹּן בֶּן-הֵלֵל  
הַפְּרָעָתוֹנִי: <sup>14</sup> וַיְהִי-לּוֹ אַרְבַּעַיִם בָּנִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנִי

“Very well, say Shibboleth.” If anyone said, “Sibboleth,” because he could not pronounce it, then they would seize him and kill him by the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell at that time. <sup>7</sup> Jephthah was judge in Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died, and was buried in his own town, in Gilead.

<sup>8</sup> After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem was judge in Israel. <sup>9</sup> He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters in marriage outside his clan and brought in thirty brides from outside for his sons. He was judge in Israel for seven years. <sup>10</sup> Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

<sup>11</sup> After him, Elon of Zebulun was judge in Israel. He was judge in Israel for ten years. <sup>12</sup> Then Elon of Zebulun died and was buried at Elon in the land of Zebulun.

<sup>13</sup> After him, Abdon son of Hillel of Pirathon was judge in Israel. <sup>14</sup> He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys’

<sup>7</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the *Jerusalem Bible* adds the name of the town, ‘Mizpah’, before ‘in Gilead’.

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear whether the ‘Bethlehem’ mentioned is that of Judah or that of Zebulun (Jos 19:15), near Nazareth. Since Ibzan, Elon and Abdon were from the north, the latter is probably more likely.

<sup>9</sup> It is not clear if Ibzan had more than the ‘thirty daughters’ mentioned in the text.

<sup>10</sup> NETB uses the pronoun ‘he’ in place of ‘Ibzan’.

<sup>11</sup> In place of ‘was judge in’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘judged’ and NETB has ‘led’.

<sup>12</sup> The NRSV & NETB have ‘Elon the Zebulunite’ in place of ‘Elon of Zebulun’ (as also in v. 12); here, we follow the NJB.

<sup>13</sup> In place of ‘was judge in’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘judged’ and NETB has ‘led’.

<sup>14</sup> The NRSV has just ‘donkeys’ in place of ‘donkeys’ colts’, here following the NJB.

בְּנִים רֹכְבִים עַל־שִׁבְעִים עִירָם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
שְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנִים: <sup>טו</sup> וַיָּמָת עַבְדּוֹן בֶּן־הַלֵּל הַפְּרָעְתוֹנִי  
וַיִּקְבֹּר בַּפְּרָעְתוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲפֵרַיִם בְּהַר הָעִמְלֵקִי: {פ}

colts. He was judge in Israel for eight years. <sup>15</sup> Then Abdon son of Hillel of Pirathon died and was buried at Pirathon in the territory of Ephraim, in the Amalekite highlands.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Pirathon' was southwest of Shechem, in the highlands of Ephraim, called here, for some reason unknown, 'the Amalekite highlands'.

## JUDGES 13

## שופטים פרק יג

- <sup>א</sup> וַיִּסְּפוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּתֶּנּוּם יְהוָה בְּיַד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה: {פ}
- <sup>ב</sup> וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצֹּרָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי וּשְׁמוֹ מָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָה: <sup>ג</sup> וַיֵּרָא מַלְאָךְ־יְהוָה אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה־נָא אֶת־עֲקָרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָתָּ וְהָרִיתָ וְיָלְדָתָּ בֶּן: <sup>ד</sup> וְעַתָּה הִשְׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתִּי יַיִן וְשֹׁכֶר וְאַל־תֹּאכְלִי כָּל־טָמֵא: <sup>ה</sup> כִּי הִנֵּךְ הָרָה וְיָלְדָתָּ בֶּן וּמוֹרָה לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר מִן־הַבֶּטֶן וְהוּא יִחַל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד פְּלִשְׁתִּים: <sup>ו</sup> וַתָּבֹא הָאִשָּׁה וַתֹּאמֶר לְאִישָׁהּ לֵאמֹר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא אֵלַי וּמְרָאֵהוּ כְּמֶרְאֵה מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים נֹרָא מְאֹד וְלֹא
- <sup>1</sup> Again, the Israelites began what was evil in Yahweh's eyes, and Yahweh gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.
- <sup>2</sup> There was a man of Zorah of the tribe of Dan, called Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. <sup>3</sup> The Angel of Yahweh appeared to this woman and said to her, "You are barren and have had no child, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. <sup>4</sup> Now be careful to take no wine or strong drink or to eat anything unclean; <sup>5</sup> for, you shall conceive and give birth to a son. No razor is to touch his head; for, the boy shall be God's nazirite from his mother's womb; and he will deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines." <sup>6</sup> Then the woman went and told her husband, "A man of God has just come to me; his presence was like the presence of the Angel of God, he was so majestic. I did not ask

## JUDGES 13

- <sup>1</sup> The NJB has 'what displeases Yahweh' in place of 'what was evil in Yahweh's sight', here following the MT & NRSV.
- <sup>2</sup> The tribe of Dan originally received a territory containing the places mentioned here: Zorah, Eshtaol, Timnah (see #Jos 19:40); the tribe later emigrated to the north (Jg 17-18). 'Zorah', a town on the border between Judah and Dan (Jos 15:33, 19:41), is identified with modern Sa'rah, 24 Km west of Jerusalem. The stories of Samson apparently relate to times later than this migration, in which the Philistines play no part. Clans who did not migrate lived with the Canaanites under Philistine domination.
- <sup>3</sup> On the 'Angel of Yahweh', see 2:1, 6:11 and #Gn 16:7. In v. 22, the Angel is identified with Yahweh, as in 6:22-23.
- <sup>4</sup> Any Israelite, male or female, who lived according to the norms of Nb 6:1-21 was a nazirite; these norms reflect the values of a conservative Yahwistic lifestyle. The requirement that the nazirite abstain from wine becomes prenatal care (also v. 7).
- <sup>5</sup> This prophecy justifies Samson's inclusion with the judges, while conceding that victory over the Philistines will not be achieved by him: this will be the work of Saul and David.
- <sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'his presence ... so majestic' is 'his appearance was like the appearance of the messenger of God, very awesome'.

שאלתיהו אי־מזה הוא ואת־שמו לא־הגיד לי:  
וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶּת בֶּן וְעַתָּה אֶל־תִּשְׁתֵּי  
יָיִן וְשֹׁכָר וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלִי כָּל־טִמְאָה כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים  
יְהִיָּה הַנֶּעַר מִן־הַבֶּטֶן עַד־יוֹם מוֹתוֹ: {פ}

ח וַיַּעֲתָר מְנוּחַ אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדוֹנָי אִישׁ  
הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְתָּ יְבוֹא־נָא עוֹד אֵלֵינוּ וְיֹרְנֵנוּ  
מִה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לַנֶּעַר הַיּוֹלֵד: ט וַיִּשְׁמַע הָאֱלֹהִים בְּקוֹל  
מְנוּחַ וַיָּבֹא מִלֶּאךָ הָאֱלֹהִים עוֹד אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וְהִיא  
יוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּשָּׂדֶה וּמְנוּחַ אִישָׁה אֵין עִמָּה: י וַתִּמְהַר  
הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּרָץ וַתִּגַּד לְאִישָׁהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה  
נִרְאָה אֵלַי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא בַּיּוֹם אֵלַי: יא וַיָּקָם  
וַיֵּלֶךְ מְנוּחַ אַחֲרֵי אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ  
הֲאֵתָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנִי:  
יב וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ עַתָּה יָבֹא דְבָרִיךָ מִה־יְהִיָּה מִשְׁפָּט־  
הַנֶּעַר וּמַעֲשָׂהוּ: יג וַיֹּאמֶר מִלֶּאךָ יְהוָה אֶל־מְנוּחַ

him where he came from, and he did not reveal his name to me; <sup>7</sup> but he said to me, “You will conceive and bear a son. From now on, take no wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean. For, the boy shall be God’s nazirite from his mother’s womb to his dying day.””

<sup>8</sup> Then Manoah pleaded with Yahweh and said, “I beg you, Lord, let the man of God that you sent come to us once again and teach us what we must do with the boy when he is born.” <sup>9</sup> God heard Manoah’s prayer for favour, and the Angel of Yahweh visited the woman again as she was sitting in the field; her husband Manoah was not with her. <sup>10</sup> The woman ran quickly and told her husband; “Look,” she said, “the man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.” <sup>11</sup> Manoah rose and followed his wife, and he came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to this woman?” He said, “I am.” <sup>12</sup> Manoah went on, “When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the boy’s rule of life and his work?” <sup>13</sup> The Angel of Yahweh replied to Manoah, “From

<sup>7</sup> Another option is to translate, ‘you are already pregnant and will have a son’; the earlier reference to her being infertile (v. 3) suggests that her conception is still future but it is possible that the earlier statement only reflects her perspective (as far as she is concerned, she is infertile).

<sup>8</sup> In place of ‘teach’ (וְיֹרְנֵנוּ), the LXX has ‘enlighten’ ( φωτισάτω), understanding the MT to read וַיֹּאֲרֵנוּ (‘to give light’).

<sup>9</sup> The NJB opens with ‘Yahweh’ in place of ‘God’, here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>10</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB adds the word, ‘again’; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

<sup>11</sup> NETB has ‘my wife’ in place of ‘this woman’, here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>12</sup> In place of ‘and his work’ here following the MT, the NJB has ‘how should he behave’ and the NRSV has ‘what must he do’.

<sup>13</sup> The Hebrew word order here emphasises ‘from everything’, probably because Manoah’s wife did not tell her husband everything the angel had said to her (cf. vv. 3–5 with v. 7); if she had, Manoah probably would not have been so confused about the child’s mission.



מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר-אָמַרְתִּי אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה תִּשְׁמַר: יִּמְכֹּר  
אֲשֶׁר-יֵצֵא מִגֶּפֶן הַיֵּין לֹא תֹאכַל וַיֵּין וְשֵׁכָר אֶל-  
תִּשֵּׂת וְכָל-טִמְאָה אֶל-תֹּאכַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר-צִוִּיתִיהָ  
תִּשְׁמַר: {ס}

טו וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל-מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה נַעֲצֹרֶה-נָּא אוֹתָךְ  
וְנַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ גֹּדִי עֲזִים: טז וַיֹּאמֶר מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל-  
מָנוּחַ אִם-תַּעֲצֹרֶנִּי לֹא-אֲכַל בְּלַחֲמֶךָ וְאִם-תַּעֲשֶׂה  
עֲלֶיהָ לִיהוָה תַּעֲלֶנָּה בִּי לֹא-יִדַּע מָנוּחַ בִּי-מַלְאָךְ  
יְהוָה הוּא: יז וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל-מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה מִי שִׁמְךָ  
כִּי-יָבֹא דְבָרֶיךָ דְּבָרֶךָ וְכִבְדֶּנּוּךָ: יח וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַלְאָךְ  
יְהוָה לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי וְהוּא-פָּלְאִי: {פ}

יט וַיִּקַּח מָנוּחַ אֶת-גֹּדִי הָעִזִּים וְאֶת-הַמִּנְחָה וַיַּעַל  
עַל-הַצֹּר לִיהוָה וּמִפְּלֹא לַעֲשׂוֹת וּמָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ

everything that I forbade this woman, let her abstain. <sup>14</sup> Let her swallow nothing that comes from the vine, let her drink no wine or fermented liquor, let her eat nothing unclean and let her obey all the orders that I have given her."

<sup>15</sup> Manoah said to the Angel of Yahweh, "Please stay with us while we prepare a kid for you." <sup>16</sup> The Angel of Yahweh said to Manoah, "If I stay, I will not eat your food; but if you wish to make a high-offering, give it to Yahweh." (For, Manoah did not know this was the Angel of Yahweh.) <sup>17</sup> Manoah then said to the Angel of Yahweh, "What is your name, so that we may honour you when your words are fulfilled?"

<sup>18</sup> The Angel of Yahweh replied, "Why ask my name? It is a mystery."

<sup>19</sup> Then Manoah took the kid and the oblation and offered it as a holocaust on the rock to Yahweh, working wonders while Manoah and

<sup>14</sup> Like Jeremiah (Jr 1:5) and the servant (Is 49:1), Samson is consecrated to God from his mother's womb. She must observe the rules of the nazirate that will later bind her son. The cultivation of grapes represents the settled life and consequent compromise with Canaanite culture.

<sup>15</sup> In place of 'please stay with us', the NJB has 'do us the honour of staying with us'; the NRSV, following the MT, has 'allow us to detain you'.

<sup>16</sup> The NJB rearranges and splits this verse (16a & 16b), placing the sentence, 'For Manoah ... Angel of Yahweh' at the beginning of the verse.

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of Manoah's question is, "Who your name? For [when] your word comes [to pass], we will honour you." Manoah apparently gets tongue-tied and uses the wrong pronoun ('who' instead of 'what') – he starts to say, 'Who are you?' But then he switches to 'your name' as if he began the sentence with 'what'. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>18</sup> The Angel, like the mysterious being at the Jabbok (Gn 32:30), again evades the question of identity.

<sup>19</sup> Both the NJB & NRSV omit 'while Manoah and his wife looked on' (the latter mentioning the clause in a footnote). The subject of the participle 'working' is missing: if the text originally read לִיהוָה מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, the scribe's eye may have jumped from the 1<sup>st</sup> יְהוָה to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, accidentally omitting 2 of the 3 words. Later, the conjunction ו would have been added to the following מִפְּלֹא for syntactical reasons. Another possibility is that a pronominal subject (הוא) has been lost in the MT due to haplography.

רָאִים: <sup>כ</sup> וַיְהִי בַעֲלוֹת הַלֵּהב מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַשְּׁמִימָה וַיַּעַל מִלֶּאֲדָיִי הַזֶּה בְּלֵהב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ רָאִים וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל-פְּנֵיהֶם אָרְצָה: <sup>כא</sup> וְלֹא-יָסַף עוֹד מִלֶּאֲדָיִי הַזֶּה לְהִרְאֶה אֶל-מָנוּחַ וְאֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲזִי יָדַע מָנוּחַ כִּי-מִלֶּאֲדָיִי הַזֶּה הוּא: <sup>כב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת נָמוּת כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ: <sup>כג</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ לוֹ חֲפֹץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתֵנוּ לֹא-לֶקַח מִיָּדֵנוּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְלֹא הִרְאָנוּ אֶת-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים וְכָעַת לֹא הִשְׁמִיעֵנוּ כִּזְזֹת: <sup>כד</sup> וַתֵּלֶד הָאִשָּׁה בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שַׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנַּעַר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה: <sup>כה</sup> וַתַּחֲלִי רוּחַ יְהוָה לִפְעָמּוֹ בְּמַחֲנֵה-דָן בֵּין צֹרְעָה וּבֵין אֶשְׁתָּאֹל: {פ}

his wife looked on.<sup>20</sup> As the flame went up heavenwards from the altar, the Angel of Yahweh ascended in the flame of the altar, while of Manoah and his wife looked on, and they fell face downwards on the ground.<sup>21</sup> The Angel of Yahweh did not appear again to Manoah and his wife, by which Manoah understood that this had been the Angel of Yahweh;<sup>22</sup> and Manoah said to his wife, “We are certain to die, because we have seen God.”<sup>23</sup> His wife answered, “If Yahweh had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a holocaust and oblation from our hands; he would not have shown us and told us all these things.”<sup>24</sup> The woman gave birth to a son and called him Samson. The child grew, and Yahweh blessed him;<sup>25</sup> and the spirit of Yahweh began to move him in the camp of Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

<sup>20</sup> In place of ‘the flame of the altar’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘this flame’, following the LXX (τῇ φλογί).

<sup>21</sup> Like Abraham for his three visitors (Gn 18), Manoah intends to discharge the duties of hospitality. On the Angel’s order, the meal is transformed into a burnt offering, in the course of which, Yahweh reveals himself; compare Gideon’s sacrifice, 6:19–22.

<sup>22</sup> NETB translates ‘God’ (אֱלֹהִים) as ‘a supernatural being’, considering it unlikely that the term here refers to the Divine Name, since v. 21 informs us that Manoah realised this was an angel, not God himself. Of course, he may be exaggerating for the sake of emphasis. The term אֱלֹהִים is sometimes used of an individual deity other than the Lord and one cannot assume that Manoah was a sophisticated monotheist.

<sup>23</sup> The NJB omits ‘shown us and’, here following the MT.

<sup>24</sup> The name, ‘Samson’ (שַׁמְשׁוֹן), is related to the Hebrew word for ‘sun’.

<sup>25</sup> The references to definite towns and places in these stories show that they are part of a genuine local tradition; these sites were in the foothills southwest of Jerusalem.

