
a *Grace Notes* course

Old Testament History

by Alfred Edersheim

History 507

Grace Notes

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III_06 The Miraculous Parting Of Jordan, And The Passage Of The Children Of Israel - Gilgal And Its Meaning - The First Passover On The Soil Of Palestine

Joshua 3:1 to 5:12

THE morrow after the return of the spies, the camp at Shittim was broken up, and the host of Israel moved forward. It consisted of all those tribes who were to have their possessions west of the Jordan, along with forty thousand chosen warriors from Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.¹ A short march brought them to the brink of Jordan. Strictly speaking, the Jordan has a threefold bank; the largest at the water's edge, which, in spring, is frequently inundated, owing to the melting of snow on Hermon; a middle bank, which is covered with rich vegetation, and an upper bank, which overhangs the river. The people now halted for three days, first to await the Divine direction as to the passage of the river, and then to prepare for receiving in a proper spirit the manifestation of Divine power about to be manifested in the miraculous parting of Jordan. For, as one has remarked, the expression used by Joshua, "the living God is among you" (Joshua 3:10), does not merely imply the presence of God among Israel, but, as the event proved, the operations by which He shows Himself both living and true.

All that was to be done by Israel was Divinely indicated to Joshua, and all was done exactly as it had been² directed. First, proclamation was made throughout Israel to "sanctify" themselves, and that not only outwardly by symbolic rites, but also inwardly by turning unto the Lord, in expectant faith of "the wonders" about to be enacted. These were intimated to them beforehand (Joshua 3:5, 13).

¹ As, according to Numbers 26:7, 18, 34, the total number of the men of war in the tribes Reuben and Gad, and those of half Manasseh amounted to 110,580, it follows that 70,580 must have been left behind for the protection of the territory east of the Jordan.

² We mark in this narrative three sections, each commencing with a Divine command (Joshua 3:7, 8; 4:2, 3; and 4:15, 16), followed by Joshua's communication thereof to the people, and an account of its execution. This to connect each stage with the Lord Himself.

Thus passed three days. It was "the tenth day of the first month" (Joshua 4:19), the anniversary of the day on which forty years before Israel had set apart their Paschal lambs (Exodus 12:3), that the miraculous passage of the Jordan was accomplished, and Israel stood on the very soil of the promised land. Before the evening of that anniversary had closed in, the memorial stones were set up in Gilgal. All between those two anniversaries seemed only as a grand historical parenthesis. But the kingdom of God has no blanks or interruptions in its history; there is a grand unity in its course, for Jehovah reigneth. With feelings stirred by such remembrances, and the expectancy of the great miracle to come, did Israel now move forward. First went the Ark, borne by the priests, and, at a reverent distance of 2000 cubits, followed the host. For, it was the Ark of the Covenant which was to make a way for Israel through the waters of Jordan, and they were to keep it in sight, so as to mark the miraculous road, as it was gradually opened to them. It is to this that the Divine words refer (Joshua 3:4): "that ye may know," or rather come to know, recognize, understand, "the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, none, at least of the laity, had been grown up at the time, and seen it, when the Lord parted the waters of the Red Sea at the Exodus. Then it had been the uplifted wonder-working rod of Moses by which the waters were parted. But now it was the Ark at whose advance they were stayed. And the difference of the means was quite in accordance with that of the circumstances. For now the Ark of the Covenant was the ordinary symbol of the Divine Presence among Israel; and God commonly employs the ordinary means of grace for the accomplishment of His marvelous purposes of mercy.

It was early spring, in that tropical district the time of early harvest (Joshua 3:15), and the Jordan had overflowed its lowest banks. As at a distance of about half a mile the Israelites looked down, they saw that, when the feet of those who bore the Ark touched the waters, they were arrested."³ Far up

³ In Joshua 3:11 and 13 it is significantly designated, "the Ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth," as Calvin remarks, to

"beyond where they stood, at the city of Adam that is beside Aretha," ⁴ did the Divine Hand draw up the waters of Jordan, while the waters below that point were speedily drained into the Dead Sea. In the middle of the river-bed the priests with the Ark ⁵ halted till the whole people had passed over dry-shod. Then twelve men, who had previously been detailed for the purpose, ⁶ took up twelve large stones from where the priests had stood in the river-bed, to erect them a solemn memorial to all times of that wondrous event.

Only after that did the priests come up from Jordan. And when "the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land" (literally, were detached, viz., from the clogging mud, "upon the dry"), "the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as before." It must have been towards evening when the rest of the march was accomplished - a distance of about five miles - and Israel's camp was pitched at what afterwards became Gilgal, "in the east border of Jericho," about two miles from the latter city.

The object and meaning of this "notable miracle" are clearly indicated in the sacred text. We know that it was as absolutely necessary in the circumstances as formerly the cleaving of the Red Sea had been. For, at that season of the year, and with the means at their disposal, it would have been absolutely impossible for a large host with women and children to cross the Jordan. But, besides, it was fitting that a miracle similar to that of the Exodus from Egypt should mark the entrance into the Land of Promise; fitting also, that the commencement of Joshua's ministry should be

show the subjection of all to God, and to increase the trust of Israel

⁴ This, and not, as in our Authorized Version, "very far from the city of Adam," is the correct rendering. The sites of these two cities have not been identified. From the nature of the banks, the inundation caused by this miracle would not lead to serious consequences.

⁵ The attentive reader will notice that, throughout the Scripture narrative, the main stress is laid on the presence of the Ark, the priests being only introduced as the bearers of it.

⁶ The rendering of Joshua 4:1-3 in our Authorized Version does not give that impression, but alike Rabbinical and the best Christian authorities regard these verses as a parenthesis, and translate, in ver. 1, "and the Lord had spoken to Joshua."

thus Divinely attested like that of Moses (Joshua 3:7). Finally, it would be to Israel a glorious pledge of future victory in the might of their God (ver. 10), while to their enemies it was a sure token of the judgment about to overtake them (Joshua 5:1).

Two things yet remained to be done, before Israel could enter upon the war with Canaan. Although the people of God, Israel had been under judgment for nearly forty years, and those born in the wilderness bore not the covenant mark of circumcision. To renew that rite in their case was the first necessity, so as to restore Israel to its full position as the covenant-people of God. ⁷

After that, a privilege awaited Israel which for thirty-eight years they had not enjoyed. Probably the Passover at the foot of Sinai (Numbers 9:1) had been the last, as that feast would not have been observed by the people in their uncircumcision. But at Gilgal their reproach was "rolled away," and the people of God renewed the festive remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. Truly, that first Passover on the soil of Palestine had a twofold meaning. Even the circumstances recalled its first celebration. As the night of the first Passover was one of terror and judgment to Egypt, so now, within view of the festive camp of Gilgal,

"Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in" (Joshua 6:1).

And now also the Divine wilderness-provision of the "manna which had clung to them with the tenacity of all God's mercies," ceased on, "the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land: neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruits of the land of Canaan that year." And so also have miraculous

⁷ Of course, the survivors of those who, having come out from Egypt, were at the time of the sentence in Kadesh under twenty years old (Numbers 14:29) - in short, all in Gilgal who were thirty-eight years and upwards - had been circumcised. Reckoning the total of males at Gilgal at about one million, the proportion of the circumcised to the uncircumcised would have been about 280,000 to 720,000. The former would suffice to prepare the Paschal lambs, and, if needful, to defend the camp at Gilgal, although the terror consequent upon the dividing of Jordan would probably have protected Israel from all hostile attacks. See Keil, Bibl. Comm., vol. 2 pp. 38, 39.

gifts ceased in the Church, because their continuance has become unnecessary. Similarly will our manna-provision for daily life-need cease, when we at the last enter upon the land of promise, and forever enjoy its fruits!