## שופטים פרק יד

## JUDGES 14

<sup>א</sup> וַיֵּרֶד שַׁמְשׁוֹן תִּמְנָה וַיֵּרָא אִשָּׁה בְּתִמְנָה מִבָּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים: <sup>ב</sup> וַיַּעַל וַיַּגִּד לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אִשָּׁה רָאִיתִי בְּתִמְנָה מִבָּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְעַתָּה קְחוּ-אוֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה: <sup>ג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ הֲאִין בְּבָנוֹת אַחִיד וּבְכָל-עַמִּי אִשָּׁה כִּי-אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ לִקְחַת אִשָּׁה מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים הָעֶרְלִים וַיֹּאמֶר שַׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל-אָבִיו אוֹתָהּ קַח-לִי כִּי-הִיא יִשְׂרָה בְּעֵינַי: <sup>ד</sup> וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי מִיָּהוָה הִיא כִּי-תֵאָנֶה הוּא-מִבְּקֵשׁ מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים וּבָעֵת הַהִיא פְּלִשְׁתִּים מְשָׁלִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>ה</sup> וַיֵּרֶד שַׁמְשׁוֹן וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ תִּמְנָה וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-כְּרָמֵי תִמְנָה וְהִנֵּה כְּפִיר אַרְיוֹת שֹׁאֵג לִקְרָאתוֹ: <sup>ו</sup> וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁסְעֵהוּ כְּשֶׁסֶּע הַגִּדִי וּמֵאוֹמָה אֵין בְּיָדוֹ וְלֹא הִגִּיד

<sup>1</sup> Samson went down to Timnah, where he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. <sup>2</sup> He came up again and told his father and mother this, "At Timnah, I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. Get her for me as my wife." <sup>3</sup> His father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among your own kin or among our people, for you to seek a wife among these uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson answered his father, "Get this one for me; get her, because I like her." <sup>4</sup> His father and mother did not know that all this came from Yahweh, who was seeking grounds for a quarrel with the Philistines, since at this time the Philistines dominated Israel. <sup>5</sup> Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother; as he reached the vineyards of Timnah, a young lion roared at him. <sup>6</sup> The spirit of Yahweh seized on him and he tore the lion in pieces barehanded, as a man tears a kid; but he did not tell his father or mother

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<sup>1</sup> 'Timnah' may be Tell El-Batashi, 6 km north of Beth-Shemesh.

<sup>2</sup> In place of 'one of the daughters of the Philistines', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has simply 'a Philistine woman' (as also in v. 1).

<sup>3</sup> The literal translation of 'our people' is 'my people'; the singular may seem strange, since the introduction to the quotation attributes the words to his father and mother, but Samson's father apparently speaks for both himself and his wife. However, the Lucianic recension of the LXX and the Peshitta have a 2P pronoun here ('your'), and this may represent the original reading.

<sup>4</sup> The Philistines had spread inland and were infiltrating the highlands; they would soon be threatening to dominate the whole of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> The NJB lacks 'with his father and mother', which, it notes, is probably an addition (see v.6), but it seems more likely that the words were accidentally copied into the text, perhaps under the influence of v. 4, where the same phrase appears.

<sup>6</sup> The 'spirit of Yahweh' equipped Samson to overcome any physical threat.

לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: <sup>ז</sup> וַיֵּרֶד וַיְדַבֵּר לְאִשָּׁה  
וַתִּישֶׁר בְּעֵינֶי שְׁמִשּׁוֹן: <sup>ח</sup> וַיָּשֶׁב מִיָּמִים לְקַחְתָּהּ וַיִּסֶּר  
לְרֵאוֹת אֵת מַפְלַת הָאֲרִיָּה וְהִנֵּה עֵדֶת דְּבוּרִים  
בְּגוֹיֵת הָאֲרִיָּה וּדְבָשׁ: <sup>ט</sup> וַיִּרְדֶּהוּ אֶל־כַּפְּיוֹ וַיִּלְךָ הַלּוֹךְ  
וְאָכַל וַיִּלְךָ אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ  
וְלֹא־הִגִּיד לָהֶם כִּי מְגוֹיֵת הָאֲרִיָּה רָדָה הַדְּבָשׁ:  
<sup>י</sup> וַיֵּרֶד אָבִיהוּ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיַּעַשׂ שָׁם שְׁמִשּׁוֹן מִשְׁתֶּה  
כִּי בֶן יַעֲשׂוּ הַבְּחוּרִים: <sup>יא</sup> וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָם אוֹתוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ  
שְׁלֹשִׁים מְרֵעִים וַיְהִיו אִתּוֹ:

<sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמִשּׁוֹן אַחֲוִידָה־נָּא לָכֶם חִידָה אִם־  
הִגִּד תִּגִּידוּ אוֹתָהּ לִי שְׁבַעֲת יָמֵי הַמִּשְׁתֶּה וּמַצָּאתֶם

what he had done. <sup>7</sup> He went down and talked to the woman, and he liked her. <sup>8</sup> After a while, he returned to marry her. He turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion, and there was a swarm of bees in the lion's body, and honey. <sup>9</sup> He took some up in his hand and ate it as he went along. On returning to his father and mother, he gave some to them, which they ate, but he did not tell them he had taken it from the lion's carcass. <sup>10</sup> Then he went down to the woman, and they made a feast for Samson, for such is the custom of young men; <sup>11</sup> but when they saw him, they chose thirty companions to stay with him.

<sup>12</sup> Then Samson said to them, "Let me ask you a riddle. If you find the answer within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, I will give you

<sup>7</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...she was the right one in the eyes of Samson."

<sup>8</sup> The literal translation of 'marry' is 'get'.

<sup>9</sup> Samson apparently went home to his parents before going to Timnah for the marriage; seeing and tasting the honey appears to encourage Manoah to go with his son to Timnah (perhaps both Samson and his father viewed the honey as a good omen of future blessing, yet touching the carcass of a dead animal undoubtedly violated Samson's Nazirite status – see Nb 6:6).

<sup>10</sup> The hostility between the Danites and the Philistines flared up because of verbal jousting between Samson and his guests. Samson proposed a riddle that could not be solved, or so he thought; Samson's bride betrayed him.

<sup>11</sup> Samson contracts the type of marriage in which the husband does not set up house with his wife but pays her occasional visits, bringing presents (see 15:1). This form of marriage is known to ancient oriental law, and among the Arabs. Samson does not take his bridegroom's escort with him, as custom would require; the bride's clan provides this. In place of 'when they saw him', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (ἐν τῇ φοβερῇ αὐτοῦ αὐτόν), has 'because they were frightened of him'; the figure of thirty is unusually large: perhaps the Philistines wanted to honour him or were frightened of him.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the seven days of feasting, cf. Gn 29:27; the marriage, however, was consummated on the first night (Gn 29:23). The NJB omits 'and find it out'.

וַנִּתְּתִי לָכֶם שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדִינִים וְשְׁלֹשִׁים חֻלְפֹת  
בְּגָדִים: <sup>13</sup> וְאִם-לֹא תוּכְלוּ לְהַגִּיד לִי וַנִּתְּתֶם אֲתָם  
לִי שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדִינִים וְשְׁלֹשִׁים חֻלְפֹת בְּגָדִים  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֻדָּה חִידָתָךְ וְנִשְׁמַעְנָה: <sup>14</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם  
מִהָאֵכֶל יֵצֵא מֵאֵכֶל וּמִעֵז יֵצֵא מִתּוֹק וְלֹא יִכְלוּ  
לְהַגִּיד הַחִידָה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: <sup>15</sup> וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאִשְׁת־שֹׁמְרוֹן פְּתִי אֶת-אִישְׁךָ וַיְגַד־לָנוּ  
אֶת-הַחִידָה פֶּן-נִשְׂרֹף אוֹתָךְ וְאֶת-בֵּית אָבִיךָ בָּאֵשׁ  
הַלִּירֶשֶׁנוּ קִרְאָתָם לָנוּ הַלֵּא: <sup>16</sup> וַתִּבְךְ אִשְׁת־שֹׁמְרוֹן  
עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר רַק-שָׁנֵאתָנִי וְלֹא אֶהְבֶּתָנִי הַחִידָה  
חִדַּתָּ לְבָנִי עַמִּי וְלִי לֹא הִגַּדְתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הִנֵּה  
לְאָבִי וּלְאִמִּי לֹא הִגַּדְתִּי וְלָךְ אֶגִּיד: <sup>17</sup> וַתִּבְךְ עָלָיו  
שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לָהֶם הַמִּשְׁתָּה וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְגַד־לָהּ כִּי הִצִּיקְתָּהוּ וַתִּגַּד הַחִידָה לְבָנִי  
עַמָּה: <sup>18</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

thirty pieces of fine linen and thirty festal robes. <sup>13</sup> But if you cannot find the answer, then you in your turn must give me thirty pieces of fine linen and thirty festal robes.” “Ask your riddle,” they replied, “we are listening.” <sup>14</sup> He said to them: “Out of the eater came what is eaten and out of the strong came what is sweet.” But three days went by and they could not solve the riddle. <sup>15</sup> On the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Coax your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father’s house together. Did you invite us here to rob us?” <sup>16</sup> So, Samson’s wife wept on him and said, “You only hate me; you do not love me. You have asked my fellow countrymen a riddle and not even told me the answer.” He said to her, “I have not even told my father and mother, why should I tell you?” <sup>17</sup> She wept on him for the seven days their feast lasted. She was so persistent that on the seventh day he told her the answer, and she told her people what the answer to the riddle was. <sup>18</sup> So, on the seventh day, the men of the town said to

<sup>13</sup> The literal translation of ‘find the answer’ is ‘tell me’.

<sup>14</sup> In place of ‘eater’, here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has ‘one who eats’.

<sup>15</sup> The MT has ‘seventh’ in place of ‘fourth’, here following the LXX (τετάρτη) and Peshitta, NRSV and NJB: this maintains consistency with v. 17, and there is a difference of only one letter between the words רְבִיעִי (‘fourth’) and שְׁבִיעִי (‘seventh’)

<sup>16</sup> The NJB has ‘fell on is neck in tears’ in place of ‘wept on him’, here following the NRSV.

<sup>17</sup> The opening does not mean she cried for the entire 7 days (v. 15 indicates otherwise): she cried for the remainder of the 7 day period, beginning on the 4<sup>th</sup> day.

<sup>18</sup> In place of ‘before the sun went down’, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has ‘before Samson entered the bedroom’; the MT (הַחֲרָסָה) is unintelligible.



בְּטֶרֶם יָבֹא הַחֶרֶסָה מֵהַמָּתוֹק מִדְּבַשׁ וְיָמָה עֹז  
מֵאָרִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֹא חֲרַשְׁתֶּם בְּעֹגְלָתִי לֹא  
מִצֵּאתֶם חִידָתִי: <sup>יט</sup> וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד  
אֲשַׁקְלוֹן וַיָּדָּךְ מֵהֶם | שְׁלֹשִׁים אִישׁ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־  
חֲלִיצוֹתָם וַיִּתֵּן הַחֲלִיפֹת לַמַּגִּידִי הַחִידָה וַיַּחֲר אַפּוֹ  
וַיַּעַל בֵּית אָבִיהוּ: <sup>כ</sup> וַתְּהִי אִשָּׁת שְׁמִשּׁוֹן לַמְרַעָהוּ  
אֲשֶׁר רָעָה לוֹ: {פ}

him, before the sun went down: “What is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion?” And he said to them: “If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would never have guessed my riddle.” <sup>19</sup> Then the spirit of Yahweh seized on him. He went down to Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their spoil and gave the festal robes to those who had answered the riddle. In hot anger, he returned to his father’s house.

<sup>20</sup> Samson’s wife was given to his companion, his best man.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Ashkelon’, on the southern Mediterranean coast, was one of the five main Philistine cities. Samson robbed the people of the city to pay his debts to the people of Timnah.

<sup>20</sup> An alternative translation of ‘best man’ (here following the NJB & NRSV) is ‘attendant’.

## JUDGES 15

## שופטים פרק טו

<sup>א</sup> וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים בִּימֵי קִצִּיר־חֹטִים וַיִּפְקֹד שֹׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּגִדֵי עֲזִים וַיֹּאמֶר אָבָא אֶל־אִשְׁתִּי הַחֲדָרָה וְלֹא־נִתְּנָה אֲבִיהָ לָּבֹא: <sup>ב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִיהָ אָמַר אִמְרָתִי כִּי־שָׁנָא שְׁנֵאתָהּ וְאַתָּנָה לְמַרְעֹךָ הֲלֹא אַחֻתָּהּ הַקְטָנָה טוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה תְּהִינָּה לָּךְ תַּחֲתֶיהָ: <sup>ג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שֹׁמְשׁוֹן נָקִיתִי הַפֶּעַם מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי־עָשָׂה אֲנִי עִמָּם רָעָה: <sup>ד</sup> וַיִּלְךְ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּלְכֹּד שְׁלֹשׁ־מֵאוֹת שׁוּעָלִים וַיִּקַּח לִפְדִּים וַיִּפֶּן זָנָב אֶל־זָנָב וַיֵּשֶׁם לִפִּיד אֶחָד בֵּין־שְׁנֵי הַזָּנָבוֹת בַּתּוֹךְ: <sup>ה</sup> וַיִּבְעֶר־אֵשׁ בַּלְּפִידִּים וַיִּשְׁלַח בַּקְמוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּבְעֶר מִגְדֵּי־יֵשׁ וְעַד־קָמָה וְעַד־כָּרֶם זֵית: <sup>ו</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים מִי עָשָׂה זֹאת וַיֹּאמְרוּ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן חָתָן הַתַּמְנִי כִּי לָקַח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְמַרְעָהּ וַיַּעֲלוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּשְׂרְפוּ אוֹתָהּ וְאֶת־אָבִיהָ בָּאֵשׁ: <sup>ז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר

<sup>1</sup> After a while, at the time of the wheat harvest, Samson went to see his wife, bringing a kid; he said, "I wish to go into my wife's room." But her father would not let him enter. <sup>2</sup> He said, "I felt sure that you had rejected her, so I gave her to your companion. Is her young sister not prettier than she? Take her instead." <sup>3</sup> Samson said to them, "This time, I am justified in doing the Philistines harm!" <sup>4</sup> So, Samson went and caught three hundred foxes and took some torches; he turned them tail to tail put a torch between each pair of tails. <sup>5</sup> He lit the torches and set the foxes free in the Philistines' cornfields, and burned both sheaves and standing corn, and the vines and olive trees. <sup>6</sup> The Philistines asked, "Who has done this?" and were told, "Samson, who married the Timnite's daughter; he took the wife back again and gave her to his companion instead." Then the Philistines went up and burned the woman and her father to death. <sup>7</sup> Samson said to them, "Since this is

## JUDGES 15

- <sup>1</sup> The 'wheat harvest' took place in the month of May. A 'kid' was perhaps the usual gift for sexual intimacy. Samson's anger after his wife was given to another man led him to destroy the Philistines' grain crop. This begins a cycle of revenge.
- <sup>2</sup> The NJB rephrases the question, "Would her younger sister not suit you better?"
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'said to them', Codex Alexandrinus of the LXX has 'said to him' (εἶπεν αὐτῷ), whereas Codex Vaticanus follows the MT (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς).
- <sup>4</sup> NETB has 'jackals' in place of 'foxes', here following the NJB & NRSV.
- <sup>5</sup> The NJB & NETB have 'vineyards and olive groves' in place of 'vines and olive trees', here following the NJB.
- <sup>6</sup> In place of 'her father' (following the NRSV), the NJB has 'her father's family'.
- <sup>7</sup> The Niphal of נָקַם ('to avenge') followed by the preposition ב has the force 'to get revenge against'; see 1S 18:25, Jr 50:15, Ezk 25:12.

לָהֶם שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶם־תַּעֲשׂוֹן כְּזֹאת כִּי אֶם־נִקְמַמְתִּי  
בָכֶם וְאַחֵר אֶחָדָל: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּךְ אוֹתָם שׁוֹק עַל־יָרֵךְ מִכָּה  
גְּדוֹלָה וַיֵּרֶד וַיָּשֶׁב בְּסַעֲיף סֶלַע עֵיטָם: {פ}

<sup>ט</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּחֲנוּ בִיהוּדָה וַיִּנְטְשׁוּ בַלְחִי:  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לָמָּה עָלִיתָם עָלֵינוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
לְאַסּוֹר אֶת־שִׁמְשׁוֹן עָלֵינוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
לָנוּ: <sup>י</sup> וַיֵּרְדּוּ שְׁלֹשָׁת אַלְפִים אִישׁ מִיהוּדָה אֶל־  
סַעֲיף סֶלַע עֵיטָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן הֲלֹא יָדַעְתָּ כִּי־  
מַשְׁלִים בָּנוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמִה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר  
לָהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי בֶן עָשִׂיתִי לָהֶם: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ  
לְאַסְרֶךָ יִרְדְּנוּ לְתַתָּךְ בִּיד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם  
שִׁמְשׁוֹן הִשְׁבַּעוּ לִי פֶן־תִּפְגְּעוּן בִּי אֹתָם: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
לוֹ לֹא־אִמְרָ לֹא כִי־אִסַּר נֶאֱסַרְךָ וַנִּתְּנוּךְ בְּיָדָם וְהָמָּת  
לֹא נִמִּיתְךָ וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בְּשָׁנִים עֲבָתִים חֲדָשִׁים  
וַיַּעֲלוּהוּ מִן־הַסֶּלַע: <sup>יד</sup> הוּא־בָּא עַד־לְחִי וּפְלִשְׁתִּים  
הִרְעוּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַתְּהַלִּינָה

how you behave, I swear I will not rest until I have had my revenge on you.” <sup>8</sup> He fell on them for all he was worth and caused great havoc. Then he went down to the cave of the Rock of Etam and stayed there.

<sup>9</sup> The Philistines came up and encamped in Judah and made a foray against Lehi. <sup>10</sup> The men of Judah said to them, “Why are you attacking us?” They answered, “We have come to seize Samson and to do to him what he did to us.” <sup>11</sup> Then three thousand of the men of Judah went down to the cave in the Rock of Etam and said to him, “Do you not know that the Philistines have us in their power? Now what have you done to us?” He answered, “What they did to me I did to them.” <sup>12</sup> Then they said to him, “We have come to take you, to hand you over to the Philistines.” He said to them, “Swear to me you will not kill me.” <sup>13</sup> They said, “No; we will only bind you and hand you over to them; we will not kill you.” Then they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the Rock. <sup>14</sup> When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came running towards him shouting and the spirit of Yahweh seized on him:

<sup>8</sup> ‘Etam’ cannot be located with certainty; it must have been in the south.

<sup>9</sup> In place of ‘made a foray’, here following the NJB (the NRSV has ‘made a raid’), NETB has ‘arrayed themselves for battle’.

<sup>10</sup> The NRSV has ‘come up against’ in place of ‘attacking’, here following the NJB.

<sup>11</sup> For the Judahites’ 1<sup>st</sup> question, here following the NJB, the NRSV has, “Do you not know that the Philistines are rulers over us?”

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of ‘kill’ is ‘harm’ but, in the light of v. 13, ‘kill’ is an appropriate translation.

<sup>13</sup> In place of ‘we will not kill you’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘we certainly do not wish to kill you’.

<sup>14</sup> The NJB has ‘Samson’ in place of ‘him’, here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

הַעֲבָתִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־זְרוּעוֹתָיו כַּפְּשָׁתִים אֲשֶׁר בָּעָרוּ  
בָּאֵשׁ וַיִּמָּסוּ אֲסוּרָיו מֵעַל יָדָיו: <sup>טו</sup> וַיִּמָּצֵא לַחֵי־חֲמֹר  
טְרִיָּה וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיִּדְבָּהּ אֵלָּף אִישׁ:  
<sup>טז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמִשׁוֹן בְּלַחֵי הַחֲמֹר חֲמֹר חֲמֹרֵתִים  
בְּלַחֵי הַחֲמֹר הַכִּיתִי אֵלָּף אִישׁ: <sup>יז</sup> וַיְהִי כִּכְלָתוֹ  
לְדַבֵּר וַיִּשְׁלַךְ הַלַּחֵי מִיָּדוֹ וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא  
רַמַּת לַחֵי: <sup>יח</sup> וַיִּצְמָא מְאֹד וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר  
אַתָּה נָתַתָּ בְיָד־עַבְדְּךָ אֶת־הַתְּשׁוּעָה הַגְּדֹלָה  
הַזֹּאת וְעַתָּה אָמוּת בַּצְמָא וְנִפְלַתִי בְיַד הָעַרְלִים:  
<sup>יט</sup> וַיִּבְלַק אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַמַּכְתֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר־בְּלַחֵי וַיֵּצֵאוּ  
מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם וַיֵּשֶׁת׃ וַתֵּשֶׁב רוּחוֹ וַיַּחֲי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא  
שְׁמָהּ עֵין הַקּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּלַחֵי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:  
<sup>כ</sup> וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו פְּלִשְׁתִּים עֶשְׂרִים  
שָׁנָה: {פ}

the ropes on his arms became like burnt strands of flax and the bonds melted off his hands. <sup>15</sup> Catching sight of the fresh jawbone of a donkey, he reached out and snatched it up; then with it he struck down a thousand men. <sup>16</sup> Samson said: "With the jawbone of a donkey I have laid them in heaps; with the jawbone of a donkey, I have felled a thousand men." <sup>17</sup> With this, he hurled the jawbone from him; and that is why the place was called Ramath-Lehi. <sup>18</sup> As he was thirsty, he called on Yahweh and said, "You yourself have worked this great victory by the hand of your servant; and now must I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" <sup>19</sup> Then God opened a hollow in the ground, the hollow there is at Lehi, and water gushed out of it. Samson drank; his vigour returned and he revived. Therefore, this spring was called En-ha-Kore; it is still at Lehi today. <sup>20</sup> Samson was judge in Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years.

<sup>15</sup> The jawbone of a donkey was sometimes worked into a sickle; it could then serve as a weapon.

<sup>16</sup> The precise meaning of חֲמֹר חֲמֹרֵתִים ('I have laid them in heaps') is uncertain; the translation assumes that the phrase means 'a heap, two heaps', and refers to the heaps of corpses littering the battlefield. Other options include: 'I have made donkeys of them' (as NIV), 'I have thoroughly skinned them' (which appeals to an Arabic cognate for support) and 'I have stormed mightily against them'. There is a play on words here between חֲמֹר (donkey) and חֲמַר (to heap or mass).

<sup>17</sup> The place name, 'Ramath-Lehi' (רַמַּת לַחֵי) is here explained as 'jawbone thrown'; though literally translated it means 'Hill of the Jawbone'.

<sup>18</sup> NETB interprets the phrase 'the uncircumcised' as 'the Philistines'.

<sup>19</sup> 'En-ha-Kore' means 'The Spring of the Partridge'; the Hebrew word for 'partridge' means 'caller'. The topological name is accounted for by Samson having called to God (v. 18). The previous story similarly accounts for the name, 'Ramoath-Lehi'.

<sup>20</sup> This verse is an editorial comment to authenticate Samson as Judge.

## שופטים פרק טז

א וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁמְשׁוֹן עִזְתָּהּ וַיֵּרָא־שָׁם אִשָּׁה זֹזְנָה וַיָּבֹא  
אֵלֶיהָ: ב לַעֲזֹתִים | לֵאמֹר בָּא שָׁמְשׁוֹן הֲנֵה וַיִּסְבּוּ  
וַיֵּאָרְבוּ-לוֹ כָּל-הַלַּיְלָה בְּשַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ כָל-  
הַלַּיְלָה לֵאמֹר עַד-אֲזֹר הַבָּקָר וְהִרְגָּנָהּ: ג וַיִּשְׁכַּב  
שָׁמְשׁוֹן עַד-חֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיָּקָם | בַּחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיֵּאָחֵז  
בַּדְּלָתוֹת שַׁעֲרֵי-הָעִיר וּבִשְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוּזוֹת וַיִּסָּעֶם עִם-  
הַבְּרִיחַ וַיֵּשֶׁם עַל-כַּתְּפָיו וַיַּעֲלֵם אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר  
אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי חֶבְרוֹן: {פ}

ד וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיֵּאָהֵב אִשָּׁה בְּנַחַל שֹׁרֵק וּשְׁמָהּ  
דִּלִּילָה: ה וַיַּעֲלֹ אֵלֶיהָ סַרְגֵּי פִלְשְׁתִּים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ  
פְּתִי אוֹתוֹ וְרֹאֵי בָמָה כָּחוֹ גָּדוֹל וּבָמָה נוֹכַח לֹא  
וְאַסְרִנוּהוּ לַעֲנוֹתוֹ וְאַנְחֵנוּ נִתֵּן-לָךְ אִישׁ אֶלֶף וּמֵאָה  
כֶּסֶף:

## JUDGES 16

<sup>1</sup> Samson went on to Gaza, where saw a harlot and went in to her. <sup>2</sup> The news was told to the men of Gaza, "Samson has arrived." They surrounded the town and kept watch for him at the gate of the town. They kept quiet all night, thinking, "We will wait until daybreak; then we will kill him." <sup>3</sup> But Samson stayed in bed until midnight, and rising at midnight, he seized the doors of the town gate and the two posts as well; he tore them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill overlooking Hebron.

<sup>4</sup> After this, he fell in love with a woman in the Vale of Sorek; her name was Delilah. <sup>5</sup> The chiefs of the Philistines visited her and said to her, "Cajole him and find out where his great strength comes from, and how we can master him, bind him and subdue him; we will each give you eleven hundred silver shekels."

## JUDGES 16

<sup>1</sup> The idiom 'went in to her' (וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ) often has sexual connotations.

<sup>2</sup> There is no object to the verb 'surrounded' in the MT but the rest of the verse suggests it is the town, not the harlot's house.

<sup>3</sup> This exploit of the Danite Hercules perhaps accounted for a place name near Hebron, at the beginning of the track leading down to Gaza. The distance from Gaza to Hebron is about 65 km and involves an ascent of around 1,000 m.

<sup>4</sup> Women have led Samson into all his adventures and, from these, he has escaped, thanks to his God-given strength. Delilah, the last of them, destroys him by making him break his nazirate vow. The 'Vale of Sorek' is the modern Wadi-es-Sarar that begins 21 km southwest of Jerusalem. The name, 'Delilah' may be related to an Arabic root that means 'flirt'. The text does not say that she was a Philistine – living in the Vale of Sorek would allow her to be either a Philistine or an Israelite.

<sup>5</sup> In place of 'subdue him', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'reduce him to helplessness' and NETB has 'subdue him and humiliate him'.



וַתֹּאמֶר דִּלִּילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן הַגִּידָה־נָא לִי בַמָּה  
כַּחֲךָ גָּדוֹל וּבַמָּה תֵאָסֵר לַעֲנוּתֶךָ: <sup>ז</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ  
שֹׁמְשׁוֹן אִם־יֵאֲסֶרְנִי בִשְׁבָעָה יִתְּרִים לַחִים אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־חָרְבוּ וְחִלִּיתִי וְהִיִּיתִי כָאֶחָד הָאָדָם: <sup>ח</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ־  
לָהּ סָרְנֵי פִלְשֹׁתִים שְׁבָעָה יִתְּרִים לַחִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־  
חָרְבוּ וַתֵּאֲסָרְהוּ בָהֶם: <sup>ט</sup> וְהָאֲרָב יָשָׁב לָהּ בַּחֲדָר  
וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו פִּלְשֹׁתִים עָלֶיךָ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּנְתֵּק אֶת־  
הַיִּתְּרִים כַּאֲשֶׁר יִנְתֵּק פְּתִיל־הַנֶּעֱרֵת בַּהֲרִיחוֹ אֵשׁ  
וְלֹא נֹדַע כָּחוֹ: <sup>י</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר דִּלִּילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן הֲנִה  
הִתַּלַּת בִּי וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלַי כְּזָבִים עֲתָה הַגִּידָה־נָא לִי  
בַמָּה תֵאָסֵר: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אִם־אֲסֹר יֵאֲסֹרוּנִי  
בְּעִבְתִּים חֲדָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִעְשָׂה בָהֶם מְלָאכָה  
וְחִלִּיתִי וְהִיִּיתִי כָאֶחָד הָאָדָם: <sup>יב</sup> וַתִּקַּח דִּלִּילָה  
עִבְתִּים חֲדָשִׁים וַתֵּאֲסָרְהוּ בָהֶם וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
פִּלְשֹׁתִים עָלֶיךָ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וְהָאֲרָב יָשָׁב בַּחֲדָר  
וַיִּנְתֵּקֵם מֵעַל זִרְעֻתּוֹ כַּחוּט:

<sup>6</sup> Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me where your great strength lies, and how you can be bound and subdued.” <sup>7</sup> Samson said, “If I were bound with seven new bowstrings that had not yet been dried, I should lose my strength and become like any other man.” <sup>8</sup> The chiefs of the Philistines brought Delilah seven new bowstrings that had not yet dried out and she bound him with them. <sup>9</sup> She had men concealed in her room, and she shouted, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” Then he snapped the bowstrings as a strand of yarn snaps at a touch of the fire; so, the secret of his strength remained unknown. <sup>10</sup> Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have mocked me and told me lies. But now please tell me what would be needed to bind you.” <sup>11</sup> He answered her, “If I were to be bound tightly with new ropes that had never been used, I should lose my strength and become like any other man.” <sup>12</sup> Then Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and she shouted, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” She had men concealed in her room, but he snapped the ropes round his arms like thread.

<sup>6</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “...how you can be subdued in order to be humiliated.”

<sup>7</sup> The ‘bowstrings’ were probably made from animal tendons (see Ps 11:2, Job 30:11).

<sup>8</sup> Before ‘bound him’, the NJB adds ‘took them and’.

<sup>9</sup> In place of ‘yarn’, here following NETB, the NJB has ‘tow’ and the NRSV has ‘fibre’.

<sup>10</sup> See Gn 31:7, Ex 8:25, Job 13:9, Is 44:20 & Jr 9:4 for other uses the word דִּלִּילָה (‘mocked’), which also occurs in v. 13.

<sup>11</sup> The literal translation of ‘that had never been used’ is ‘with which no work had been done’.

<sup>12</sup> Literally translated, ‘she had men concealed in her room’ is ‘and the ones lying in wait were sitting in the bedroom’.

י' וַתֹּאמֶר דְּלִילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן עַד־הֵנָּה הַתֵּלֶת בִּי  
וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלַי כְּזָבִים הַגִּידָה לִּי בְּמָה תֵּאָסֵר וַיֹּאמֶר  
אֵלֶיהָ אֶסְתַּאֲרֶגֶי אֶת־שִׁבְעַת מַחְלָפוֹת רֹאשִׁי עִם־  
הַמַּסָּכָת: י" וַתִּתְקַע בִּיתָד וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו פִּלְשְׁתִּים  
עָלֶיךָ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּיקֶץ מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיִּסַּע אֶת־הַיִּתָּד הָאָרֶג  
וְאֶת־הַמַּסָּכָת:

טו' וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵיךְ תֹּאמַר אֶהְבֶּתִּיךָ וּלְבָבְךָ אֵין  
אֵתִי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ פַּעַמִּים הַתֵּלֶת בִּי וְלֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי  
בְּמָה כַּחַךְ גָּדוֹל: טז' וַיְהִי כִּי־הִצִּיקָהּ לוֹ בַּדְּבָרֶיהָ כָּל־  
הַיָּמִים וַתֹּאֲלָצֶהוּ וַתִּקְצֹר נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוּת: יז' וַיַּגְדֵּלָהּ  
אֶת־כָּל־לְבָבוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מוֹרָה לֹא־עָלָה עַל־רֹאשִׁי  
כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אֶסְגֹּלַחְתִּי וְסָר  
מִמֶּנִּי כָחִי וְחִלִּיתִי וְהִיִּיתִי כְּכֹל־הָאָדָם: יח' וַתֵּרָא  
דְּלִילָה כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לְבָבוֹ וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא

<sup>13</sup> Then Delilah said to Samson, "Up to now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what would be needed to bind you." He answered, "If you wove the seven locks of my hair into the warp of a cloth." <sup>14</sup> She bound them together with a reed and shouted, "The Philistines are on you, Samson!" He woke from his sleep and pulled out both pin and warp; so, the secret of his strength remained unknown.

<sup>15</sup> She said to him, "How can you say you love me when you do not trust me? Three times now you have mocked me and have not told me where your great strength comes from." <sup>16</sup> Day after day, she nagged him and pestered him, until he grew tired to death of it. <sup>17</sup> At last, he told her his whole secret; he said to her, "A razor has never touched my head, because I have been God's nazirite from my mother's womb. If my head were shorn, then my power would leave me and I would become weak like any other man." <sup>18</sup> Then Delilah realised he had told her his whole

<sup>13</sup> At the end of this verse, the NRSV & NJB, following the LXX (καὶ ἐγκαρούσης ἐν τῷ πασσάλῳ εἰς τὸν τοῖχον, καὶ ἔσομαι ἀσθενὴς ὡς εἷς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), add "and beat them together tight with the reed, I should lose my strength and become like any other man." See #14.

<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of this verse, the NJB & NRSV, following the LXX (καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ κοιμᾶσθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἔλαβεν Δαλιδα τὰς ἐπτὰ σειρὰς τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὕφανεν ἐν τῷ διάσματι), add "She lulled him to sleep, then wove the seven locks of his hair into the warp." The MT was accidentally shortened during the copying process: a scribe's eye jumped from the 1<sup>st</sup> instance of 'into the warp' to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, causing him to leave out inadvertently the intervening words.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of 'you do not trust me' is 'your heart is not with me'.

<sup>16</sup> In place of 'nagged him and pestered him', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'persisted with her questions, and allowed him no rest'.

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of 'his whole secret' is 'all his heart'.

<sup>18</sup> In place of לִי ('to me'), here following the Qere, the Ketiv has לָהּ ('to her').

לְסֶרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים לֵאמֹר עָלוּ הַפֶּעַם כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהּ לִי  
אֶת־כָּל־לְבֹו וְעָלוּ אֵלֶיהָ סֶרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים וַיַּעֲלוּ  
הַכֶּסֶף בְּיָדָם: <sup>יט</sup> וַתִּשְׁנֶהוּ עַל־בִּרְפִּיהָ וַתִּקְרָא לְאִישׁ  
וַתְּגַלֵּחַ אֶת־שִׁבְעַת מַחְלָפוֹת רֹאשׁוֹ וַתַּחֲלֵל לְעֻנּוֹתוֹ  
וַיִּסַּר כָּחוֹ מֵעָלָיו: <sup>כ</sup> וַתֹּאמֶר פִּלְשְׁתִּים עָלֶיךָ שִׁמְשֹׁן  
וַיִּקֶץ מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵצֶא כְּפַעַם בְּפַעַם וְאֶנְעֹר  
וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע כִּי יְהוָה סָר מֵעָלָיו: <sup>כא</sup> וַיֵּאחָזוּהוּ  
פִלְשְׁתִּים וַיִּנְקְרוּ אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיּוֹרִידוּ אוֹתוֹ עֲזָתָהּ  
וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בַּנְּחֹשְׁתִּים וַיְהִי טוֹחֵן בְּבֵית הָאֲסִירִים  
הָאֲסוּרִים: <sup>כב</sup> וַיַּחֲלֵל שַׁעַר־רֹאשׁוֹ לְצִמְחָה כְּאִשֶּׁר  
גָּלַח: {פ}

<sup>כג</sup> וְסֶרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים נֶאֱסָפוּ לְזִבְחָה זֹבַח־גָּדוֹל לְדָגוֹן  
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וּלְשִׁמְחָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדָנוּ אֶת  
שִׁמְשֹׁן אוֹיְבֵנוּ: <sup>כד</sup> וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ הָעָם וַיַּהֲלִלוּ אֶת־

secret; she called the chiefs of the Philistines, saying “Come once more: he has told his whole secret to me.” Then the chiefs of the Philistines came to her with the money in their hands. <sup>19</sup> She lulled Samson to sleep in her lap and called a man who sheared the seven locks off his head. She began to torment him, and his strength left him. <sup>20</sup> She cried, “The Philistines are on you, Samson!” He awoke from sleep thinking, “I shall go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that Yahweh had left him. <sup>21</sup> The Philistines seized him, put out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. They bound him in bronze chains, and he ground at the mill in prison; <sup>22</sup> but his hair that had been shorn off began to grow again.