III_07 The "Prince Of The Host Of Jehovah" Appears To Joshua - The Miraculous Fall Of Jericho Before The Ark Of Jehovah

Joshua 5:13; 6:27

AT first sight it may seem strange, that, when such fear had fallen upon the people of the land, any attempt should have been made to defend Jericho. But a fuller consideration will help us not only to understand this, but also by-and-by to see special reasons, why this one fortress should have been miraculously given to Israel. Not to mention motives of honor, which would at least have some influence with the men of Jericho, it was one of the main principles of heathenism, that each of their "gods many" was limited in his activity to one special object. But what the Canaanites had heard of Jehovah showed Him to be the God of nature, who clave the Red Sea and arrested the waters of Jordon, and that He was so far also the God of battles, as to give Israel the victory over the Amorite kings. But was His strength also the same as against their gods in reducing strong fortresses? Of that at any rate they had no experience. Trivial as such a question may sound in our ears, we have evidence that it was seriously entertained by heathendom. To mention only one instance, we know that a similar suggestion was made at a much later period, not by obscure men, but by the servants and trusted advisers of Ben-hadad, and that it was acted upon by that monarch in the belief that "Jehovah is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys" (1 Kings 20:28). At any rate, it was worth the trial, and Jericho, as already stated, was the strongest fortress in Canaan, and the key to the whole country.

This latter consideration could not but have weighed on the mind of Joshua, as from the camp of Gilgal he "viewed the city." As yet no special direction had been given him how to attack Jericho, and, assuredly, the people whom he commanded were untrained for such work. While such thoughts were busy within him, of a sudden, "as he lifted up his eyes and looked, there stood

over against him," not the beleaguered city, but "a man with his sword drawn in his hand." Challenged by Joshua: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" the strange warrior replied: "No! But I am the Captain (or Prince) of the host of Jehovah, now I am come."⁸ Here His speech was interrupted - for Joshua fell on his face before Him, and reverently inquired His commands. The reply: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy," must have convinced Joshua that this Prince of the host of Jehovah was none other than the Angel of the Covenant, Who had spoken to Moses out of the burning bush (Exodus 3:4), and Who was co-equal with Jehovah. Indeed, shortly afterwards, we find Him expressly spoken of as Jehovah (Joshua 6:2).

So then the mission of Joshua was substantially the continuation and completion of that of Moses. As at the commencement of the latter, the Angel of the Covenant had appeared and spoken out of the burning bush, so He now also appeared to Joshua, while the symbolical act of "loosing the shoe off his foot," in reverent acknowledgment of the Holy One of Israel, recalled the vision of Moses, and at the same time connected it with that of his successor. Having assured Joshua of complete victory, the Angel of Jehovah gave him detailed directions how Israel was to compass Jericho, under the leadership of the Ark of the Lord, and how, when the wall of the city had fallen, the people were to act. Implicit obedience of what in its nature was symbolical, was absolutely requisite, and Joshua communicated the command of the Lord both to priests and people.

And now a marvelous sight would be witnessed from the walls of Jericho. Day by day, a solemn procession left the camp of Israel. First came lightly armed men,⁹ then followed seven priests blowing continually, not the customary silver

⁸ This is the correct rendering of Joshua 5:14; that in our Authorized Version does not fully express the pictorial import of the original.

⁹ Joshua 6:9 implies that the host of Israel was divided into two parts: "the armed men" preceding, and "the rereward following the Ark." As the Hebrew "for armed men" is the same term as that in Joshua 4:13 ("prepared for war"), it has been suggested by Rabbinical interpreters that "the armed men" consisted of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

trumpets, but large horns, the loud sound of which penetrated to the far distance, such as had been heard at Sinai (Exodus 19:16, 19; 20:18). The same kind of horns were to be used on the first day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:24), and to announce the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9).

Thus heralded, came the Ark of Jehovah, borne by the priests, and after it "the rearward" of Israel. So they did for six days, each day once encompassing the walls of Jericho, but in solemn silence, save for the short sharp tones, or the long-drawn blasts of the priests' horns. The impression made by this long, solemn procession, which appeared and disappeared, and did its work, in solemn silence, only broken by the loud shrill notes of the horns, must have been peculiar. At length came the seventh day. Its work began earlier than on the others - "about the dawning of the day." In the same order as before, they encompassed the city, only now seven times. "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for Jehovah hath given you the city." "And it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." As for Jericho itself, Joshua had by Divine command declared it "cherem," or "devoted" to Jehovah (Joshua 6:17). In such cases, according to Leviticus 27:28, 29, no redemption was possible, but, as indicated in Deuteronomy 13:16, alike the inhabitants and all the spoil of the city was to be destroyed, "only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron" being reserved and "put into the treasury of the house of Jehovah" (Joshua 6:24; comp. Numbers 31:22, 23, 50-54). This was not the ordinary sentence against all the cities of Canaan. In all other cases the inhabitants alone were "smitten with the edge of the sword" (Joshua 8:26; 10:28; comp. Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 8:2; 20:16), while the cattle and the spoil were preserved. But in the case of Jericho, for reasons to be afterwards stated, the whole city, with all that it contained, was cherem. Only Rahab, "and her father's household, and all that she had," were saved from the general wreck.

It lies on the surface of the Scriptural narrative that "a notable miracle," unparalleled in history, had in this case been "wrought" by Jehovah for Israel. As a German writer puts it: It would have been impossible to show it more clearly, that Jehovah had given the city to Israel. First, the river was made to recede, to allow them entrance into the land; and now the walls of the city were made to fall, to give them admission to its first and strongest city. Now such proofs of the presence and help of Jehovah, so soon after Moses' death, must have convinced the most carnal among Israel, that the same God who had cleft the Red Sea before their fathers was still on their side. And in this light must the event also have been viewed by the people of Canaan. But, besides, a deeper symbolical meaning attached to all that had happened. The first and strongest fortress in the land Jehovah God bestowed upon His people, so to speak, as a free gift, without their having to make any effort, or to run any risk in taking it.

A precious pledge this of the ease with which all His gracious promises were to be fulfilled. Similarly, the manner in which Israel obtained possession of Jericho was deeply significant. Evidently, the walls of Jericho fell, not before Israel, but before the Ark of Jehovah, or rather, as it is expressly said in Joshua 6:8, before Jehovah Himself, whose presence among His people was connected with the Ark of the Covenant. And the blast of those jubilee-horns all around the doomed city made proclamation of Jehovah, and was, so to speak, the summons of His kingdom, proclaiming that the labor and sorrow of His people were at an end, and they about to enter upon their inheritance. This was the symbolical and typical import of the blasts of the jubilee-horns, whenever they were blown. Hence also alike in the visions of the prophets and in the New Testament the final advent of the kingdom of God is heralded by the trumpet-sound of His angelic messengers (comp. 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20 and 21). But, on the other hand, the advent of the kingdom of God always implies destruction to His enemies. Accordingly, the walls of Jericho must fall, and all the city be destroyed. Nor will the reader of this history fail here also to notice the significance of the number seven - seven horns, seven priests, seven days of

compassing the walls, repeated seven times on the seventh day! The suddenness of the ruin of Jericho, which typified the kingdom of this world in its opposition to that of God, has also its counterpart at the end of the present dispensation. For "the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; and when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Lastly, it was fitting that Jericho should have been entirely devoted unto the Lord; not only that Israel might gain no immediate spoil by what the Lord had done, but also because the city, as the firstfruits of the conquest of the land, belonged unto Jehovah, just as all the first, both in His people and in all that was theirs, was His - in token that the whole was really God's property, Who gave everything to His people, and at Whose hands they held their possessions. But, to indicate the state of heart and mind with which Israel compassed the city, following the Ark in solemn silence, we recall this emphatic testimony of Scripture (Hebrews 11:30):

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

In this instance also, as just before the Lord cleft the Red Sea, and again afterwards, when in answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer God destroyed the heathen combination against His people, the Divine call to them was, "Stand ye still" (in expectant faith) "and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Exodus 14:13, 2 Chronicles 20:17). And so it ever is to His believing people in similar circumstances.

III_08 Unsuccessful Attack Upon Ai - Achan's Sin, And Judgment - Ai Attacked A Second Time And Taken

Joshua 7:1 to 8:29

THE conquest of Jericho without fight on the part of Israel had given them full pledge of future success. But, on the other hand, also, might it become a source of greatest danger, if the gracious promises of God were regarded as national rights, and the presence of Jehovah as secured, irrespective of the bearing of Israel towards Him. It was therefore of the utmost importance, that from the first it should appear that victory over the

enemy was Israel's only so long as the people were faithful to the covenant of their God.

In their progress towards the interior of the land, the fortress next to be taken was Ai. Broken up as the country seems to have been into small territories, each under an independent chieftain or "king," who reigned in his fortified city and held sway over the district around,¹⁰ a series of sieges rather than of pitched battles was to be expected. Ai, situated on a conical hill about ten miles to the west of Jericho, was a comparatively smaller city, numbering only 12,000 inhabitants (Joshua 8:25). Yet its position was exceedingly important. Southwards it opened the road to Jerusalem, which is only a few hours distant; northwards it commanded access to the heart of the country, so that, as we find in the sequel, a victorious army could march thence unopposed into the fertile district of Samaria.

Moreover, the fate of Ai virtually decided also that of Bethel. The latter city, ruled by another independent "king,"¹¹ lay to the west of Ai, being separated from it by a high intervening hill. This hill, about midway between Bethel and Ai, possessed special interest. It was the site of Abram's altar, when he first entered the land (Genesis 12:8). Here also had the patriarch stood with Lot, overlooking in the near distance the rich luxuriance of the Jordan valley, when Lot made his fatal choice of residence (Genesis 13:4, 10). Standing on this hill, a valley is seen to stretch westward to Bethel, while eastward, around Ai, "the wadys which at first break down steeply... descend gradually for about three quarters of a mile, before taking their final plunge to the Jordan valley. The gently sloping ground is well studded with olive trees." This rapid sketch of the locality

¹⁰ In Joshua 12:7-24, no less than thirty-one such "kings" are enumerated, as vanquished by Joshua. And it must be remembered that their territories did not by any means cover the whole of Palestine west of the Jordan.

¹¹ Joshua 12:16. From the position of the king of Bethel in the list of vanquished "kings," we are led to infer that Bethel was taken somewhat later than Ai. But, from Joshua 8:17, we learn that there was a league between the two cities. Their armies must have either moved in accord, or have been at the disposal of the king of Ai. In either case the men of Bethel may have made their way back to their own city when Israel turned against Ai.

will help us to realize the events about to be recorded.

The advance now to be made by Israel was so important, that Joshua deemed it a proper precaution to send "men to view Ai." Their report satisfied him that only an army-corps of about 3000 men was requisite to take that city. But the expedition proved far from successful. The men of Ai issued from the city, and routed Israel, killing thirty-six men, pursuing the fugitives as far as "Shebarim" ("mines," or perhaps "quarries" where stones are broken), and smiting them "in the going down," that is, to about a mile's distance, where the wadys, descending from Ai, take "their final plunge" eastwards. Viewed in any light, the event was terribly ominous. It had been Israel's first fight west of the Jordan - and their first defeat. The immediate danger likely to accrue was a combination of all their enemies round about, and the utter destruction of a host which had become dispirited. But there was even a more serious aspect than this. Had God's pledged promises now failed? or, if this could not even for a moment be entertained, had the Lord given up His gracious purpose, His covenant with Israel, and the manifestation of His "Name" among all nations, connected therewith?

Feelings like these found expression in Joshua's appeal to God, when, with rent clothes and ashes upon their heads, he and the elders of Israel lay the livelong day, in humiliation and prayer, before the Lord, while in the camp "the hearts of the people" had "melted and became as water." We require to keep in view this contrast between the impotent terror of the people and the praying attitude of their leaders, to realize the circumstances of the case; the perplexity, the anxiety, and the difficulties of Joshua, before we judge of the language which he used. It fell indeed far short of the calm confidence of a Moses; yet, in its inquiry into the reason of God's dealings, which were acknowledged, faith, so to speak, wrestled with doubt (Joshua 7:7), while rising fear was confronted by trust in God's promises (ver. 9). Best of all, the inward contest found expression in prayer. It was therefore, after all, a contest of faith, and faith is "the victory over the world."

Strange, that amidst this universal agitation, one should have remained unmoved, who, all the time, knew that he was the cause of Israel's disaster and of the mourning around. Yet his conscience must have told him that, so long as it remained, the curse of his sin would follow his brethren, and smite them with impotence. It is this hardness of impenitence - itself the consequence of sin - which, when properly considered, vindicates, or rather demonstrates, the rightness of the Divine sentence afterwards executed upon Achan.¹² His sin was of no ordinary character. It had not only been a violation of God's express command, but daring sacrilege and profanation. And this under circumstances of the most aggravated character. Besides, Joshua had, just before the fall of Jericho, warned the people of the danger to themselves and to all Israel of taking "of the accursed thing" (Joshua 6:18). So emphatic had been the ban pronounced upon the doomed city, that it was extended to all time, and even over the whole family of any who should presume to restore Jericho as a fortress (6:26).¹³

And, in face of all this, Achan had allowed himself to be tempted! He had yielded to the lowest passion. One of those Babylonian garments, curiously woven with figures and pictures (such as classical writers describe), a massive golden ornament, in the shape of a tongue, and a sum of silver, amounting to about 25l in a city the walls of which had just miraculously fallen before the Lord, had induced him to commit this daring sin! More than that, when it had come true, as Joshua predicted (6:18), that such theft would "make the

¹² The Divine sentence needs no justification. Achan's was a sin which involved its peculiar punishment. But, as in the case of Esau, his history showed the fitness of the Divine sentence which debarred him of the "inheritance" of the promise, so was it also in the case of Achan. In studying the history of events we are too apt to overlook that of person and characters.

¹³ It is a common mistake to suppose that Jericho was never to be rebuilt. This evidently could not have been the meaning of Joshua, as among other cities he assigned Jericho to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:21). Similarly, we read of "the city of palm-trees" in Judges 3:13, and by its own name in 2 Samuel 10:5. The ban of Joshua referred not to the rebuilding of Jericho, but to its restoration as a fortified city. This also appears from the terms used by Joshua ("set up the gates of it," Joshua 6:26), and again reiterated when the threatened judgment afterwards came upon the family of Hiel (1 Kings 16:34).

camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it," Achan had still persisted in his sin.

It will be remembered that, forty years before, at the brink of the Red Sea, "the Lord said unto Moses: Wherefore criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward!" (Exodus 14:15). As then, so now, when Joshua and the elders of Israel lay on their faces before the Lord, not prayer, but action was required. In the one case it was not exercise of faith to pray where obedience was called for; nor yet, in the other, had prayer any meaning, nor could it expect an answer, while sin remained unremoved. And so it ever is. The cause of Israel's disaster lay, not in want of faithfulness on the part of the Lord, but on that of Israel. Their sin must now be searched out, and "the accursed" be "destroyed from among them." For, although the sin of Achan was that of an individual, it involved all Israel in its guilt. The sinner was of Israel, and his sin was in Israel's camp. It is needless here to discuss the question, how one guilty of sin should involve in its consequences those connected with him, whether by family or social ties. It is simply a fact, admitting no discussion, and is equally witnessed when God's law in nature, and when His moral law is set at defiance. The deepest reason of it lies, indeed, in this, that the God of nature and of grace is also the founder of society; for, the family and society are not of man's devising, but of God's institution, and form part of His general plan. Accordingly, God deals with us not merely as individuals, but also as families and as nations. To question the rightness of this would be to question alike the administration, the fundamental principles, and the plan of God's universe. But there is reason for devout thankfulness, that we can, and do recognize the presence of God in both nature and in history. The highest instance of the application of this law, is that which has rendered our salvation possible. For just as we had sinned and destroyed ourselves through our connection with the first Adam, so are we saved through the second Adam - the Lord from heaven, Who has become our Substitute, that in Him we might receive the adoption of children.