<sup>23</sup> The chiefs of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice. They said, “Into our hands our god has delivered Samson our enemy.” <sup>24</sup> As soon as the people saw their god,

<sup>19</sup> The NJB & NRSV, following the LXX (καὶ ἤρξατο ταπεινοῦσθαι), have ‘he began to weaken’ in place of ‘she began to torment him’; rather than referring to some specific insulting action on Delilah’s part after Samson’s hair was shaved off, this statement probably means that she, through the devious actions just described, began the process of Samson’s humiliation which culminates in the following verses.

<sup>20</sup> By breaking his nazirite vow, Samson had lost the power given him by the Spirit of Yahweh.

<sup>21</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>22</sup> The literal translation of ‘his hair’ is ‘the hair on his head’.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Dagon’ was originally the major god of the region of the Middle Euphrates; his cult spread into Syria and Palestine (see the place name, ‘Beth-Dagon’, Jos 15:41, 19:27). He was adopted by the Philistine, who seem very quickly to have forgotten their own ancestral religion. Dagon reappears in the story of the Ark (1S 5:2ff).

<sup>24</sup> Before ‘our enemy’, the NJB, following the LXX, adds the name, ‘Samson’; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אָמְרוּ נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדֵנוּ אֶת־אֹיְבָנוּ  
וְאֵת מַחֲרִיב אֶרְצֵנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר הִרְבָּה אֶת־חַלְלֵינוּ:  
כֹּה וַיְהִי כִּי טוֹב [כְּטוֹב] לָבָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ קִרְאוּ  
לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּשְׁחַק־לָנוּ וַיִּקְרָאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן מִבֵּית  
הָאֲסִירִים הָאֲסוּרִים וַיִּצְחַק לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמִידוּ אוֹתוֹ  
בֵּין הָעַמּוּדִים: כו וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל־הַנַּעַר הַמְּחַזֵּק  
בְּיָדוֹ הַנִּיחָה אוֹתִי וְהִימֵשְׁנִי אֶת־הָעַמּוּדִים  
אֲשֶׁר הַבַּיִת נִכּוֹן עָלֵיהֶם וְאֶשְׁעֵן עָלֵיהֶם: כז וְהַבַּיִת  
מָלֵא הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְשָׁמָּה כָּל סָרְנֵי פִלִּשְׁתִּים  
וְעַל־הַגֹּג כְּשִׁלְשֶׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה הָרָאִים  
בְּשִׁחוּק שִׁמְשׁוֹן: כח וַיִּקְרָא שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל־יְהוָה  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה זְכֹרְנִי נָא וְחַזְקֵנִי נָא אֲדָּהּ הַפֶּעַם  
הַזֶּה הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶנְקָמָה נִקְס־אֲחַת מִשְׁתִּי עֵינִי  
מִפִּלְשִׁתִּים: כט וַיִּלְפַּת שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת־שְׁנֵי עַמּוּדֵי  
הַתֹּךְ אֲשֶׁר הַבַּיִת נִכּוֹן עָלֵיהֶם וַיִּסְמֹךְ עָלֵיהֶם אֶחָד  
בְּיָמִינוּ וְאֶחָד בְּשִׁמְאָלוֹ: ל וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן תָּמוּת  
נַפְשִׁי עִם־פִּלְשְׁתִּים וַיֵּט בָּכָח וַיִּפֹּל הַבַּיִת עַל־

they acclaimed him, shouting his praises: “Into our hands our god has delivered our enemy, the man who laid our country waste and killed so many of us.” <sup>25</sup> As their hearts were full of joy, they shouted, “Send Samson out to amuse us.” So they brought Samson out of prison, and he performed feats for them; then they made him stand between the pillars; <sup>26</sup> but Samson said to the boy who was leading him by the hand, “Lead me where I can touch the pillars supporting the building, so that I can lean against them.” <sup>27</sup> Now the building was crowded with men and women. All the chiefs of the Philistines were there, while about three thousand men and women were watching Samson’s feats from the roof. <sup>28</sup> Samson called on Yahweh and cried out, “Lord Yahweh, I beg you, remember me; give me strength again this once, and let me be revenged on the Philistines at one blow for my two eyes.” <sup>29</sup> And Samson put his arms round the two middle pillars supporting the building, and threw all his weight against them, his right arm against one and his left arm against the other; <sup>30</sup> and he cried out, “May I die with the Philistines!” He thrust now with all his might, and the building

<sup>25</sup> The *Kethib/Qere* differences here would benefit from explanations.

<sup>26</sup> The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>27</sup> The MT & NRSV have ‘house’ in place of ‘building’, here following the NJB, and NETB has ‘temple’ (as also in v. 26).

<sup>28</sup> An alternative translation for the end of this verse is, “...so that I may be avenged upon the Philistines for one of my two eyes.”

<sup>29</sup> The literal translation of ‘the two middle pillars supporting the building’ is ‘the pillars upon which the house was founded’.

<sup>30</sup> Samson’s death is truly heroic: he gives his life by using his God-given strength, for the last time, against the enemies of his people. His final words and deeds portray an honourable death.

הַסִּרְנַיִם וְעַל-כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ וַיְהִיו הַמָּתִים  
אֲשֶׁר הָמִית בָּמוֹתָו רַבִּים מֵאֲשֶׁר הָמִית בְּחַיָּיו:  
לֹא וַיֵּרְדּוּ אָחָיו וְכָל-בֵּית אָבִיהוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ וַיַּעֲלוּ  
וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין צֹרְחָה וּבֵין אֶשְׁתָּאֵל בְּקִבְר מָנוּחַ  
אָבִיו וְהוּא שָׁפֵט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

fell on all the chiefs and on all the people there. Those he killed at his death outnumbered those he had killed in his life.<sup>31</sup> His brothers and all his father's family came down and carried him away. They took him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had been judge in Israel for twenty years.

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<sup>31</sup> The NRSV omits 'father's'.



## שופטים פרק יז

א וַיְהִי-אִישׁ מֵהֶרְאֶפְרַיִם וּשְׁמוֹ מִיכָיְהוּ: ב וַיֹּאמֶר לְאִמּוֹ אֵלַי וּמָאָה הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר לָקַח-לִי וְאֵתִי וְאֶת אֲלִיתִי וְגַם אֶמְרַתְּ בְּאָזְנִי הִנֵּה-הַכֶּסֶף אֵתִי אֲנִי לָקַחְתִּיו וְתֹאמַר אִמּוֹ בְּרוּךְ בְּנִי לַיהוָה: ג וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת-אֵלַי וּמָאָה הַכֶּסֶף לְאִמּוֹ וְתֹאמַר אִמּוֹ הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשָׁתִי אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף לַיהוָה מִיָּדִי לְבְנִי לַעֲשׂוֹת פֶּסֶל וּמִסְכָּה וְעֵתָה אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ לָךְ: ד וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת-הַכֶּסֶף לְאִמּוֹ וַתִּקַּח אִמּוֹ מֵאֲתִים כֶּסֶף וַתִּתְּנֶנּוּ לְצֹרֶךְ וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ פֶּסֶל וּמִסְכָּה וַיְהִי בְּבֵית מִיכָיְהוּ: ה וְהָאִישׁ מִיכָה לוֹ בֵּית אֱלֹהִים וַיַּעַשׂ אֲפֹד וְתֹרָפִים וַיִּמְלֵא אֶת-יָד אֶחָד מִבָּנָיו וַיְהִי-לוֹ לַכֹּהֵן: ו בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיֵּשֶׁר בַּעֲיָנָיו יַעֲשֶׂה: {פ}

## JUDGES 17

<sup>1</sup> In the hills of Ephraim there was a man called Micayehu. <sup>2</sup> He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred silver shekels taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and even spoke in my ears, I have that silver; I took it but I will return it to you." His mother said, "May Yahweh bless my son!" <sup>3</sup> Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother; and his mother said, "I consecrate the silver to Yahweh from my hand for my son, to make an idol of cast metal." <sup>4</sup> Then his mother took two hundred silver shekels and gave them to the metalworker, who made them into a carved image and metal idol; and it was in the house of Micah, <sup>5</sup> who had a shrine and made an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons to act as priest for him. <sup>6</sup> In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased.

### JUDGES 17

<sup>1</sup> 'Micayehu' (מִיכָיְהוּ) means 'Who is like Yahweh' and is elsewhere abbreviated to 'Micah' (as it is here in the NRSV & NETB).

<sup>2</sup> Vv. 2-3 herein follow the translation of the NRSV; the words 'but now I will return it to you' are transposed to the end of v. 3 in the MT and NJB – the words may have been accidentally omitted from a manuscript, written in the margin, and then later inserted in the wrong place in another manuscript. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>3</sup> She cannot mean that she is now taking the money from her hand and giving it back to her son so he can make an image: vv. 4-6 indicate she took back the money and used a portion of it to hire a silversmith to make an idol for her son to use.

<sup>4</sup> This is the only reasonably certain example of a cult statue of Yahweh, the oft-repeated prohibition in the Decalogue (Ex 20:4) notwithstanding. It is not condemned and nor are the ephod and cultic statues of v. 5, although these later become suspect to official Yahwism.

<sup>5</sup> In appointing his son, Micah acts according to the ancient custom authorising the head of clans and families to exercise the functions of priest themselves and to appoint their own priests; 'teraphim' were household idols associated with inheritance rights to the property.

<sup>6</sup> This verse is an editorial comment that describes the end of the Judges' period as disordered (21:25).

וַיְהִי־נֶעֱר מִבֵּית לַחֵם יְהוּדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת יְהוּדָה  
וְהוּא לֵוִי וְהוּא גֵר־שָׁם:<sup>7</sup> וַיֵּלֶךְ הָאִישׁ מִהָעִיר מִבֵּית  
לַחֵם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹר בְּאֶשֶׁר יִמְצָא וַיָּבֹא הָרֶאֱפָרִים  
עַד־בֵּית מִיכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכּוֹ:<sup>8</sup> וַיֹּאמְרֵלּוּ מִיכָה  
מֵאֵין תָּבוֹא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לֵוִי אָנֹכִי מִבֵּית לַחֵם  
יְהוּדָה וְאַנֹכִי הֵלֵךְ לְגוֹר בְּאֶשֶׁר אִמְצָא:<sup>9</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לּוֹ  
מִיכָה שְׁבָה עִמָּדִי וְהָיָה־לִּי לְאָב וּלְכַהֵן וְאַנֹכִי אֶתֶּן  
לָךְ עֶשְׂרֵת כֶּסֶף לַיָּמִים וְעֶרֶךְ בְּגָדִים וּמַחֲיִתָּךְ וַיֵּלֶךְ  
הַלֵּוִי:<sup>10</sup> וַיֹּנָאֵל הַלֵּוִי לְשִׁבַת אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיְהִי הַנֶּעֱר  
לּוֹ כְּאַחַד מִבָּנָיו:<sup>11</sup> וַיִּמְלֵא מִיכָה אֶת־יַד הַלֵּוִי וַיְהִי־  
לּוֹ הַנֶּעֱר לְכַהֵן וַיְהִי בְּבֵית מִיכָה:<sup>12</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר מִיכָה  
עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יִיטִיב יְהוָה לִי כִּי הָיָה־לִּי הַלֵּוִי  
לְכַהֵן: {פ}

<sup>7</sup> There was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the clan of Judah, who was a Levite residing there. <sup>8</sup> This man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah to look for a place where he could find a home. In his travels, he came to Micah's house in the highlands of Ephraim. <sup>9</sup> Micah asked him, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am looking for a place where I can live." <sup>10</sup> Micah said to him, "Stay here with me; be a father and a priest for me, and I will give you ten silver shekels a year, and food and clothing;" and he urged the Levite. <sup>11</sup> The Levite agreed to stay with the man, and the young man became like one of his sons to him. <sup>12</sup> So, Micah installed the Levite and the young man became Micah's priest and stayed in his house; <sup>13</sup> and Micah said, "Now I know that Yahweh will prosper me, because I have this Levite as my priest."

<sup>7</sup> Unless 'Levite' is taken here to designate function and not membership of the priestly tribe (which is contradicted in 18:30), the young man could not be both a Levite and a member of the clan of Judah. However, he could live in Bethlehem (this was that in Judah, 8 km south of Jerusalem – see #12:8) as a 'resident stranger' (see #Ex 12:48).

<sup>8</sup> Literally translated, the 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence reads, "He came to the Ephraimite hill country, to Micah's house, making his way."

<sup>9</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...and I am going to reside in a place I can find."

<sup>10</sup> 'Father' is here a title of honour that suggests the priest will give advice and protect the interests of the family, primarily by divining God's will in matters, perhaps through the use of the ephod.

<sup>11</sup> In place of 'stay with the man', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'remain in the man's house'.

<sup>12</sup> The literal translation of 'installed' is 'filled the hand of'; NETB has 'paid'.

<sup>13</sup> A more literal translation of 'prosper me', here following the NJB & NRSV, is 'do me good'.

## JUDGES 18

## שופטים פרק יח

<sup>א</sup> בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבַיָּמִים הָהֵם  
שָׁבַט הַדָּנִי מִבְּקֶשְׁלוֹ נַחֲלָה לָשֶׁבֶת כִּי לֹא־נָפְלָה  
לוֹ עַד־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּתוֹךְ־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּנַחֲלָה: {פ}

<sup>ב</sup> וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ בְנֵי־דָן מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתָּם חֲמִשָּׁה אַנְשִׁים  
מִקְצוֹתָם אַנְשִׁים בְּנֵי־חִיל מִצְרַעָה וּמֵאֶשְׁתָּאֵל  
לְרַגֵּל אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּלְחַקְרָהּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם לְכוּ  
חַקְרוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ הַר־אֶפְרַיִם עַד־בֵּית מִיכָה  
וַיָּלִינוּ שָׁם: <sup>ג</sup> הָמָּה עַם־בֵּית מִיכָה וְהָמָּה הַפִּירִי  
אֶת־קוֹל הַנַּעַר הַלְוִי וַיִּסּוּרוּ שָׁם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ מִי־  
הַבִּיאָךְ הֵלֵם וּמֵה־אֵתָּה עֲשֵׂה בָזָה וּמֵה־לָּךְ פָּה:  
<sup>ד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּזֶה וְכֹזֶה עֲשֵׂה לִי מִיכָה וַיִּשְׁפְּרֵנִי  
וְאֵהֱיָלוֹ לְכֹהֵן: <sup>ה</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ שְׂאֵל־נָא בָּאלֹהִים  
וְנִדְעָה הַתְּצִלַּח דְּרַכֵּנוּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנַחְנוּ הֹלְכִים עָלֶיהָ:  
<sup>ו</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הִפְהֵן לְכוּ לְשָׁלוֹם נִכַּח יְהוָה דְּרַכְכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכוּ־בָהּ: {פ}

<sup>1</sup> In those days, there was no king in Israel. Now in those days, the tribe of the Danites was seeking for itself a territory to live in, because, up until then, no inheritance had fallen to them among the tribes of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> From their clan the Danites sent five brave men from the whole number of their clan, from Zorah and Eshtaol to reconnoitre the country and explore it. They said to them, "Go and explore the country." The five men came to the highlands of Ephraim and to Micah's house, and spent the night there. <sup>3</sup> When they were near Micah's house, they recognised the voice of the young Levite, and turning that way, they said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing here? What is keeping you here?" <sup>4</sup> He answered, "Micah has done such and such for me. He pays me a wage and I act as his priest." <sup>5</sup> They replied, "Then consult God and find out for us whether our journey will be successful." <sup>6</sup> The priest replied, "Go in peace; the journey you are making is under the eye of Yahweh."

## JUDGES 18

<sup>1</sup> The Danites could not hold their territory and were expelled by the Amorites, according to 1:34–35.

<sup>2</sup> The NJB, following the LXX, omits 'from the whole number of their clan'.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase 'recognised the voice' probably means that his speech was Judahite (i.e. southern) like their own, not Israelite (i.e., northern).

<sup>4</sup> Although presented as a direct quotation, the phrase 'such and such' appears to be the narrator's summary of what the Levite really said.

<sup>5</sup> Here, to 'consult Yahweh' refers to divination.