The tidings, that the sin of one of their number had involved Israel in judgment, must have rapidly

spread through the camp of Israel. But even this knowledge and the summons to sanctify themselves, that on the morrow the transgressor might be designated by the Lord, did not move Achan to repentance and confession. And now all Israel were gathered before the Lord. First approached the princes of the twelve tribes. Each name of a tribe had been written separately,¹⁴ when "the lot" that "came up," or was drawn, bore the name of Judah.

Thus singled out, the heads of the various clans of Judah next presented themselves, when the lot designated that of Zarhi. And still the solemn trial went on, with increasing solemnity, as the circle narrowed, when successively the families of Zabdi, and finally, among them, the household of Achan was singled out by the hand of God. All this time had Achan kept silence. And now he stood alone before God and Israel, that guilty one who had "troubled" all. Would he at the last confess, and "give glory to Jehovah" by owning Him as the God who seeth and knoweth all sin, however deeply hidden? It was in the language of sorrow, not of anger, that Joshua adjured him. It wrung from Achan a full admission of his crime. How miserable the whole thing must have sounded in his own ears, when he had put the facts of his sin into naked words; how paltry the price at which he had sold himself, when it was brought into the broad sunlight and "laid out before the Lord," in the sight of Joshua and of all Israel. One thing more only remained to be done. They led forth the wretched man, with all his household, and all that belonged to them, and all Israel stoned him.¹⁵ And then they burned the dead body,¹⁶

¹⁴ We infer that the guilty tribe, kindred, family, and individual household (being the four divisions according to which all Israel was arranged) was designated by the lot, from the fact that the expression rendered "taken" in Joshua 7 is exactly the same as that word in 1 Samuel 10:20, and 14:41, 42. Again, the expressions "the lot came up" (Joshua 18:11) or "came forth" (19:1), seems to indicate that the lot was drawn - probably out an urn - in the manner described in the text.

¹⁵ Most commentators read Joshua 7:24, 25, as implying that the sons and daughters of Achan were stoned with him, supposing that his family could not have been ignorant of their father's sin. Of the latter there is, however, no indication in the text. It will also be noticed that in ver. 25 the singular number is used: "All Israel stoned him;" "and they raised over him a great heap of stones." In that case, the plural number which follows

and buried all beneath a heap of stones, alike as a memorial and a warning. But the valley they called that of "Achor," or trouble - while the echoes of that story sounded through Israel's history to latest times, in woe and in weal, for judgment and for hope (Isaiah 65:10; Hosea 2:15).

The sin of Israel having been removed, God once more assured Joshua of His presence to give success to the undertaking against Ai. In pledge thereof He was even pleased to indicate the exact means which were to be used in reducing the city. A corps of 30,000 men was accordingly detailed, of whom 5000 were placed in ambush on the west side of Ai,¹⁷ where, under shelter of the wood, their presence was concealed from Ai, and, by the intervening hill, from Bethel. While the main body of the Israelites under Joshua were to draw away the defenders of Ai by feigned flight, this corps was at a given signal to take the city, and after having set it on fire, to turn against the retreating men. Such was the plan of attack, and it was closely adhered to. "The ambush" lay on the west of Ai, while the main body of the host pitched north of the city, a valley intervening between them and Ai. Next, Joshua moved into the middle of that valley. Early the following morning the king of Ai discovered this advance of the Israelitish camp, and moved with his army to the "appointed place,"¹⁸ right in front of "the plain," which, as we know from the description of travelers, was covered by olive trees.

("and burned them," etc.) would refer only to the oxen, asses, and sheep, and to all that Achan possessed.

¹⁶ This was an aggravation of the ordinary punishment of death, Leviticus 20:14. We may here also explain that the expression "wrought folly in Israel" (Joshua 7:15), refers to that which is opposed to the character and dignity of God's people, as in Genesis 34:7.

¹⁷ Interpreters have found considerable difficulties in Joshua 8:3, as compared with vers. 10-12, and accordingly suggested, that as the two letters h and l - the one indicating the number five, the other thirty - are very like each other, there may have been a mistake in copying ver. 3, where it should read 5000 instead of 30,000. But there really is no need for resorting to this theory, and I believe that the narrative, fairly read, convey the meaning expressed by me the text.

¹⁸ Not "time," as in our Authorized Version, which would give no meaning.

The battlefield was well chosen, since Ai occupied the vantage-ground on the slope, while an advance by Israel would be checked and broken by the olive plantation which they would have to traverse. Joshua and all Israel now feigned a retreat, and fled in an easterly direction towards the wilderness. Upon this, all the people that were in Ai, in their eager haste to make the victory decisive, "allowed themselves to be called away" to pursue after Israel, till they were drawn a considerable distance from the city.

The olive plantation now afforded those who had lain in ambush shelter for their advance. The preconcerted signal was given. Joshua, who probably occupied a height apart, watching the fight, lifted his spear. As the outposts of the ambush saw it, and reported that the signal for their advance had been given, a rush would be made up the steep sides of the hill towards the city. But the signal would also be perceived and understood by the main army of Israel, and they now anxiously watched the result of movements which they could not follow. They had not long to wait. Above the dark green olive trees, above the rising slopes, above the white walls, curled slowly in the clear morning air the smoke of the burning city. Something in the attitude and movements of Israel must have betrayed it, for "the men of Ai looked behind them," only to see that all was lost, and no means of escape left them. And now the host of Israel "turned again," while those who had set Ai on fire advanced in an opposite direction. Between these two forces the men of Ai were literally crushed. Not one of them escaped from that bloody plain and slope. The slaughter extended to the district around. Finally, the king of Ai was put to death, and his dead body "hanged upon a tree till eventide."¹⁹

But of what had been Ai "they made a Tel (or heap) forever." Never was Scripture saying more

¹⁹ It does not appear that "hanging" was one of the modes of execution under the Mosaic Law. From Deuteronomy 21:22, we learn that in certain cases the criminal was put to death, and after that his dead body hung on a tree till eventide. This is fully confirmed by Joshua 10:26. The Rabbinical Law (Sanh. vii. 3; xi. 1) recognizes strangulation, but not hanging, as a mode of execution in the lightest cases to which the punishment of death attached. Full details are given as to the manner in which the punishment was to be administered.

literally fulfilled than this. For a long time did modern explorers in vain seek for the site of Ai, where they knew it must have stood. "The inhabitants of the neighboring villages," writes Canon Williams, to whom the merit of the identification really belongs, "declared repeatedly and emphatically that this was Tel, and nothing else. I was satisfied that it should be so when, on subsequent reference to the original text of Joshua 8:28, I found it written, that 'Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a Tel forever, even a desolation unto this day!' There are many Tels in modern Palestine, that land of Tels, each Tel with some other name attached to it to mark the former site. But the site of Ai has no other name 'unto this day.' It is simply et-Tel - the heap 'par excellence.'"

III_09 Solemn Dedication Of The Land And Of Israel On Mounts Ebal And Gerizim - The Deceit Of The Gibeonites.

Joshua 8:30 to 9:27

BY the miraculous fall of Jericho God had, so to speak, given to His people the key to the whole land; with the conquest of Ai they had themselves entered, in His strength, upon possession of it. The first and most obvious duty now was, to declare, by a grand national act, in what character Israel meant to hold what it had received of God. For, as previously explained, it could never have been the Divine object in all that had been, or would be done, merely to substitute one nation for another in the possession of Palestine; but rather to destroy the heathen, and to place in their room His own redeemed and sanctified people, so that on the ruins of the hostile kingdom of this world, His own might be established. To mark the significance of the act by which Israel was to declare this, it had before been prescribed by Moses as a first duty (Deuteronomy 27:2), and detailed directions given for it (Deuteronomy 27). The act itself was to consist of three parts. The law - that is, the commands, "statutes," and "rights," contained in the Pentateuch - was to be written on "great stones," previously covered with "plaster," in the manner in which inscriptions were made on the monuments of Egypt.²⁰ Then sacrifices were

to be offered on an altar of "whole stones." The memorial stones were to be set up, and the sacrifices offered on Mount Ebal. But the third was to be the most solemn part of the service. The priests²¹ with the Ark were to occupy the intermediate valley, and six of the tribes (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin) - those which had sprung from the lawful wives of Israel - were to stand on Mount Gerizim, while the other six (of whom five had sprung from Leah's and Rachel's maids, Reuben being added to them on account of his great sin, Genesis 49:4) were placed on Mount Ebal.

Then, as the priests in the valley beneath read the words of blessing, the tribes on Mount Gerizim were to respond by an Amen; and as they read the words of the curses, those on Mount Ebal were similarly to give their solemn assent - thus expressly taking upon themselves each obligation, with its blessing in the observance, and its curse in the breach thereof. An historical parallel here immediately recurs to our minds. As, on his first entrance into Canaan, Abraham had formally owned Jehovah by rearing an altar unto Him (Genesis 12:7), and as Jacob had, on his return, paid the vow which he had recorded at Bethel (Genesis 35:7), so Israel now consecrated its possession of the land by receiving it as from the Lord, by recording His name, and by taking upon itself all the obligations of the covenant.

A glance at the map will enable us to realize the scene. From Ai and Bethel the direct route northwards leads by Shiloh to Shechem (Judges 21:19). The journey would occupy altogether about eleven hours. Of course, Israel could not have realized at the time that they were just then traveling along what would become the great highway from Galilee to Jerusalem, so memorable in after-history. Leaving the sanctuary of Shiloh a little aside, they would climb a rocky ridge. Before

could not have been so durable as if graven on these stones. May it not be, that this "profession" was intended for that, rather than for all future generations? For, though it was indeed binding upon all succeeding generations - as the record of the transaction in Scripture shows - yet each generation must take for itself the profession to be the Lord's.

²⁰ In the drier climate of Palestine such inscriptions would of course last much longer than in our own country. Still, they

²¹ That this devolved not upon the Levites generally, but specially upon the priests, appears from Joshua 8:33.

them a noble prospect spread. This was the future rich portion of Ephraim: valleys covered with corn, hills terraced to their tops, the slopes covered with vines and olive-yards. On wards the host moved, till it reached a valley, bounded south and north by mountains, which run from west to east. This was the exact spot on which Abram had built his first altar (Genesis 12:7); here, also, had Jacob's first settlement been (Genesis 33:19). Not a foe molested Israel on their march right up the middle of the land, partly, as previously explained, from the division of the land under so many petty chieftains, but chiefly because God had a favor unto them and to the work to which they had set their hands. Travelers speak in rapturous terms of the beauty of the valley of Shechem, even in the present desolateness of the country. It is a pass which intersects the mountain-chain, that runs through Palestine from south to north. To the south it is bounded by the range of Gerizim, to the north by that of Ebal. From where the priests with the Ark took up their position on the gentle rise of the valley, both Gerizim and Ebal appear hollowed out, forming, as it were, an amphitheater, while the "limestone strata, running up in a succession of ledges to the top of the hills, have all the appearance of benches."

Here, occupying every available inch of ground, were crowded the tribes of Israel: men, women, and children, "as well the strangers, and he that was born among them." As they stood close together, the humblest in Israel by the side of the "officers," "elders," and "judges," all eagerly watching what passed in the valley, or solemnly responding to blessing or curse, a scene was enacted, the like of which had not before been witnessed upon earth, and which could never fade from the memory.²² It is noteworthy that, on Mount Ebal, whence came the responses to the curses, the great stones were set up on which "the

law" was written, and that there also the sacrifices were offered. This is in itself characteristic. Perhaps even the circumstance is not without significance, that they who stood on Mount Ebal must have had their view bounded by the mountains of Benjamin. Not so they who occupied Gerizim, the mount whence came the responses to the blessings. For the view which greeted those who at early morn crowded the top of the Mount of Blessings, was only second to that vouchsafed to Moses from the summit of Pisgah. If less in extent than the latter, it was more distinct and detailed.

All Central Palestine lay spread like a map before the wondering gaze of Israel. Tabor, Gilboa, the hills of Galilee rose in succession; in the far-distance snow-capped Hermon bounded the horizon, with sweet valleys and rich fields intervening. Turning to the right, they would descry the Lake of Galilee, and follow the cleft of the Jordan valley, marking beyond it Bashan, Ajalon, Gilead, and even Moab; to their left, the Mediterranean from Carmel to Gaza was full in view, the blue outline far away dimly suggesting thoughts of the "isles of the Gentiles," and the blessings in store for them. as far as the eye could reach - and beyond it, to the uttermost bounds of the earth - would the scene which they witnessed in that valley below be repeated; the echo of the blessings to which they responded on that mount would resound, till, having wakened every valley, it would finally be sent back in songs of praise and thanksgiving from a redeemed earth. And so did Israel on that spring morning consecrate Palestine unto the LORD, taking sea and lake, mountain and valley - the most hallowed spots in their history - as witnesses of their covenant.

From this solemn transaction the Israelites moved, as we gather from Joshua 9:6, to Gilgal, where they seem to have formed a permanent camp. The mention of this place in Deuteronomy 11:30, where it is described as "beside the oaks of Moreh," that is, near the spot of Abram's first altar (Genesis 12:7), implies a locality well-known at the time, and, as we might almost conjecture from its after history, a sort of traditional sanctuary.

This alone would suffice to distinguish this Gilgal from the first encampment of Israel east of Jericho,

²² All travelers are agreed on two points: 1. That there could be no difficulty whatever in distinctly hearing both from Ebal and Gerizim anything that was spoken in the valley. 2. That these two mountains afforded sufficient standing-ground for all Israel. We note these two points in answer to possible objections. Happily in the present instance we have express and independent testimony to put such cavils out of court. According to Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, 1 p. 203), the valley is about sixty rods wide.

which only obtained its name from the event which there occurred. Besides, it is impossible to suppose that Joshua marched back from Shechem to the banks of Jordan (9:6; 10:6, 7, 9, 15, 43), and, again, that he did so a second time, after the battles in Galilee, to make apportionment of the land among the people by the banks of Jordan (14:6). Further, the localization of Gilgal near the banks of Jordan would be entirely incompatible with what we know of the after-history of that place. Gilgal was one of the three cities where Samuel judged the people (1 Samuel 7:16); here, also, he offered sacrifices, when the Ark was no longer in the tabernacle at Shiloh (1 Samuel 10:8; 13:7-9; 15:21); and there, as in a central sanctuary, did all Israel gather to renew their allegiance to Saul (1 Samuel 11:14). Later on, Gilgal was the great scene of Elisha's ministry (2 Kings 2:1), and still later it became a center of idolatrous worship (Hosea 4:15; 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5). All these considerations lead to the conclusion, that the Gilgal, which formed the site of Joshua's encampment is the modern Jiljilieh, a few miles from Shiloh, and about the same distance from Bethel - nearly equidistant from Shechem and from Jerusalem.

In this camp at Gilgal a strange deputation soon arrived. Professedly, and apparently, the travelers had come a long distance. For their garments were worn, their sandals clouted, their provisions dry and moldy, ²³ and the skins in which their wine had been were rent and "bound up" (like purses), as in the East wine-bottles of goat's skin are temporarily repaired on a long journey.

According to their own account, they lived far beyond the boundaries of Palestine, where their fellow-townsmen had heard what the Lord had done in Egypt, and again to Sihon and to Og, wisely omitting from the catalogue the miraculous passage of Jordan and the fall of Jericho, as of too recent date for their theory. Attracted by the name of Jehovah, Israel's God, who had done such wonders, they had been sent to make "a league" with Israel. It must have been felt that the story did not sound probable - at least, to any who had learned to realize the essential enmity of

heathenism against the kingdom of God, and who understood that so great a change as the report of these men implied could not be brought about by "the hearing of the ear." Besides, what they proposed was not to make submission to, but a league with, Israel: by which not merely life, but their land and liberty, would be secured to them.