<sup>6</sup> NETB has 'in confidence' in place of 'in peace', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

וַיֵּלְכוּ חֲמִשָּׁתָּהּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיָּבֹאוּ לִישָׁה וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־  
הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בְּקִרְבָּהּ יוֹשְׁבֵת־לְבֶטֶחַ כְּמִשְׁפַּט צִדְנִים  
שֶׁקֶט וּבֶטֶחַ וְאִין־מַכְלִים דְּבַר בְּאַרְץ יֹרֵשׁ עֶזֶר  
וּרְחוּקִים הָמָּה מִצִּידָנִים וְדָבַר אִין־לָהֶם עִם־אָדָם:  
<sup>ח</sup> וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־אֲחֵיהֶם צֹרַח וְאַשְׁתָּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם  
אֲחֵיהֶם מָה אַתֶּם: <sup>ט</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ קוּמָה וְנַעֲלֶה עֲלֵיהֶם  
כִּי רָאִינוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְהִנֵּה טוֹבָה מְאֹד וְאַתֶּם  
מַחֲשִׁים אֶל־תַּעֲצֹלוּ לָלֶכֶת לָבֹא לָרֶשֶׁת אֶת־  
הָאָרֶץ: <sup>י</sup> כְּבָאֲכֶם תָּבֹאוּ אֶל־עַם בֶּטֶחַ וְהָאָרֶץ  
רַחֲבַת יָדַיִם כִּי־נָתַנָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיַדְכֶם מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
אִין־שָׁם מַחֲסוֹר כָּל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ: <sup>יא</sup> וַיִּסְעוּ  
מִשָּׁם מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי מִצֹּרַח וּמֵאַשְׁתָּאֵל נֶשֶׁת־  
מֵאוֹת אִישׁ חֲגוֹר כָּלִי מִלְחָמָה: <sup>יב</sup> וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ  
בְּקִרְיַת יַעֲרִים בִּיהוּדָה עַל־כֵּן קָרְאוּ לַמְּקוֹם הַהוּא

<sup>7</sup> Then, the five men set out and they came to Laish. They saw that the people there lived in security like the Sidonians, peaceful and trusting; for, they lacked nothing on earth and they possessed wealth, and that they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. <sup>8</sup> When they came to their kinsfolk at Zorah and Eshtaol, they asked, "How did it go?" <sup>9</sup> They answered, "Up, and let us march against them, for we have seen the country and it is very good; but you – why stand there speechless? Set out for Laish immediately and take possession of the country. <sup>10</sup> When you reach it, you will find a defenceless people. The country is wide; God has put in your power a place where there is nothing lacking of all that men can want on earth." <sup>11</sup> Six hundred men of the tribe of the Danites, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. <sup>12</sup> They went up and camped at Kiriath-Jearim in Judah; and, for this reason, the camp is still called the Camp of Dan

<sup>7</sup> In place of 'for, they lacked nothing on earth and possessed wealth', here loosely following the NRSV, the NJB has 'that there was no lack or shortage of any sort in the territory' as a minimal emendation of a doubtful text. In place of 'with anyone', here following the MT, the LXX (Codex Alexandrinus) and Symmachus, have 'with Syria' (μετὰ Συρίας); this reading, followed by the NJB & NRSV, presupposes אֲרָם ('Aram') rather than אָדָם.

<sup>8</sup> The literal translation of 'kinsfolk' is 'brothers'.

<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX, adds, "We went and passed through the country as far as Laish. We saw that the people there live in security like the Sidonians. They are far from Sidon and have no relations with Aram." (ὅτι εἰσῆλθαμεν καὶ ἐνεπεριπατήσαμεν ἐν τῇ γῇ ἕως Λαισα καὶ εἶδομεν τὸν λαὸν τὸν κατοικοῦντα ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν ἐλπίδι κατὰ τὸ σύγκριμα τῶν Σιδωνίων, καὶ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντες ἐκ Σιδῶνος, καὶ λόγος οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς μετὰ Συρίας.)

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'wide' is 'broad of hands', an idiom meaning 'wide on both sides'.

<sup>11</sup> Literally, "They journeyed from there, from the tribe of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men, equipped with weapons of war."

<sup>12</sup> The NRSV uses the Hebrew name, 'Mahaneh-Dan' (מַחֲנֵה־דָן), for 'The Camp of Dan'.

מִחְנֵה־דָן עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אַחֲרֵי קִרְיַת יַעֲרִים:  
 י' וַיַּעֲבְרוּ מִשָּׁם הַר־אֶפְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־בֵּית מִיכָה:  
 י" וַיַּעֲנוּ חֲמֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הַהֲלָכִים לְרֹגֶל אֶת־  
 הָאָרֶץ לֵישׁ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־אֲחֵיהֶם הַיִּדְעָתָם כִּי יֵשׁ  
 בַּבָּתִּים הָאֵלֶּה אֲפֹד וְתִרְפִּים וַפֶּסֶל וּמִסְכָּה וְעַתָּה  
 דַּעוּ מֵה־תַּעֲשׂוּ: טו וַיִּסּוּרוּ שָׁמָּה וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּית־  
 הַנַּעַר הַלֵּוִי בֵּית מִיכָה וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ־לּוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם: טז וְשֵׁשׁ־  
 מֵאוֹת אִישׁ חֲגוּרִים כָּלִי מִלְחָמָתָם נֹצְעִים פָּתַח  
 הַשַּׁעַר אֲשֶׁר מִבְּנֵי־דָן: י" וַיַּעֲלוּ חֲמֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים  
 הַהֲלָכִים לְרֹגֶל אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה לִקְחוּ אֶת־  
 הַפֶּסֶל וְאֶת־הָאֲפֹד וְאֶת־הַתִּרְפִּים וְאֶת־הַמִּסְכָּה  
 וְהַכֹּהֵן נֹצֵץ פָּתַח הַשַּׁעַר וְשֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַחֲגוּרִים  
 כָּלִי הַמִּלְחָמָה: י" וְאֵלֶּה בָּאוּ בֵּית מִיכָה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־  
 פֶּסֶל הָאֲפֹד וְאֶת־הַתִּרְפִּים וְאֶת־הַמִּסְכָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 אֲלֵיהֶם הַכֹּהֵן מָה אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים: יט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ  
 הַחֲרָשׁ שִׁים־יָדְךָ עַל־פִּיךָ וְלֹךְ עִמָּנוּ וְהָיָה־לָּנוּ לֵאב  
 וּלְכֹהֵן הַטּוֹב | הַיּוֹתֵד כֹּהֵן לְבֵית אִישׁ אֶחָד אוֹ

today. It lies to the west of Kiriath-Jearim.<sup>13</sup> From there, they passed on to the highlands of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.<sup>14</sup> Then, the five men who had been to reconnoitre the country (that is, Laish) spoke to their brothers and said, “Do you know that there is an ephod in these houses, and teraphim, and a carved image (and an idol cast in metal)? So, now think what you have to do.”<sup>15</sup> They turned aside and went to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and greeted him.<sup>16</sup> While the six hundred men of the Danites, armed for war, stood at the threshold of the gate,<sup>17</sup> the five who had set out to explore the country went on into the house and took the carved image and ephod and teraphim (and the idol of cast metal). The priest remained at the threshold of the gate with the six hundred men armed for war.<sup>18</sup> These men, having entered Micah’s house, took the carved image, the ephod and the teraphim (and the idol of cast metal); but the priest said, “What are you doing?”<sup>19</sup> They answered, “Hush! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us. You shall be a father and a priest for us. Is it better for you to be a priest for one man’s household,

<sup>13</sup> The NRSV & NETB have ‘hill country’ in place of ‘highlands’, here following the NJB.

<sup>14</sup> The NJB, following the LXX (Codex Alexandrinus) omits the phrase ‘that is, Laish’, here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>15</sup> The literal translation of ‘greeted him’ is ‘asked him concerning peace’.

<sup>16</sup> The literal translation of ‘armed for war’ is ‘equipped with the weapons of war’.

<sup>17</sup> In place of ‘took’, here following the NJB, NETB has ‘stole’.

<sup>18</sup> NETB has ‘personal idols’ in place of ‘teraphim’, here following the MT (הַתִּרְפִּים), NJB & NRSV.

<sup>19</sup> NETB rephrases the question: “Wouldn’t it be better to be a priest for a whole Israelite tribe than for just one man’s family?”



הַיּוֹתֵד כֹּהֵן לְשֹׁבֵט וּלְמִשְׁפַּחָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּיטֵב  
לֵב הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶפֹּד וְאֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וְאֶת־  
הַפֶּסֶל וַיָּבֵא בִקְרֵב הָעָם: <sup>כא</sup> וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיִּשְׁיֻמוּ  
אֶת־הַטֹּף וְאֶת־הַמִּקְנֶה וְאֶת־הַכְּבוֹדָה לִפְנֵיהֶם:  
<sup>כב</sup> הֵמָּה הִרְחִיקוּ מִבֵּית מִיכָה וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר  
בְּבָתִּים אֲשֶׁר עִם־בֵּית מִיכָה נִזְעְקוּ וַיִּדְּבִיקוּ אֶת־  
בְּנֵי־דָן: <sup>כג</sup> וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי־דָן וַיִּסְבּוּ פָנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
לְמִיכָה מַה־לָּךְ כִּי נִזְעַקְתָּ: <sup>כד</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי  
אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי לְקַחְתָּם וְאֶת־הַכֹּהֵן וְתֵלְכוּ וּמַה־לִּי  
עוֹד וּמַה־זֶּה תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי מַה־לָּךְ: <sup>כה</sup> וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו  
בְּנֵי־דָן אֶל־תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלְךָ עִמָּנוּ פֶּן־יִפְּגְעוּ בָּכֶם  
אֲנָשִׁים מְרִי נָפֶשׁ וְאִסְפָּתָה נַפְשְׁךָ וְנִפֶּשׁ בֵּיתְךָ:  
<sup>כו</sup> וַיֵּלְכוּ בְנֵי־דָן לְדַרְכָּם וַיֵּרָא מִיכָה כִּי־חֲזָקִים הֵמָּה  
מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּפֶּן וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ: <sup>כז</sup> וְהֵמָּה לָקְחוּ אֶת  
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה מִיכָה וְאֶת־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר הָיָה־לּוֹ וַיָּבֵאוּ

or to be a priest for a tribe and a clan in Israel?" <sup>20</sup> The priest was overjoyed; he took the ephod and teraphim and the carved image and set off in the middle of the band of men. <sup>21</sup> They went on their way, putting the women, children, cattle, and valuables in front of them. <sup>22</sup> They had gone some way from Micah's house when the men with houses next to his gathered and caught up with the Danites. <sup>23</sup> As they shouted after them, the Danites turned round and asked Micah, "Why have you gathered together?" <sup>24</sup> He said, "You have taken away the gods I made and my priest and go on your way; what have I left? How can you ask me, "What is this about?" <sup>25</sup> The Danites answered, "Let us hear no more from you, or men may lose their tempers and fall on you. You may lose your life and those of your household." <sup>26</sup> Then the Danites went on their way; and, since Micah saw they were stronger, he turned and went home. <sup>27</sup> The Danites, having taken what Micah had made and his priest, came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting,

<sup>20</sup> In place of 'was overjoyed', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'accepted the offer' and NETB has 'was happy'.

<sup>21</sup> The NJB has 'left by the way they came' in place of 'went on their way', here following the NRSV.

<sup>22</sup> The NJB has 'neighbours' in place of 'men', here following the MT & NRSV.

<sup>23</sup> In place of 'why have you gathered together', here following NETB, the NJB has 'what is all this shouting about'.

<sup>24</sup> The NJB has the singular 'God' in place of 'gods', here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

<sup>25</sup> In place of 'you may lose your life', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'you may bring about your own destruction'.

<sup>26</sup> After 'stronger', NETB adds (for clarity) 'than he'.

<sup>27</sup> For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Taking with them the god that Micah had made and the priest who had served him, the Danites marched against Laish, against a peaceful and trusting people. They slaughtered all the inhabitants and set the town on fire."

עַל-לֵישׁ עַל-עַם שָׁקֵט וּבִטָּח וַיָּכּוּ אוֹתָם לְפִי-חֶרֶב  
וְאֶת-הָעִיר שָׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ: <sup>כח</sup> וְאֵין מַצִּיל כִּי רְחוֹקָה-  
הָיָא מִצִּידוֹן וְדָבָר אֵין-לָהֶם עִם-אָדָם וְהָיָא בְּעַמָּק  
אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית-רְחוֹב וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת-הָעִיר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָּהּ:  
<sup>כט</sup> וַיִּקְרְאוּ שֵׁם-הָעִיר דָּן בְּשֵׁם דָּן אֲבִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר  
יוֹלָד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאוֹלָם לֵישׁ שֵׁם-הָעִיר לְרָאשָׁנָה:  
<sup>ל</sup> וַיִּקְיֵמוּ לָהֶם בְּנֵי-דָן אֶת-הַפֶּסֶל וַיְהוֹנָתָן בֶּן-גֵּרְשֹׁם  
בֶּן-מְנַשֶּׁה הוּא וּבָנָיו הָיוּ כֹהֲנִים לְשִׁבְט הַדָּנִי עַד-  
יוֹם גְּלוֹת הָאָרֶץ: <sup>לא</sup> וַיִּשְׁיֵמוּ לָהֶם אֶת-פֶּסֶל מִיכָה  
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כָּל-יְמֵי הַיּוֹת בֵּית-הָאֱלֹהִים  
בְּשִׁלֹּה: {פ}

put them to the sword, and burned down the city. <sup>28</sup> There was no one to help the city because it was a long way from Sidon and had no relations with anyone. It lay in a valley near Beth-Rehob. They rebuilt the city and settled in it, <sup>29</sup> and called it Dan after Dan their father who had been born to Israel, but the name of the city was originally Laish. <sup>30</sup> The Danites erected the carved image for their own use. Jonathon son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons after him were priests for the tribe of Dan until the day when the inhabitants of the country went into exile. <sup>31</sup> The carved image that Micah had made they enshrined for their own use, and there it stayed as long as the house of God remained at Shiloh.

<sup>28</sup> In place of 'anyone', the NJB has 'the Aramaeans' and the NRSV has 'Aram' (see #7).

<sup>29</sup> NETB has 'who was one of Israel's sons' in place of 'who had been born to Israel', here following the MT, NJB & NRSV.

<sup>30</sup> This verse is an addition. To a doublet in v. 31, it adds a note on the priesthood of this first Danite sanctuary. That its first ministration was of Levitical descent is very likely, although it shocked the copyists, who added a ך above the line, thus transforming the name 'Moses' (מֹשֶׁה) into 'Manasseh' (מְנַשֶּׁה). The 'exile' mentioned here is the deportation following Tiglath-Pileser's campaign of 734 BCE. Note that the nun in בֶּן-מְנַשֶּׁה is raised ('suspended'), just as it appears in almost all Hebrew MSS.

<sup>31</sup> The end of the verse, in contradiction with v. 30, is another addition and takes as point of reference the closing of the sanctuary at Shiloh, after the capture of the Ark in the days of Samuel (1S 4).

## JUDGES 19

## שופטים פרק יט

א ויהי בימים ההם ומלך אין בישראל ויהי איש לוי גר בירכתי הר-אפרים ויקח-לו אשה פילגש מבית לחם יהודה: ב ותזנה עליו פילגשו ותלך מאתו אל-בית אביה אל-בית לחם יהודה ותהי שם ימים ארבעה חדשים: ג ויקם אישה וילך אחריה לדבר על-לבה להשיבו להשיבה ונער עמו וצמד חמרים ותביאהו בית אביה ויראהו אבי הנערה וישמח לקראתו: ד ויחזקבו חתנו אבי הנערה וישב אתו שלשת ימים ויאכלו וישתו וילינו שם: ה ויהי ביום הרביעי וישכימו בבקר ויקם ללכת ויאמר אבי הנערה אל-חתנו סעד לבך פת-לחם ואחר תלכו: ו וישבו ויאכלו שניהם יחדו וישתו ויאמר אבי הנערה אל-האיש הואל-נא ולין וייטב לבך: ז ויקם האיש ללכת ויפצרבו

<sup>1</sup> In those days, when there was no king in Israel, a certain Levite, who lived deep in the highlands of Ephraim, took as concubine a woman from Bethlehem in Judah. <sup>2</sup> She was angry with him, left him and returned to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there for four months. <sup>3</sup> Her husband set out to visit her, to reason with her and fetch her back; he had his servant and two donkeys with him. When she brought him to her father's house, the girl's father saw him and came joyfully to meet him. <sup>4</sup> His father-in-law, the girl's father, made him stay with him for three days; they ate and drank, and spent the night there. <sup>5</sup> On the fourth day they got up early, and the Levite was preparing to leave when the girl's father said to his son-in-law, "Have a bite of food to fortify yourself; you can leave later." <sup>6</sup> So, they sat down and ate and drank together; then the girl's father said to the man, "Come, spend tonight here and enjoy yourself." <sup>7</sup> When the man got up to go, the

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- <sup>1</sup> The literal translation of 'a certain Levite' (here following the NRSV) is 'a man, a Levite'.
- <sup>2</sup> An alternative reading of 'was angry with him' is 'was unfaithful to him'; many have understood the verb וַתִּזְנֶה as being from זָנָה ('to be a prostitute'), but it may be derived from a root meaning 'to be angry' attested in Accadian.
- <sup>3</sup> In place of 'when she brought him to', here following the MT & NETB, the NJB, following the LXX (καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἔως) have 'as he approached'.
- <sup>4</sup> The NRSV, following the LXX, ends the verse with 'and he stayed there'.
- <sup>5</sup> The literal translation of 'have a bite of food to fortify yourself' is 'sustain your heart with a bit of food'.
- <sup>6</sup> Before 'spend the night', the NJB adds 'say you will'.
- <sup>7</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...his father-in-law persuaded him and he again spent the night there."

חָתָנוּ וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם: <sup>ח</sup> וַיִּשְׁלַם בַּבֹּקֶר בַּיּוֹם  
הַחֲמִישִׁי לָלֶכֶת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה סַעֲדָנָא  
לְבַבְךָ וְהַתְמַהְמְהוּ עַד־נִטּוֹת הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאכְלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם:  
<sup>ט</sup> וַיָּקָם הָאִישׁ לָלֶכֶת הוּא וּפִילְגָשׁוֹ וַנַּעֲרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ  
חָתָנוּ אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה הִנֵּה נָא רָפָה הַיּוֹם לַעֲרֹב לִינוּ-  
נָא הִנֵּה חֲנוֹת הַיּוֹם לֵין פֹּה וַיִּיטֵב לְבַבְךָ  
וְהַשְׁכַּמְתָּ מָחָר לְדַרְכְּכֶם וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְאַהֲלֶיךָ: <sup>י</sup> וְלֹא-  
אָבָה הָאִישׁ לָלוֹן וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּבֹא עַד־נֶכַח יְבוּס  
הִיא יְרוּשָׁלַם וְעַמּוֹ צֶמֶד חֲמוֹרִים חֲבוּשִׁים וּפִילְגָשׁוֹ  
עִמּוֹ: <sup>יא</sup> הֵם עַם־יְבוּס וְהַיּוֹם רֹד מָאֵד וַיֹּאמֶר הַנַּעַר  
אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו לֵכֶה־נָּא וְנִסּוּרָה אֶל־עִיר־הַיְּבוּסִי הַזֹּאת  
וְנִלְין בָּהּ: <sup>יב</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲדֹנָיו לֹא נִסּוּר אֶל־עִיר  
נִכְרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה וְעַבְרָנוּ עַד־  
גִּבְעָה: <sup>יג</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר לַנַּעַר לֵךְ וְנִקְרְבָה בְּאַחַד  
הַמְּקֹמֹת וְלִנּוּ בַּגִּבְעָה אוֹ בַּרְמָה: <sup>יד</sup> וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ  
וַתָּבֹא לָהֶם הַשָּׁמֶשׁ אֶצֶל הַגִּבְעָה אֲשֶׁר לְבִנְיָמִן:

father-in-law urged him, and he spent another night there. <sup>8</sup> On the fifth morning, he got up early to leave, but the girl's father said to him, "Eat something first, I beg you." So, he stayed on until the day began to decline and the two of them ate together. <sup>9</sup> When the man, with his concubine and servant, got up to go, his father-in-law, the girl's father, said to him, "Look, the day is drawing towards evening. Spend the night here and enjoy yourself. Early tomorrow you can go to your tent." <sup>10</sup> But the man would not stay the night; he got up and set off, and came to Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). He had with him two saddled donkeys and his concubine. <sup>11</sup> When they were near Jebus, the day was fast going. The servant said to his master, "Come, let us turn aside to this Jebusite town and lodge there." <sup>12</sup> His master said, "We will not enter a town of foreigners, of people who are not Israelites; we will go on to Gibeah instead." <sup>13</sup> Then he said to his servant, "Come on, we will go to one of these places and lodge in Gibeah or Ramah." <sup>14</sup> So, they passed on and went on their way, and the sun set on them near Gibeah in Benjamin;

<sup>8</sup> 'He stayed on' is a conjectural correction; the MT has 'stay'. After 'ate', the NRSV, following the LXX (*καὶ ἔπινον*), adds 'and drank'.

<sup>9</sup> The NJB has 'husband' in place of 'man', here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

<sup>10</sup> The name 'Jebus' (יְבוּס) is found only here, in v. 11 and in 1Ch 11:4ff. It is derived from the name of its inhabitants at the time of the conquest (the Jebusites) but, in fact, the city was always called Jerusalem. At the end of this verse, the NJB adds 'and his servant'.

<sup>11</sup> The NJB has 'Jerusalem' in place of 'Jebus', here following the MT (יְבוּס), NRSV & NETB.

<sup>12</sup> 'Gibeah' (גִּבְעָה) is identified with Tell El-Ful, 6 Km north of Jerusalem; it became Saul's royal residence (1S 15:34).

<sup>13</sup> 'Ramah' (רָמָה) is identified with er-Ram, 8 Km north of Jerusalem.

<sup>14</sup> The literal translation of 'in Benjamin' is 'which belongs to Benjamin'.

<sup>טו</sup> וַיִּסְרוּ שָׁם לָבוֹא לָלוֹן בְּגִבְעָה וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּרֶחֱבֹה  
הָעִיר וַאֲזַן אִישׁ מֵאֶסְפֵּי-אוֹתָם הַבֵּיתָה לָלוֹן:  
<sup>טז</sup> וְהִנֵּה | אִישׁ זָקֵן בָּא מִן-מַעֲשָׂהוּ מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה בָּעֶרֶב  
וְהָאִישׁ מֵהָר אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא-גַּר בְּגִבְעָה וְאֲנָשֵׁי  
הַמָּקוֹם בְּנֵי יְמִינִי: <sup>יז</sup> וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת-הָאִישׁ  
הָאֶרֶץ בְּרֶחֱבֹה הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ הַזֶּקֶן אָנָּה תֵּלֵךְ  
וּמֵאֵין תָּבוֹא: <sup>יח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו עֲבָרִים אֲנַחְנוּ מִבֵּית-  
לָחֶם יְהוּדָה עַד-יִרְכָּתִי הָרֶאֱפָרַיִם מִשָּׁם אָנֹכִי  
וְאַלֶּךְ עַד-בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וְאֶת-בֵּית יְהוָה אָנִי  
הֹלֵךְ וַאֲזַן אִישׁ מֵאֶסְפֵּי אוֹתֵי הַבֵּיתָה: <sup>יט</sup> וְגַם-תִּבֶּן  
גַּם-מִסְפּוֹא יֵשׁ לַחֲמוּרֵינוּ וְגַם לָחֶם וַיֵּן יֵשׁ-לִי  
וְלֹא מִתָּךְ וּלְנָעַר עַם-עַבְדֶּיךָ אֵין מִחֲסוֹר כָּל-דָּבָר:  
<sup>כ</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ הַזֶּקֶן שְׁלוֹם לָךְ רַק כָּל-מִחֲסוֹרְךָ  
עָלִי רַק בְּרֶחֱבֹה אֶל-תֵּלֵךְ: <sup>כא</sup> וַיָּבִיאוּהוּ לְבֵיתוֹ וַיִּבּוֹל  
וַיָּבֵל לַחֲמוּרִים וַיִּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:

<sup>15</sup> so, they turned that way to spend the night in Gibeah. He went in and sat down in the town square, but no one took them to spend the night.

<sup>16</sup> Then, at nightfall, an old man came their way; he was returning from his work in the fields. He was a man from the highlands of Ephraim, living in Gibeah, the men of the place being Benjaminites. <sup>17</sup> Raising his eyes, he saw the traveller sitting in the town square; the old man asked him, "Where have you come from? Where are you going?" <sup>18</sup> He said, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a place deep in the highlands of Ephraim. That is where I am from. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going home. No one has offered to take me in, <sup>19</sup> We your servants have straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and the woman and the young man along with us. We need nothing more" <sup>20</sup> The old man answered, "Peace to you! Let me see to all your needs; you cannot spend the night in the town square." <sup>21</sup> So, he took him into his house and gave the donkeys provender; they washed their feet, then ate and drank.

<sup>15</sup> At Gibeah in Benjamin, the only person prepared to take the Levite in is another Ephraimite (v. 16) and he is willing to fulfil the duties of hospitality to the point of heroism (v. 24). The Benjaminites of the town fall gravely short in this respect (v. 15) and their behaviour is monstrous.

<sup>16</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, "And look, an old man was coming from his work, from the field in the evening."

<sup>17</sup> The literal translation of 'the traveller' is 'the man, the traveller'.

<sup>18</sup> The phrase 'going home' is an emendation following the LXX (εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου), in line with v. 29; the MT has 'going to the house of Yahweh'.

<sup>19</sup> The NJB has 'provender' in place of 'fodder'.

<sup>20</sup> In place of 'peace', here following the MT, NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'welcome'.

<sup>21</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.



כב הָמָהּ מִיִּטְיָבִים אֶת־לִבָּם וְהִנֵּה אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר  
 אַנְשֵׁי בְנֵי־בְלִיעַל נִסְבּוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת מִתְדַּפְּקִים עַל־  
 הַדֶּלֶת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּקֶן לֵאמֹר  
 הוֹצֵא אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ וְנִדְעֶנּוּ:  
 כג וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם  
 אֶל־אֲחִי אֶל־תִּרְעוּ נָא אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר־בָּא הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה  
 אֶל־בֵּיתִי אֶל־תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַנִּבְלָה הַזֹּאת: כד הִנֵּה  
 בְּתִי הַבְּתוּלָה וּפִילְגָּשָׁהּ אוֹצִיָּאהָ־נָּא אוֹתָם וְעֲנוּ  
 אוֹתָם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְלֹאִישׁ הַזֶּה לֹא  
 תַּעֲשׂוּ דִבָּר הַנִּבְלָה הַזֹּאת: כה וְלֹא־אָבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים  
 לִשְׁמֹעַ לוֹ וַיַּחֲזֹק הָאִישׁ בְּפִילְגָּשׁוֹ וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם  
 הַחוּץ וַיִּדְעוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיַּתְעַלְלוּ־בָּהּ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה עַד־  
 הַבֹּקֶר וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהָ בַּעֲלוֹת כַּעֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר: כו וַתָּבֹא  
 הָאִשָּׁה לַפְּנוֹת הַבֹּקֶר וַתִּפֹּל פֶּתַח בֵּית־הָאִישׁ  
 אֲשֶׁר־אֲדוֹנֶיהָ שָׁם עַד־הָאֹר: כז וַיָּקָם אֲדֹנֶיהָ בַּבֹּקֶר

22 As they were making their hearts merry, suddenly, some men from the town, who were scoundrels, came crowding together round the house; they battered on the door and said to the old man, the master of the house, "Send out the man who has come into your house, so that we can have sex with him." 23 Then the master of the house went out to them and said, "No, my brothers, I implore you, do not commit this crime. This man has become my guest; do not commit such an infamy. 24 Here is my daughter, she is a virgin, and his concubine; I will give her to you. Possess her, do what you please to her, but do not commit such an infamy against this man." 25 The men would not listen to him, so the Levite took his concubine and brought her out to them. They had intercourse with her and outraged her all night until morning; when dawn was breaking, they let her go. 26 At daybreak, the girl came and fell on the threshold of her master's host and stayed there until it was full day. 27 In the morning, her master got up and opened the door of

22 To forestall his own rape by the men of Gibeah, the Levite offers them his concubine.

23 The term translated as 'infamy' is applied to grave transgressions of the divine Law, above all moral transgressions, which, in reaction to the licentiousness of Canaanite cults, are regarded as peculiarly reprehensible. Here, whatever crime was intended, it was compounded by the breach of the sacred laws of hospitality.

24 The NJB omits 'and his concubine'.

25 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

26 The term here translated 'master' is plural; the plural indicates degree here and emphasises the Levite's absolute sovereignty over the woman.

27 The text implies that the woman died as a result of her night of horror.

וַיִּפְתַּח דְּלֶתוֹת הַבַּיִת וַיֵּצֵא לֵלְכַת לְדַרְכּוֹ וְהִנֵּה  
הָאִשָּׁה פִּילְגָּשׁוֹ נֹפֶלֶת פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת וַיְדִיחַ עַל-הַסֶּף:  
כ<sup>ח</sup> וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ קוּמִי וְנִלְכֶה וְאִין עֲנֵה וַיִּקְחָהּ עַל-  
הַחֲמֹר וַיִּקֶּם הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִקְמוֹ: כט<sup>ט</sup> וַיָּבֹא אֶל-  
בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמֶּאֱכָלֶת וַיַּחֲזֹק בְּפִילְגָּשׁוֹ וַיִּנְתְּחָהּ  
לְעֶצְמֶיהָ לְשָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר נִתְחָם וַיִּשְׁלַחַהּ בְּכָל גְּבוּל  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל<sup>ל</sup> וְהָיָה כָּל-הָרְאָה וְאָמַר לֹא-נִהְיְתָה וְלֹא-  
נִרְאָתָה כְּזֹאת לְמַיּוֹם עֲלֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ  
מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שְׂמֹנוּ-לָכֶם עָלֶיהָ עֲצוּ  
וְדַבְּרוּ: {פ}

the house; when he went out to go on his way, he saw the woman who had been his concubine lying at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. <sup>28</sup> He said to her, “Stand up: we must go.” There was no answer. Then he put her on his donkey, rose up, and began the journey home. <sup>29</sup> When he arrived at his house, he picked up a knife, took hold of his concubine and, limb by limb, cut her into twelve pieces; then, he sent her all through the land of Israel. <sup>30</sup> And all who saw it declared, “Never has such a thing been done or been seen since the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt. Ponder on this, discuss it; then give your verdict”

<sup>28</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “...and the man took her on the donkey and arose and went to his place.”

<sup>29</sup> This grim appeal for vengeance is addressed to all Israel (see 20:1–2, 10); in 1S 11:7, Saul calls up the tribes of Israel in strikingly similar fashion. This might be taken to stress the solidarity of the tribes when faced with a gross breach of the religious law; their common reaction, however, would appear to be unique, and it is more likely that the scope of the original story has been extended from a more limited encounter between Ephraim and Benjamin. Hence, it should probably be regarded as one further episode in Ephraim’s struggle for tribal supremacy (see #8:1 and 12:1).

<sup>30</sup> At the beginning of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (Codex Alexandrinus – *καὶ ἐνετείλατο τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, οἷς ἐξαπέστειλεν, λέγων Τάδε ἐρεῖτε πρὸς πάντα ἄνδρα Ἰσραὴλ Εἰ γέγονεν κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης*) adds, “And he instructed his messengers as follows, “Thus you shall say to all the Israelites, “Has any man seen such a thing from the day the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, until this very day?””

## JUDGES 20

## שופטים פרק כ

א וַיֵּצְאוּ כָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתִּקְהַל הָעֵדָה כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִדָּן וְעַד־בְּאֵר שָׁבַע וְאֶרֶץ הַגִּלְעָד אֶל־יְהוָה הַמִּצְפָּה: ב וַיָּתִיצְבוּ פָּנֹת כָּל־הָעָם כָּל שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקֶהֱל עִם הָאֱלֹהִים אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אַלְפֵי אִישׁ רֶגֶלִי שְׁלֹף־חֶרֶב: {פ}

ג וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ בְנֵי בְנִימִן כִּי־עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמִּצְפָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דַּבְּרוּ אֵיכָה נְהִיְתָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת: ד וַיַּעַן הָאִישׁ הַלֵּוִי אִישׁ הָאִשָּׁה הַנֶּרְצָחָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּבְעָתָה אֲשֶׁר לְבְנִימִן בָּאתִי אֲנִי וּפִילִגְשִׁי לָלוֹן: ה וַיִּקְמוּ עָלַי בַּעֲלֵי הַגִּבְעָה וַיִּסְבּוּ עָלַי אֶת־הַבֵּית לַיְלָה אוֹתִי דָמוֹ לְהָרֹג וְאֶת־פִּילִגְשִׁי עָנוּ וַתָּמָת: ו וְאֶחָז בְּפִילִגְשִׁי וְאַנְתָּחָה וְאֶשְׁלָחָה בְּכָל־שָׂדֶה נַחֲלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי עָשׂוּ זָמָה וַנִּבְלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ז הִנֵּה כָלְכֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָבּוּ לָכֶם דָּבָר וְעַצָּה

<sup>1</sup> So, all the sons of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba and the land of Gilead, and the community assembled as one man before Yahweh at Mizpah. <sup>2</sup> The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel were present at this assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers bearing arms.

<sup>3</sup> (Now, the Benjaminites heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the sons of Israel said, "Tell us how this crime was committed." <sup>4</sup> The Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, spoke up, "I came with my concubine to Gibeah in Benjamin, to spend the night. <sup>5</sup> The men of Gibeah rose against me in the night and surrounded the house; they wanted to kill me, and they raped my concubine to death. <sup>6</sup> Then I took my concubine, cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the territory that Israel inherited because they have committed an infamy in Israel. <sup>7</sup> So now, you Israelites, all of you, give your

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- <sup>1</sup> 'From Dan to Beersheba' is a stereotyped formula, used outside the Pentateuch, to indicate the northern and southern extremities of the territory occupied by Israel (see 1S 3:20, 2S 3:10, 1K 5:5).
- <sup>2</sup> The figure of 400,000, like those in the description of the battles (see vv. 15, 21), is obviously exaggerated.
- <sup>3</sup> The NJB does not parenthesise the 1<sup>st</sup> sentence but ends it with an ellipsis.
- <sup>4</sup> The literal translation of 'the Levite' is 'the man, the Levite'.
- <sup>5</sup> After 'house', the NJB adds 'where I was staying'.
- <sup>6</sup> The literal translation of 'infamy' is 'wicked and disgraceful (thing)'.
- <sup>7</sup> For this verse, the NJB reads, "You have all met together here, men of Israel. Discuss the matter and make your decision here and now."