²⁴ But against any league with the inhabitants of Canaan, Israel had been specially warned (Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:2). What if, after all, they were neighbors? The suspicion seems to have crossed the minds of Joshua and of the elders, and even to have been expressed by them, only to be set aside by the protestations of the pretended ambassadors. It was certainly a mark of religious superficiality and self-confidence on the part of the elders of Israel to have consented on such grounds to "a league." The sacred text significantly puts it: "And the men (the elders of Israel) took of their victuals (according to the common Eastern fashion of eating bread and salt with a guest who is received as a friend), but they asked not counsel at the mouth of Jehovah."

Their mistake soon became apparent. Three days later, and Israel found that the pretended foreigners were in reality neighbors! Meanwhile, the kings or chieftains who ruled in Western Palestine had been concerting against Israel a combined movement of their forces from "the hills," or highlands of Central Palestine, from "the valleys," or the Shephelah (low country), between the mountain-chain and the sea, and "from the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon," that is, from Joppa northwards by the sea-shore. The existence of the small confederate republic of Gibeon with its three associate cities in the midst of small monarchies throws a curious light upon the state of Palestine at the time; and the jealousy which would naturally exist between them helps to explain alike the policy of the Gibeonites, and the revenge which the Canaanitish kings were shortly afterwards preparing to take. The history of the republic of Gibeon is interesting.

²³ Literally, "dotted over."

²⁴ In Joshua 9:15, we read indeed: "Joshua... made a league with them, to let them live."

"Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities.... greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty" (Joshua 10:2).

Its inhabitants were "Hivites" (11:19). Afterwards Gibeon fell to the lot of Benjamin, and became a priest-city (18:25; 21:17). When Nob was destroyed by Saul, the tabernacle was transported to Gibeon, where it remained till the temple was built by Solomon (1 Chronicles 16:39; 21:29; 1 Kings 3:4; 2 Chronicles 1:3).²⁵ It lay about two hours to the north-west of Jerusalem, and is represented by the modern village of el-Jib. Its three associate towns were Chephirah, about three hours' west from Gibeon, the modern Kefir; Beeroth, about ten miles north of Jerusalem, the modern el-Bireh - both cities afterwards within the possession of Benjamin; and Kirjath-Jearim, "the city of groves," probably so called from its olive, fig, and other plantations, as its modern representative, Kuriet-el-Enab, is from its vineyards. The latter city, which was afterwards allotted to Judah, is about three hours from Jerusalem; and there the Ark remained from the time of its return from the Philistines to that of David (1 Samuel 7:2; 2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Chronicles 13:5, 6).

When the people learned the deceit practiced upon them, they "murmured against the princes;" but the latter refused to break their solemn oath, so far as it insured the lives and safety of the Gibeonites. If they had sworn rashly and presumptuously "by Jehovah, God of Israel," it would have only added another and a far more grievous sin to have broken their oath; not to speak of the effect upon the heathen around. The principle applying to this, as

²⁵ The following historical notice in the Mishnah is so interesting, that we give its translation: "When they went to Gilgal, high places were allowed (for ordinary worship); the most holy offerings were eaten 'within,' between the veils; the less holy ones in every place. When they went to Shiloh, the high places were forbidden. There were not there beams (for the house of God), but a building of stones below (a kind of foundation) and the curtains (tabernacle) above, and that was (in Scripture-language) 'rest.' Then the most holy offerings were eaten 'within,' between the veils, and the less holy and the second tithe anywhere within sight (of Shiloh). When they went to Nob and to Gibeon, high places were allowed. Then the most holy offerings were eaten 'within,' between the veils, and the less holy ones in all the cities of Israel" (Sevachim xiv. 5, 6, 7).

to similar rash undertakings, is, that a solemn obligation, however incurred, must be considered binding, unless its observance involve fresh sin. But in this instance it manifestly did not involve fresh sin. For the main reason of the destruction of the Canaanites was their essential hostility to the kingdom of God. The danger to Israel, accruing from this, could be avoided in a solitary instance. With a view to this, the Gibeonites were indeed spared, but attached as "bond-men" to the sanctuary, where they and their descendants performed all menial services²⁶ (Joshua 9:23). Nor, as the event proved, did they ever betray their trust, or lead Israel into idolatry.²⁷ Still, as a German writer observes, the rashness of Israel's princes, and the conduct of the Gibeonites, conveys to the church at all times solemn warning against the devices and the deceit of the world, which, when outward advantage offers, seeks a friendly alliance with, or even reception into, the visible kingdom of God.

III_10 The Battle Of Gibeon - Conquest Of The South Of Canaan - The Battle Of Merom - Conquest Of The North Of Canaan - State Of The Land At The Close Of The Seven Years' War

Joshua 10 to 12

THE surrender of Gibeon would fill the kings of Southern Canaan with dismay. It was, so to speak, treason within their own camp; it gave Israel a strong position in the heart of the country and within easy reach of Jerusalem; while the possession of the passes leading from Gibeon would throw the whole south of Canaan open to their incursion. In the circumstances it natural that the chieftains of the south would combine, in the first place, for the retaking of Gibeon. The confederacy, which was under the leadership of

²⁶ From the concluding words of Joshua 9:27, it has been rightly inferred that the Book of Joshua must date from a period previous to the building of the temple by Solomon.

²⁷ From 2 Samuel 21:1, we gather that, in his carnal zeal, Saul had broken the oath of the princes - with what result appears from the narrative.

Adoni-Zedek,²⁸ king of Jerusalem,²⁹ embraced Hoham,³⁰ King of Hebron (about seven hours' south of Jerusalem); Piram,³¹ king of Jarmuth, the present Jarmuk, about three hours' to the south-west of Jerusalem; Japhia,³² king of Lachish, and Debir,³³ king of Eglon, both cities close to each other, and not far from Gaza, to the south-west of Hebron.

The march of the combined kings was evidently rapid, and the danger pressing, for it seems to have found the Gibeonites wholly unprepared, and their entreaty to Joshua for immediate succor was of the most urgent kind. That very night Joshua marched to their relief with "all the people of war, that is, the mighty men of valor."

The relieving army came upon the enemy as "suddenly" as they had appeared in sight of Gibeon. It was probably very early in the morning when Joshua and his warriors surprised the allied camp. Gibeon lay in the east, surrounded, as in a semicircle, north, west, and south, by its three confederate cities. The five kings had pushed forward within that semicircle, and camped in the "open ground at the foot of the heights of Gibeon." Animated by the assurance which God had expressly given Joshua: "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee," the host of Israel fell upon them with an irresistible rush. The Canaanites made but a short stand before their unexpected assailants; then fled in wild confusion towards the pass of Upper Beth-horon, "the house of caves." They gained the height before their pursuers, and were hurrying down the pass of the Nether Beth-horon, when a fearful hailstorm, such as not infrequently sweeps over the hills of

²⁸ The reader will notice the significant change from Melchi-Zedek, "My King righteousness," to Adoni-Zedek, "My Lord righteousness," marking the change of dynasties.

²⁹ Jerusalem, either the habitation of peace, or the possession of peace - perhaps originally the habitation of Shalem.

³⁰ Hoham: "the Jehovah of the multitude."

³¹ Piram: "coursing about," wild and free.

³² Japhia: exalted.

³³ Debir: scribe.

Palestine, burst upon them. It was in reality "the Lord" who, once more miraculously employing natural agency, "cast down great stones from heaven upon them;" "and they were more which died from the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

It was but noon; far behind Israel in the heaven stood the sun over Gibeon, and before them over Ajalon in the west hung the crescent moon. The tempest was extinguishing day and light, and the work was but half done. In the pass to Nether Beth-horon Israel might be readily divided; at any rate, the enemy might escape before their crushing defeat had assured safety to Gibeon, and given the south of Palestine to Israel. Now, or never, was the time to pursue the advantage. Oh, that the sun would once more burst forth in his brightness; oh, that the all too short day were protracted "until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies!" Then it was that Joshua burst into that impassioned prayer of faith, which is quoted in the sacred text from the "Book of Jasher," - or "Book of the Pious," - apparently, as we infer from 2 Samuel 1:18, a collection of poetical pieces, connected with the sublimest scenes in the history of the heroes of the kingdom of God. In this instance the quotation begins, as we take it, Joshua 10:12, and ends with ver. 15. This is proved by the insertion in ver. 15 of a notice, which in the historical narrative occurs only in ver. 43. For it is evident that Joshua did not return to Gilgal immediately after the battle of Gibeon (ver. 21), but pursued the war as described in the rest of ch. 10, till the whole south of Palestine was reduced. Thus verses 12-15 are a quotation from "the Book of the Pious," inserted within the Book of Joshua, the narrative of which is resumed in ver. 16. The quotation reads as follows:

"Then spake Joshua to Jehovah,

In the day Jehovah gave the Amorite before the sons of Israel,

And he spake in the sight of Israel.

Sun, on Gibeon rest still,³⁴

³⁴ The word probably means "to become dumb." Accordingly, a recent Italian writer has regarded it as a poetical expression for "ceasing to shine," and treated the event as an eclipse of the sun. But the context shows that this view is

And moon, on the valley of Ajalon!
 And still rested the sun, And the moon stood,
 Till the people were avenged on their foes.
 (Is not this written in the 'Book of the Pious?')
 And the sun stood in mid-heaven,
 And hasted not to go - like (as on) a complete day.
³⁵

And there was not like that day, before or after,
 That Jehovah hearkened to the voice of man - For
 Jehovah warred for Israel!
 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him to the
 camp, to Gilgal." ³⁶

And God hearkened to the voice of Joshua. Once
 more the sun burst forth, and the daylight was
 miraculously protracted till Israel was avenged of
 its enemies. Onwards rolled the tide of fugitives,
 hotly pursued by Israel, through the pass of Nether
 Beth-horon to Azekah, and thence to Makkedah.
³⁷ Here tidings were brought to Joshua, that the
 five kings had hid themselves in one of the caves
 with which that district abounds. But Joshua
 would not be diverted from his object. He ordered
 large stones to be rolled to the mouth of the cave,
 and its entrance to be guarded by armed men,
 while the rest of the army followed the enemy and
 smote their "rearguard." Only broken remnants of
 the fugitives found shelter in the "fenced cities."

untenable, and that "to become dumb" means here to rest silent
 or stand still.

³⁵ That is, like any ordinary complete day. We attach
 considerable importance to our rendering as here proposed.

³⁶ It is impossible here to enter on a detailed criticism.
 Substantially our view is that of all the best critics, except that
 some regard the five lines after the parenthesis as the remarks
 of him who inserted in the Book of Joshua the quotation from
 the Book of Jasher. But the poetical terms used in these five last
 lines render this view, to say the least of it, most improbable.
 Poetical expressions, similar to those used in the text, will recur
 to the reader, specially Judges 5:20: "the stars fought out of their
 courses (not "in their courses," as in Authorized Version)
 against Sisera." See also Psalm 18:10; 29:6; 114:4-6; Isaiah 34:3;
 55:12; 64:1; Amos 9:13; Micah 1:4. The passage Habakkuk 3:11
 does not refer to the event in the text, as its correct rendering is:
 "The sun and moon enter into their habitation," that is, go into
 shadow. Our view does not, of course, militate against a
 miraculous intervention on the part of God.

³⁷ The locality of these two places has not been ascertained.

Joshua himself had camped before the city of
 Makkedah. Thither the pursuing corps returned,
 and thence the war was afterwards carried on
 (10:21, 29). On the morning after the victory, the
 five confederate kings were brought from their
 hiding-place. In a manner not uncommon in
 ancient times, ³⁸ Joshua made his captains put
 their feet upon the necks of the prostrate kings,
 who had so lately gone forth boastfully in all the
 pride and. pomp of war. But the lesson which
 Israel was to learn from their victory was not one
 of self-confidence in their supposed superiority,
 but of acknowledgment of God and confidence in
 Him: "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of
 good courage: for thus shall Jehovah do to all your
 enemies against whom ye fight."

The death of these five kings proved only the
 beginning of a campaign which may have lasted
 weeks, or even months, for we find that successors
 of these five kings afterwards shared their fate. In
 the end, the whole south of Canaan was in the
 hands of Israel, though some of the cities taken
 appear to have been afterwards again wrested from
 them, and occupied by the Canaanites. ³⁹ The
 extent of the conquest is indicated (10:41) by a
 line drawn south and north, westwards - "from
 Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza" - and eastwards,
 "from the district of Goshen ⁴⁰ unto Gibeon."

The campaign thus finished in the south had soon
 to be renewed in the north of Canaan. The means,
 the help, and the result were the same as before.
 Only, as the danger was much greater, from the
 multitude of Israel's opponents - "even as the sand
 that is upon the sea-shore," - and from their
 formidable mode of warfare ("horses and chariots
 very many"), hitherto unknown to Israel, the Lord
 once more gave express assurance of victory: "I
 will deliver them up all slain before Israel." At the

³⁸ It seems even to have been practiced by the Byzantine
 emperors long after the Christian era.

³⁹ Such as Gezer (10:33), Hebron, and Debir (14:12; 15:13-17;
 comp. Judges 1:10-15). Masius rightly observes, that in this
 expedition Joshua had rather rapidly swept over the south of
 Palestine than permanently and wholly occupied the country.

⁴⁰ Of course not the province of that name in Egypt, but a
 district in the south of Judah, probably deriving its name from
 the town of that name (15:51).

same time He enjoined "to hough (or hamstring) their horses, and burn their chariots with fire," lest Israel should be tempted to place in future their trust in such weapons. The allied forces of the northern enemy were under the leadership of Jabin,⁴¹ king of Hazor,⁴² which "before times was the head of all those kingdoms." They consisted not only of the three neighboring "kings" (or chieftains) of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph,⁴³ but of all the kings "in the north and (on the mountain" (of Naphtali, Joshua 20:7), of those in the Arabah, south of the Lake of Gennesaret, of those "in the plains," or valleys that stretched to the Mediterranean, and in "the heights of Dor," at the foot of Mount Carmel - in short, of all the Canaanite tribes from the Mediterranean in the south-west up to Mizpeh⁴⁴ "the view") under Mount Hermon in the far north-east.

With the rapidity and suddenness which characterized all his movements, Joshua fell upon the allied camp by the Lake Merom (the modern el-Huleh), and utterly routed the ill-welded mass of the enemy. The fugitive Canaanites seem to have divided into three parts, one taking the road north-west to "Zidon the Great," another that west and south-west to the "smelting-pits by the waters" (Misrephoth-Maim), and the third that to the east leading to the valley of Mizpeh. In each direction they were hotly pursued by the Israelites. One by one all their cities were taken. Those in the valleys were burnt, but those on the heights, with the exception of Hazor, left standing, as requiring only small garrisons for their occupation. Altogether the war in the south and north must have occupied

at least seven years,⁴⁵ at the end of which the whole country was in the possession of Israel, from the "smooth mountain (Mount Halak) that goeth up to Seir," - that is, the white chalk mountains in the chain of the Azazimeh, in the Negeb - as far north as "Baal-gad," the town dedicated to "Baal" as god of "fortune," the Caesarea Philippi of the Gospels (11:16- 18). More than that, Joshua also drove the Anakim, who had inspired the spies with such dread, from their original seats in the mountains,⁴⁶ and in and around Hebron, Debir, and Anab into the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. From ch. 15:14 we infer that they shortly afterwards returned, but were conquered by that veteran hero, Caleb.