הָלָם: <sup>ח</sup> וַיָּקֻם כָּל-הָעָם כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד לֵאמֹר לֹא נִלְךָ אִישׁ לְאַהֲלָיו וְלֹא נָסֹר אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ: <sup>ט</sup> וַעֲתָה זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה לַגִּבְעָה עָלֶיהָ בְּגֹרֶל: <sup>י</sup> וְלִקְחוּנוּ עֲשָׂרָה אַנְשִׁים לַמָּאָה לְכָל שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֵאָה לְאַלְפִּי וְאַלְפִּי לַרִבְבָּה לַקַּחַת צֹדָה לָעַם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְבוֹאֵם לַגִּבְעָה בְּנִימָן כְּכֹל-הַנִּבְלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>יא</sup> וַיֵּאָסֶף כָּל-אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-הָעִיר כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד חֲבָרִים: {פ}

<sup>יב</sup> וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַנְשִׁים בְּכָל-שְׁבֹטֵי בְנִימָן לֵאמֹר מָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר נְהִיתָה בָּכֶם: <sup>יג</sup> וַעֲתָה תָנוּ אֶת-הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּנִי-בְלִיעַל אֲשֶׁר בִּגְבְּעָה וְנִמְיָתָם וְנִבְעֶרָה רָעָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא אָבוּ [בְּנִי] בְּנִימָן לִשְׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹל אַחֵיהֶם בְּנִי-יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>יד</sup> וַיֵּאָסְפוּ בְנֵי-בְנִימָן מִן-הָעָרִים הַגִּבְעָתָה לְצֹאת

advice and counsel here.” <sup>8</sup> All the people stood up as one man and said, “Not one of us will go to his tent, not one of us will return to his house. <sup>9</sup> This is what we shall do to Gibeah: we shall draw lots <sup>10</sup> and select ten men from a hundred from each tribe of Israel, and a hundred from a thousand, and a thousand from ten thousand. They will collect food for the army, for those who will go and punish Gibeah in Benjamin for the infamy they have committed in Israel.” <sup>11</sup> So, all the men of Israel mustered against that town, united as one man.

<sup>12</sup> The tribes of Israel sent messengers out through the whole tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has been committed among you? <sup>13</sup> Come, therefore, give up these men, these scoundrels from Gibeah, so that we may put them to death and banish this wickedness from the midst of Israel.” However, the Benjaminites would not listen to their brother Israelites. <sup>14</sup> The Benjaminites left their towns

<sup>8</sup> The literal translation of ‘return’ is ‘turn aside’.

<sup>9</sup> In place of ‘we shall draw lots’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘we will go up against it by lot’; the MT has ‘against her by lot’: probably, the verb ‘we will go up’ (נַעֲלָה) has been accidentally omitted before ‘against her’ (עָלֶיהָ)

<sup>10</sup> The NRSV uses ‘repay’ in place of ‘punish’; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

<sup>11</sup> NETB has ‘as allies’ in place of ‘united as one man’, here following the MT & NJB.

<sup>12</sup> For ‘tribe’, the MT reads the plural but surely the singular, which is supported by the LXX (φυλῆς) and Vg (tribum) is preferable here.

<sup>13</sup> The word, בְּנִי, is here included in brackets, following the MAM text; the Mechon Mamre text has it in parentheses (normally used for Ketiv/Qere variants) and precedes it with five spaces. However, as both this and the alternate word are pointed, it is not clear here what the highlighting represents. The WLC text has a footnote to the effect that a word used differs from the conventional one used for the Qere.

<sup>14</sup> The account of the battle of Gibeah is similar both in incident and in style to the account of the capture of Ai (Jos 7–8). Rather than allow an editorial influence of Joshua on Judges, it is better to hold that the fictitious account of the latter has been modelled on this historic victory.

לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>טו</sup> וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ בְנֵי בְנִימִן  
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא מִהֶעָרִים עֹשִׂים וְשֹׂשֶׁה אֶלֶף אִישׁ  
שֶׁלֶף חֶרֶב לְבַד מִיִּשְׁבֵּי הַגִּבְעָה הַתְּפֹקְדוּ שִׁבְעַת  
מֵאוֹת אִישׁ בַּחֹר: <sup>טז</sup> מִכָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה שִׁבְעַת מֵאוֹת  
אִישׁ בַּחֹר אֶטֶר יְדִימִינוּ כָּל־זֶה קָלַע בְּאַבֵּן אֶל־  
הַשְּׂעֵרָה וְלֹא יִחְטֹא: {פ}

<sup>יז</sup> וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַתְּפֹקְדוּ לְבַד מִבְּנֵימִן אַרְבַּע  
מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ שֶׁלֶף חֶרֶב כָּל־זֶה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה:  
<sup>יח</sup> וַיָּקֻמוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ בֵּית־אֵל וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ בָּאלֹהִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָנוּ בַתְּחִלָּה לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־  
בְּנֵי בְנִימִן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יְהוּדָה בַתְּחִלָּה: <sup>יט</sup> וַיָּקֻמוּ  
בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּבְקָר וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל־הַגִּבְעָה: <sup>כ</sup> וַיֵּצֵא אִישׁ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵימִן וַיַּעֲרְכוּ אֹתָם אִישׁ־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְחָמָה אֶל־הַגִּבְעָה: <sup>כא</sup> וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי־בְנִימִן  
מִן־הַגִּבְעָה וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בִּישְׂרָאֵל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׁנַיִם  
וָעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ אֶרֶץ: <sup>כב</sup> וַיִּתְּחַזַּק הָעָם אִישׁ

and mustered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites. <sup>15</sup> The Benjaminites from these various towns had counted their numbers that day: twenty-five thousand men who could handle the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah. <sup>16</sup> In this great army were seven hundred first-rate men who could fight with their left hand; every one of these could sling a stone at a hair and would not miss it.

<sup>17</sup> The men of Israel also took a count. Without Benjamin, there were four hundred thousand of them who could handle the sword; all experienced fighters. <sup>18</sup> They set off and went up to Bethel to consult God. The Israelites put the question, "Which of us should go out first to attack the Benjaminites?" Yahweh answered, "Judah shall go first." <sup>19</sup> Then, in the morning, the Israelites marched out and pitched their camp facing Gibeah. <sup>20</sup> Then, advancing to engage Benjamin, the Israelites drew up their line in front of the town; <sup>21</sup> but the Benjaminites sallied out from Gibeah and that day killed twenty-two thousand Israelites, who they left on the field. <sup>22</sup> The Israelites went and wept

<sup>15</sup> The MT appends to this verse, 'seven hundred picked men', a doublet of v. 16.

<sup>16</sup> On the significance of left-handed soldiers, see #3:15.

<sup>17</sup> For this verse, the NRSV reads, "And the Israelites, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand armed men, all of them warriors."

<sup>18</sup> 'Bethel', once known as 'Luz', had associations with both Abraham (Gn 12:8, 13:3) and Jacob (Gn 28:10-22); it is 22 Km north of Jerusalem.

<sup>19</sup> In place of 'pitched their camp facing Gibeah', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'encamped against Gibeah'.

<sup>20</sup> For this verse, the NRSV reads, "The Israelites went out to battle against Benjamin; and the Israelites drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah."

<sup>21</sup> The NRSV lacks the phrase 'who they left on the field', here following the NJB.

<sup>22</sup> In both the NJB and the NRSV, vv. 22 & 23 are transposed for the sake of the sense.



יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְפּוּ לַעֲרֹךְ מִלְחָמָה בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־עָרְכוּ  
שָׁם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן: כג וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְכוּ  
לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה עַד־הָעֶרֶב וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ בִיהוָה לֵאמֹר  
הֲאֻסִּיף לָגֶשֶׁת לַמִּלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי בְנִימֵן אַחִי  
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה עָלוּ אֵלָיו: {פ}

כד וַיִּקְרְבוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בְּנֵי בְנִימֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי:  
כה וַיֵּצֵא בְנִימֵן | לַקְרָאתָם | מִן־הַגִּבְעָה בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי  
וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד שְׁמֹנֶת עָשָׂר אֶלֶף אִישׁ  
אֶרֶצָה כָּל־אֵלֶּה שְׁלֹפֵי חָרֶב: כו וַיַּעֲלוּ כָל־בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית־אֵל וַיִּבְכוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם  
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּצְּמוּ בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא עַד־הָעֶרֶב וַיַּעֲלוּ  
עֹלוֹת וּשְׁלָמִים לִפְנֵי יְהוָה: כז וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בִּיהוָה וְשָׁם אֲרוֹן בְּרִית הָאֱלֹהִים בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם:  
כח וַפִּינָחָס בֶּן־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן עֹמֵד | לִפְנֵי בַּיָּמִים  
הָהֵם לֵאמֹר הֲאֻסִּיף עוֹד לָצֵאת לַמִּלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי־  
בְנִימֵן אַחִי אִם־אֶחָדָל וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה עָלוּ כִּי מָחָר

before Yahweh until evening; then they consulted Yahweh; they asked, "Shall we join battle again with the sons of our brother Benjamin?" Yahweh answered, "March against him."<sup>23</sup> Then the army of the people of Israel took heart afresh; and again, they drew up their line for battle, in the same place as the day before.

<sup>24</sup> This second day the Israelites advanced on the Benjaminites; <sup>25</sup> but again this second day Benjamin sallied out from Gibeah against them and killed eighteen thousand Israelites, who they left on the field; they could all handle the sword. <sup>26</sup> Then all the Israelites and the whole people went up to Bethel; they wept and sat in Yahweh's presence; they fasted all day until the evening and offered holocausts and peace offerings before Yahweh; <sup>27</sup> then the Israelites consulted Yahweh. The Ark of the Covenant of God was there in those days, <sup>28</sup> and Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron was the priest who ministered at it at that time. They said, "Ought we to go again and fight the sons of our brother Benjamin, or should we stop?" Yahweh answered, "March; for,

<sup>23</sup> An alternative reading for 'took heart' is 'encouraged one another'.

<sup>24</sup> The literal translation of 'advanced on' is 'drew near to'.

<sup>25</sup> The NJB ends this verse with, "...they were all experienced fighters who could handle the sword."

<sup>26</sup> In place of 'peace offerings', the NJB has 'communion sacrifices' and the NRSV has 'sacrifices of well-being'.

<sup>27</sup> In place of 'consulted Yahweh', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'inquired of the LORD'.

<sup>28</sup> The first two attempts had also been made on Yahweh's orders (vv. 18, 23), but God promises victory only at the third consultation. In the parallel story (Jos 7), the initial failure is attributed to a violation of the curse of destruction. However, no reason is given here.

אֶתְנַנּוּ בִידֶךָ: כִּי וַיֵּשֶׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרָבִים אֶל־הַגִּבְעָה  
סָבִיב: {פ}

לִ וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בְּנֵי בְנִימֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי  
וַיַּעֲרֻכוּ אֶל־הַגִּבְעָה כַּפֶּעַם בַּפֶּעַם: לֹא וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי־  
בְנִימֵן לִקְרֹאת הָעָם הַנִּתְקוּ מִן־הָעִיר וַיִּחְלְלוּ לְהַכּוֹת  
מִהָעָם חֲלָלִים כַּפֶּעַם | בַּפֶּעַם בַּמִּסְלֹת אֲשֶׁר אַחַת  
עָלָה בֵּית־אֵל וְאַחַת גִּבְעָתָה בַּשָּׂדֶה כְּשֹׁלֵשִׁים אִישׁ  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: לִב וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי בְנִימֵן נִגְפִים הֵם לִפְנֵינוּ  
כְּבָרָאשֵׁנָה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמְרוּ נָנוּסָה וְנִתְקַנּוּהוּ  
מִן־הָעִיר אֶל־הַמִּסְלֹת: לִג וְכָל | אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל קָמוּ  
מִמְּקוֹמוֹ וַיַּעֲרֻכוּ בִּבְעַל תָּמָר וְאַרְבַּי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִגִּיחַ  
מִמְּקוֹמוֹ מִמַּעֲרָה גִבְעָה: לִד וַיָּבֹאוּ מִגִּבְעָה  
עֹשְׂרֹת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ בַּחֹר מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַמִּלְחָמָה  
כְּבָדָה וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי־נִגְעַת עָלֵיהֶם הָרָעָה: {פ}

לִה וַיִּגַּף יְהוָה | אֶת־בְּנִימֵן לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בְנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּבְנִימֵן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֶשְׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אֲלָף

tomorrow, I shall deliver him into your power.” <sup>29</sup> Then Israel stationed men in ambush round Gibeah.

<sup>30</sup> On the third day, the Israelites marched against the Benjaminites and, as before, they set their line facing Gibeah. <sup>31</sup> The Benjaminites sallied against the people and were drawn away from the town. As before, they began by killing those people who were on the roads (one runs up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah): in open country, about thirty men of Israel. <sup>32</sup> The Benjaminites thought, “They are routed, as before;” but the Israelites said, “Let us retreat and draw them away from the town along the roads. <sup>33</sup> The main body of the Israelites drew back its battle line to Baal-Tamar, while the Israelites in ambush rushed forward from their position on the Plain of Geba.” <sup>34</sup> Then ten thousand picked men, chosen from the whole of Israel, appeared before Gibeah. The battle was fierce. The Benjaminites did not suspect the disaster hanging over them.

<sup>35</sup> Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel and the Israelites killed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin that day, all of

<sup>29</sup> The remainder of this chapter consists of the traditions of Mizpah and Bethel clumsily combined: hence the incoherence of the text.

<sup>30</sup> The NJB has ‘the town’ in place of ‘Gibeah’, here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

<sup>31</sup> The skirmish took place between Bethel, where the Israelites had their base, and Gibeah, where the Benjaminites had theirs.

<sup>32</sup> For ‘draw them away’ the MT has ‘draw him away’ – possibly the use of a collective singular pronoun.

<sup>33</sup> The NRSV and NJB, following the LXX (ἀπὸ δυσμῶν τῆς Γαββα), have ‘to the west of Gibeah’ in place of ‘on the Plain of Geba’.

<sup>34</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, “...and they did not know that touching against them was disaster.”

<sup>35</sup> In place of ‘all of them armed’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘all men who could handle the sword’.

וּמֵאָה אִישׁ כָּל־אַלֶּה שְׁלַח־חֶרֶב: לוֹ וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־  
 בְּנִימִן כִּי נִגְפוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מָקוֹם לְבְנִימִן כִּי  
 בָּטְחוּ אֶל־הָאֲרֵב אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמוּ אֶל־הַגִּבְעָה:  
 לוֹ וְהָאֲרֵב הֵחִישׁוּ וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶל־הַגִּבְעָה וַיִּמְשְׁךְ  
 הָאֲרֵב וַיֵּךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר לְפִי־חֶרֶב: לח וְהַמּוֹעֵד  
 הָיָה לְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם־הָאֲרֵב הָרֹב לְהַעֲלוֹתָם  
 מִשָּׂאת הָעֵשֶׂן מִן־הָעִיר: לט וַיִּהְיֶה אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בַּמִּלְחָמָה וּבְנִימִן הֵחֵל לְהַכּוֹת חֲלָלִים בְּאִישׁ־  
 יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּשִׁלְשִׁים אִישׁ כִּי אָמְרוּ אֵךְ נִגְזַף נִגְזַף הוּא  
 לְפָנֵינוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה הִרְאֵשְׁנָה: מ וְהַמִּשָּׂאת הֵחֵלָה  
 לַעֲלוֹת מִן־הָעִיר עֲמוּד עָשָׁן וַיִּפֹּן בְּנִימִן אַחֲרָיו  
 וַהֲגָה עֲלֶה כָּל־יִלְהָעִיר הַשְּׂמִימָה: מא וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 הִפֵּךְ וַיִּבְהֵל אִישׁ בְּנִימִן כִּי רָאָה כִּי־נִגְעָה עָלָיו  
 הָרָעָה: מב וַיִּפְּנוּ לְפָנֵי אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־דֶּרֶךְ  
 הַמִּדְבָּר וְהַמִּלְחָמָה הִדְבִּיקָתָהּ וְאֲשֶׁר מֵהָעָרִים

them armed. <sup>36</sup> The Benjaminites, seeing themselves defeated ... The men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the ambush they had set against Gibeah. <sup>37</sup> The men in ambush rushed quickly upon Gibeah and put the whole town to the sword. <sup>38</sup> For the Israelite army and the troops in ambush had agreed that they should raise a smoke signal from the town, <sup>39</sup> whereupon the Israelites in the thick of the battle would turn about. Now Benjamin had begun by killing men of the Israelite army, about thirty of them; so, they were thinking, "Plainly we have routed them now as we did before." <sup>40</sup> Then the signal, a column of smoke, began to rise from the town, and the Benjaminites looking back saw the whole town going up in flames to the sky. <sup>41</sup> Then the Israelites turned about, and the Benjaminites were dismayed, for they saw that disaster was imminent. <sup>42</sup> They broke before the Israelite onslaught and made for the desert, but the fighters pressed them hard, while the others coming out of the town surprised them and

<sup>36</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> sentence is concluded in v. 45; however, the intermediate vv. 36–44 do not come from a single source.

<sup>37</sup> The verb here translated as 'rushed' normally means 'lead' or 'draw'.

<sup>38</sup> The smoke signal seems to have served two purposes here: it alerted the remaining Israelites that the town had been taken, but it also dismayed the Benjaminites.

<sup>39</sup> In place of 'turn about', NETB has 'counterattack'.

<sup>40</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...Benjamin turned after him and, look, the whole city went up toward the sky."

<sup>41</sup> The literal translation of 'disaster was imminent' is 'disaster touched against them'.

<sup>42</sup> 'Took and slaughtered them from the rear' is a conjectural translation following the NJB; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The Benjaminites were caught between the main body of troops and the ambush contingent; see, for the same operation, Jos 8:21–22.

מִשְׁחִיתִים אוֹתוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ: <sup>מג</sup> כָּתְרוּ אֶת־בְּנֵימִן  
הֲרִדֵּפוּהוּ מִנוּחָה הִדְרִיכֻהוּ עַד נֹכַח הַגִּבְעָה  
מִמִּזְרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ: <sup>מד</sup> וַיִּפְּלוּ מִבְּנֵימִן שְׁמֹנֶה־עָשָׂר אֶלֶף  
אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה אַנְשֵׁי־חֵייל: <sup>מה</sup> וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיֵּנָסוּ  
הַמַּדְבָּרָה אֶל־סֹלֶע הַרְמוֹן וַיַּעֲלֶלְהוּ בַּמִּסְלֹת  
חֲמֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ וַיִּדְבִּיקוּ אַחֲרָיו עַד־גִּדְעֹם וַיָּכוּ  
מִמֶּנּוּ אֲלָפִים אִישׁ: <sup>מו</sup> וַיְהִי כָל־הַנָּפְלִים מִבְּנֵימִן  
עֹשָׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אֶלֶף אִישׁ שָׁלַף חֶרֶב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא  
אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה אַנְשֵׁי־חֵייל: <sup>מי</sup> וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיֵּנָסוּ הַמַּדְבָּרָה  
אֶל־סֹלֶע הַרְמוֹן שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בַּסֹּלֶע רְמוֹן  
אַרְבַּעַת חֳדָשִׁים: <sup>מח</sup> וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁבוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי  
בְּנֵימִן וַיָּכּוּם לְפִי־חֶרֶב מֵעִיר מָתָם עַד־בִּהְמָה עַד  
כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא גַם כָּל־הָעָרִים הַנִּמְצָאוֹת שָׁלְחוּ  
בָּאֵשׁ: {פ}

took and slaughtered them from the rear. <sup>43</sup> They hemmed the Benjaminites in, pursued them relentlessly and crushed them opposite Geba on the east. <sup>44</sup> Eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell, all of them brave men. <sup>45</sup> The survivors turned and ran, and fled into the desert and towards the Rock of Rimmon. On the highroads, the Israelites caught five thousand men. Then they pursued the Benjaminites to Gidom and killed two thousand of them. <sup>46</sup> The total number of sword-wielding Benjaminites who fell that day was twenty-five thousand men – all of them brave men. <sup>47</sup> Six hundred men, however, turned tail and escaped into the desert, to the Rock of Rimmon, and there they stayed for four months. <sup>48</sup> The men of Israel went back to the Benjaminites, and put them to the sword: the town, the people, the cattle, and all that came their way; and they set on fire all the towns that they came to in Benjamin.

<sup>43</sup> The NRSV reads: "Cutting down the Benjaminites, they pursued them from Nohah and trod them down as far as a place east of Gibeah."

<sup>44</sup> In place of 'brave men', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'courageous fighters' and NETB has 'capable warriors'.

<sup>45</sup> 'Gidom' (גִּדְעֹם) is an unknown place (the NJB has 'Gideon'); the primitive text had, perhaps, 'Geba' or 'Gabaon'.

<sup>46</sup> The number given here (25,000) is an approximate figure; v. 35 gives a more precise number (25,100) and, according to v. 15, the Benjaminites numbered 26,700 (26,000 + 700). The figures in vv. 35 (rounded in vv. 44–46) and 47 add up to 25,700. What happened to the other 1,000 men? The most reasonable explanation is that they were killed during the first two days of fighting, but some reject this proposal, arguing that the narrator is too precise and concerned about details to omit such a fact.

<sup>47</sup> NETB has 'cliff of Rimmon' in place of 'Rock of Rimmon', here following the NJB & NRSV.

<sup>48</sup> The translation, 'the town, the people', is based on the reading מֵעִיר מָתָם ('from a town of men' i.e. an inhabited city), rather than the reading מֵעִיר מָתָם ('from a town of soundness') found in the Leningrad Codex of the MT.

## שופטים פרק כא

א וַאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִשְׁבַּע בַּמִּצְפָּה לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ  
לֹא יִתֵּן בָּתּוֹ לְבִנְיָמִן לְאִשָּׁה: ב וַיָּבֹא הָעָם בֵּית־אֵל  
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם עַד־הָעֶרֶב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׁאוּ קוֹלָם  
וַיִּבְכוּ בְּכִי גָדוֹל: ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָמָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הֵיטָה זֹאת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַפְקִיד הַיּוֹם מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שִׁבְט  
אֶחָד: ד וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרָת וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ הָעָם וַיָּבִנוּ־שָׁם  
מִזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלוֹת וּשְׁלָמִים: {פ}

ה וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה בַקָּהָל  
מְכַל־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי הִשְׁבוּעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה  
הֵיטָה לֹאֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה אֶל־יְהוָה הַמִּצְפָּה לֵאמֹר  
מוֹת יוּמָת: ו וַיִּנָּחֲמוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בִּנְיָמִן אֲחֵיו  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִגְדַע הַיּוֹם שִׁבְט אֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ז מָה־  
נַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְנוֹתָרִים לְנָשִׁים וְאֲנַחְנוּ נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ

## JUDGES 21

<sup>1</sup> The men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "Not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin." <sup>2</sup> The people went to Bethel and stayed there until evening, sitting before God with groans and bitter weeping. <sup>3</sup> They said, "Yahweh, God of Israel, why must this be Israel's lot, to lose one of its tribes today?" <sup>4</sup> The next day, the people got up early and built an altar there; they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings.

<sup>5</sup> Then the Israelites said, "Who of all the tribes of Israel has not assembled in Yahweh's presence?" For they had sworn a solemn oath, threatening death to anyone who would not come into Yahweh's presence at Mizpah. <sup>6</sup> Now the Israelites were sorry for Benjamin their brother; they said, "Today, one tribe has been cut off from Israel. <sup>7</sup> What shall we do to provide wives for those who are left, since we have sworn

## JUDGES 21

<sup>1</sup> This chapter juxtaposes two traditions, linked together by the concluding words of v. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Literally translated, this verse ends, "...and they lifted up their voice(s) and wept with great weeping." Both the cognate accusative בָּכָי ('weeping') and the attributive adjective גָּדוֹל ('great') emphasise their degree of sorrow.

<sup>3</sup> Inter-tribal conflicts do not weaken the sense of solidarity binding the people of Israel together, and the post-exilic editor emphasises this by frequently speaking of the 'community'.

<sup>4</sup> In place of 'burnt sacrifices and peace offerings', here following NETB, the NJB has 'holocausts and communions sacrifices'.

<sup>5</sup> The oath here solves the problem resulting from the oath of v. 1.

<sup>6</sup> In place of 'were sorry for', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'felt compassion on'.

<sup>7</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, "What should we do for them, for the remaining ones, concerning wives?"



בִּיהוָה לְבַלְתִּי תִתְּלֶהֶם מִבְּנוֹתֵינוּ לְנָשִׁים:  
 ח וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי אֶחָד מִשְׁבְּטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה  
 אֶל־יְהוָה הַמִּצְפָּה וְהָנָה לֹא בֶאֱנָשׁ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה  
 מִיָּבִישׁ גִּלְעָד אֶל־הַקָּהָל: ט וַיִּתְּפֹקֶד הָעָם וְהָנָה  
 אֵין־שָׁם אִישׁ מִיּוֹשְׁבֵי יָבֵשׁ גִּלְעָד: י וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ־שָׁם  
 הָעֵדָה שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר אֲלֹף אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי הַחִיל וַיִּצְווּ  
 אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר לְכוּ וְהִכִּיתֶם אֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי יָבֵשׁ גִּלְעָד  
 לְפִי־חָרֶב וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטָּף: יא וְזֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּ  
 כָּל־זָכָר וְכָל־אִשָּׁה יָדַעַת מִשְׁכַּב־זָכָר תַּחְרִימוּ:  
 יב וַיִּמָּצְאוּ מִיּוֹשְׁבֵי יָבִישׁ גִּלְעָד אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת נַעֲרָה  
 בְּתוּלָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעָה אִישׁ לְמִשְׁכַּב זָכָר וַיָּבִאוּ  
 אוֹתָם אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה שָׁלָה אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְץ כְּנָעַן: {פ}

יג וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ כָל־הָעֵדָה וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי בִנְיָמִן אֲשֶׁר  
 בְּסֵלַע רִמּוֹן וַיִּקְרְאוּ לָהֶם שְׁלוֹם: יד וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּנִימִן

by Yahweh not to give them any of our own daughters as wives?" <sup>8</sup> Then they said, "Which of all the tribes of Israel has not come into Yahweh's presence at Mizpah?" It turned out that no one from Jabesh-Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly; <sup>9</sup> for, the people had been counted over, and not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead was there. <sup>10</sup> Then the community sent twelve thousand of their bravest soldiers there and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike with the sword all the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, the women and children too. <sup>11</sup> This is what you are to do. You are to put all the males and all the women who have slept with a male under the ban. <sup>12</sup> Among the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, they found four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man, and brought them to the camp (at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan).

<sup>13</sup> Then the whole community sent word to the Benjaminites who were at the Rock of Rimmon, offering peace. <sup>14</sup> Benjamin returned and they

<sup>8</sup> The last sentence, literally translated, reads, "Look, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly."

<sup>9</sup> 'Jabesh-Gilead' (יָבֵשׁ גִּלְעָד), a town in the northern Transjordanian region, has been identified with Tell Abu Haraz and Tell El-Meqberch.

<sup>10</sup> The literal translation of 'bravest soldiers' (here following the NRSV) is 'sons of strength'.

<sup>11</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (Codex Vaticanus – τὰς δὲ παρθένας περιποιήσεσθε. καὶ ἐποίησαν οὕτως.) adds, ""but the lives of the virgins you are to spare." This they did."

<sup>12</sup> Four hundred virgins are spared and given to Benjamin as wives (v. 14). 'Shiloh' is identified with the modern Seilun, 14 km north of Bethel.

<sup>13</sup> Literally translated, this verse reads, "And all the assembly sent and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the Rock of Rimmon and they proclaimed to them peace."

<sup>14</sup> At the end of this verse, the NJB adds 'for all'.

בַּעַת הַהִיא וַיִּתְּנוּ לָהֶם הַנָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר חָיו מִנָּשִׁי  
יְבִשׁ גִּלְעָד וְלֹא־מָצְאוּ לָהֶם כֵּן: <sup>ט</sup>וְהָעָם נָחַם  
לְבִנְיָמִן כִּי־עָשָׂה יְהוָה פֶּרֶץ בְּשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
<sup>טז</sup>וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי הָעֵדָה מַה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לְנוֹתָרִים לְנָשִׁים  
כִּי־נִשְׁמְדָה מִבִּנְיָמִן אִשָּׁה: <sup>יז</sup>וַיֹּאמְרוּ יִרְשֶׁת פְּלִיטָה  
לְבִנְיָמִן וְלֹא־יִמָּחַה שִׁבְט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: <sup>יח</sup>וְאִנְחָנוּ לֹא  
נוֹכַל לְתַת־לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִבָּנוֹתֵינוּ כִּי־נִשְׁבַּעוּ בְנֵי־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אֲרוּר אִישׁ נָתַן אִשָּׁה לְבִנְיָמִן: {ס}

<sup>יט</sup>וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּה חַג־יְהוָה בְּשִׁלּוֹ מִיָּמִים | יְמִימָה  
אֲשֶׁר מַצְפּוֹנָה לְבֵית־אֵל מִזְרַחָה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ לְמִסְלָה  
הָעֵלָה מִבֵּית־אֵל שְׁכֵמָה וּמִנֶּגֶב לְלִבְנוֹנָה: <sup>כ</sup>וַיֵּצְאוּ  
וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי בִנְיָמִן לֵאמֹר לָכוּ וְאַרְבַּתְּם בַּכְּרָמִים:  
<sup>כא</sup>וּרְאִיתֶם וְהִנֵּה אִם־יֵצְאוּ בָנוֹת־שִׁילּוֹ לַחֹל  
בְּמַחְלוֹת וַיִּצְאֲתֶם מִן־הַכְּרָמִים וַחֲטַפְתֶּם לָכֶם אִישׁ  
אִשְׁתּוֹ מִבָּנוֹת שִׁילּוֹ וְהִלַּכְתֶּם אֶרֶץ בִּנְיָמִן: <sup>כב</sup>וְהָיָה  
כִּי־יִבְאוּ אֲבוֹתָם אֹי אֲחֵיהֶם לְרֹב לְרִיב | אֲלֵינוּ

gave them those women from Jabesh-Gilead they had left alive; but there were not enough. <sup>15</sup> The people grieved for Benjamin because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel; <sup>16</sup> and the elders of the community said, “What shall we do for wives for the survivors, since there are no women left in Benjamin?” <sup>17</sup> They said, “The remnant of Benjamin must be preserved so that a tribe is not blotted out from Israel? <sup>18</sup> We cannot give them our own daughters as wives.” For, the Israelites had sworn, “Cursed be any man who gives a wife to Benjamin!”

<sup>19</sup> So, they said, “Look, there is Yahweh’s annual feast at Shiloh.” (This is north of Bethel, east of the road that runs from Bethel up to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.) <sup>20</sup> So, they said to the Benjaminites, “Place yourselves in ambush in the vineyards. <sup>21</sup> Keep watch there, and when the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, you too come out of the vineyards: seize a wife, each one of you, from the daughters of Shiloh and make for the land of Benjamin. <sup>22</sup> If their fathers or brothers come to complain to us, we shall say to them, “Forgive them because

<sup>15</sup> In place of ‘grieved for’, here following the WEBBE, the NRSV has ‘had compassion on’.

<sup>16</sup> NETB has ‘leaders’ in place of ‘elders’, here following the NJB & NRSV.

<sup>17</sup> For stylistic reasons, NETB omits the opening ‘they went on’.

<sup>18</sup> Literally translated, this verse opens, “But we are not able to give to them wives from our daughters.”

<sup>19</sup> This verse refers to a Canaanite festival (see 9:27), later identified with the Harvest Festival (Ex 23:16) or the Feast of Shelters (Dt 16:13).

<sup>20</sup> The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

<sup>21</sup> In place of ‘in the dances’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘in groups together’.

<sup>22</sup> In place of ‘to us’, the NJB has ‘to you’, following the LXX (πρὸς ὑμᾶς). The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

וַאֲמָרְנוּ אֲלֵיהֶם חָנוּנוּ אוֹתָם כִּי לֹא לָקַחְנוּ אִישׁ  
אִשְׁתּוֹ בַּמִּלְחָמָה כִּי לֹא אַתֶּם נָתַתָּם לָהֶם כָּעֵת  
הָאֲשֶׁמוּ: {ס}

כַּג וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי בְנִימִן וַיִּשְׂאוּ נָשִׁים לְמִסְפָּרָם מִן־  
הַמַּחֲלָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּשׁוּבוּ אֶל־נַחֲלָתָם  
וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־הָעָרִים וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָהֶם: כַּד וַיִּתְּהַלְכוּ מִשָּׁם  
בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵת הַהִיא אִישׁ לְשִׁבְטוֹ וּלְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ  
וַיֵּצְאוּ מִשָּׁם אִישׁ לְנַחֲלָתוֹ: {פ}

כַּה בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר  
בַּעֲיֵנָיו יַעֲשֶׂה:  
{ש}

each one of them has taken a wife for himself, as men do in war. For if you had given them brides, you would have broken your oath, and so would have sinned.””

<sup>23</sup> The Benjaminites did this and, from the dancers they had captured, they chose as many wives as there were men; then they set off, returned to their inheritance, rebuilt their towns, and settled in them. <sup>24</sup> Then the Israelites went away, each to re-join his own tribe and clan, and returned from Shiloh each to his own inheritance.

<sup>25</sup> In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased.

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<sup>23</sup> Literally translated, the central part of this verse reads, “and they took wives according to their number from the dancing girls whom they abducted.”

<sup>24</sup> The NRSV has ‘territories’ in place of ‘inheritance’, here following the MT & NJB.

<sup>25</sup> The narrative in 19:1–21:25 is introduced and concluded by the same comment as at 17:6 and 18:1. Here, it may be an editorial insertion, or a comment by the priests of the official sanctuary at Bethel, who take a point of view similar to the priests of the royal sanctuary at Dan in the previous story (see #17:1).