To sum up all, we find that the wars under Joshua put Israel into possession of Canaan and broke the power of its inhabitants, but that the latter were not exterminated, nor yet all their cities taken by Israel (13:1-6; 17:14, etc.; 18:3, 23:5, 12). Indeed, such a result could scarcely have been desirable, either in reference to the country or to Israel, while, from Exodus 23:28-30 and Deuteronomy 7:22, we know that from the beginning it had not been the Divine purpose. But there was also a higher object in this. It would teach that a conquest, begun in the power of God and in believing dependence on Him, must be completed and consolidated in the same spirit. Only thus could Israel prosper as a nation. Canaan had been given to Israel by God,

⁴¹ Jabin seems to have been the title of the kings of Hazor (Judges 4:2).

⁴² Hazor in the mountains, north of Lake Merom, was afterwards rebuilt, and again became the seat of royalty (Judges 4:2; 1 Samuel 12:9). Thence Sisera issued against Israel.

⁴³ The locality of these three places has not been ascertained; but they seem to have been in the neighborhood of Hazor.

⁴⁴ There were several places throughout the land bearing the name of "Mizpeh" or "view." This Mizpeh was probably the modern village Mutulleh, which also means "prospect," situated on a hill two hundred feet high, north of Lake Merom, whence there is a splendid view.

⁴⁵ This we gather from Joshua 14:10. From it we learn that forty-five years had elapsed since the spies returned to Kadesh. But as thirty-eight of these were spent in the wanderings in the wilderness, it follows that the wars for the occupation of Canaan must have lasted seven years.

⁴⁶ In Joshua 11:21 a distinction is made between "the mountains of Judah" and "the mountains of Israel." This, strange as it may sound, affords one of the undesigned evidences of the early composition of the Book of Joshua. "When Judah entered on his possession," observes a German critic, "all the other tribes were still in Gilgal (14:6; 15:1). Afterwards, when Ephraim and Manasseh entered on theirs, all Israel, except Judah, were camped in Shiloh (16:1; 18:1), these two possessions being separated by the still unallotted territory which later was given to Benjamin (18:11). What more natural than that 'the mountain' given to the 'children of Judah' should have been called 'the mountain of Judah,' and that where all the rest of Israel camped, 'the mountain of Israel,' and also 'the mountain of Ephraim' (19:50; 20:7), because it was afterwards given to that tribe?"

and given to their faith. But much was left to be done which only the same faith could achieve. Any conformity to the heathen around, or tolerance of heathenism, any decay of the spirit in which they had entered the land, would result not only in weakness, but in the triumph of the enemy. And so it was intended of the Lord. The lesson of all this is obvious and important. To us also has our Joshua given entrance into Canaan, and victory over our enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have present possession of the land. But we do not yet hold all its cities, nor are our enemies exterminated. It needs on our part constant faith; there must be no compromise with the enemy, no tolerance of his spirit, no cessation of our warfare. Only that which at first gave us the land can complete and consolidate our possession of it.

III_11 Distribution Of The Land - Unconquered Districts - Tribes East Of The Jordan - "The Lot" - Tribes West Of The Jordan - The Inheritance Of Caleb - Dissatisfaction Of The Sons Of Joseph - The Tabernacle At Shiloh - Final Division Of The Land

Joshua 13 to 21

THE continuance of unsubdued races and districts soon became a source of danger, although in a direction different from what might have been anticipated. Sufficient had been gained by a series of brilliant victories to render the general tenure of the land safe to Israel. The Canaanites and other races were driven to their fastnesses, where for the time they remained on the defensive. On the other hand, a nation like Israel, accustomed to the nomadic habits of the wilderness, would scarcely feel the need of a fixed tenure of land, and readily grow weary of a desultory warfare in which each tribe had separately to make good its boundaries. Thus it came that Joshua had grown old, probably ninety or a hundred years, while the work entrusted to him was far from completed. In the far south and along the sea-shore the whole district from the brook of Egypt⁴⁷ to Ekron was still held, in the south-west and south-east, by the Geshurites

⁴⁷ Literally: "from Shichor, in the face of Egypt," or rather "from the black (river) to the east of Egypt." This was the brook Rhinocorura, the modern el-Arish.

and the Avites, while the territory farther north from Ekron to Gaza was occupied by the five lords of the Philistines (Joshua 13:2, 3).

According to the Divine direction, all these, though not descended from Canaan (Genesis 10:14), were to be "counted to the Canaanites," that is, treated as such. Traveling still farther northwards along the sea-shore, the whole "land of the Canaanites" or of the Phoenicians far up to the celebrated "cave"⁴⁸ near Sidon, and beyond it to Aphek⁴⁹ and even "to the borders of the Amorites"⁵⁰ was still unconquered. Thence eastward across Lebanon as far as Baal-gad and "the entering into Hamath,"| and again back from Mount Lebanon, across country, to the "smelting-pits on the waters," was subject to the Sidonians or Phoenicians.⁵¹ Yet all this belonged by Divine gift to Israel. That it was still unoccupied by them, and that Joshua was now old, constituted the ground for the Divine command to make immediate distribution of the land among the tribes. It was as if, looking to His promise, God would have bidden Israel consider the whole land as theirs, and simply go forward, in faith of that promise and in obedience to His command.⁵²

It will be remembered that only nine and a half tribes remained to be provided for, since "unto the tribe of Levi He gave none inheritance," other than what came from the sanctuary, while Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh had had their portions assigned by Moses east of the Jordan.⁵³

⁴⁸ Left untranslated (Mearah) in the Authorized Version. The cave, which is east of Sidon, still serves as a hiding-place to the Druses.

⁴⁹ The modern Afkah, on a terrace of Mount Lebanon, by the principal source of the river Adonis, in a lovely situation.

⁵⁰ The explanation of this is doubtful. Possibly it means: as far east as the territory of Og, king of Bashan, which formerly belonged to the Amorites.

⁵¹ Hamath, a district in Syria, with a capital of the same name on the Orontes.

⁵² The particle "and," put in italics in our Authorized Version, is not in the text of Joshua 13:6. The clause, "all the Sidonians" is explanatory, not additional.

⁵³ Although geographical details may seem dry to some, they are most important for the proper understanding of the Bible narrative. They may also be made alike interesting and

That territory was bounded by Moab along the south-eastern shores of the Dead Sea, while the eastern border of Reuben and Gad was held by Ammon. Both these nations were by Divine command not to be molested by Israel (Deuteronomy 2:9, 19). The southernmost and smallest portion of the district east of the Jordan belonged to Reuben. His territory extended from the river Arnon, in the south, to where Jordan flowed into the Dead Sea, and embraced the original kingdom of Sihon. Northward of it, the Ammonites had once held possession, but had been driven out by Sihon. That new portion of Sihon's kingdom was given not to Reuben but to Gad. The territory of that tribe ran along the Jordan as far as the Lake of Gennesaret - the upper portion (from Mahanaim) narrowing almost into a point. North of this was the possession of the half tribe of Manasseh, which embraced the whole of Bashan. It occupied by far the largest extent of area. But from its position it also lay most open to constant nomadic incursions, and possessed comparatively few settled cities.

The division of the land among the nine and a half tribes⁵⁴ was, in strict accordance with Divine direction (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54; 34:2-29), made by Eleazar, Joshua, and one representative from each of the ten tribes. It was decided by the "lot," which probably, however, only determined the situation of each inheritance, whether north or south, in land or by the sea-shore, not its extent and precise boundaries. These would depend upon the size of each tribe. In point of fact, the original arrangements had in some cases to be afterwards modified, not as to tribal localization, which was unalterably fixed by the Divine lot, but as to extent of territory. Thus Judah had to give up part of its possession to Simeon (Joshua 19:9), while Dan, whose portion proved too small, obtained certain cities both from Judah and from Ephraim.⁵⁵ As

spiritually useful, if the history of these places is traced in the various passages of Scripture where they are mentioned.

⁵⁴ The children of Joseph were counted two tribes.

⁵⁵ In connection with this we may note the curious and undesigned evidence, that we have in the text the real and original allotment of the land by Joshua himself. As so often, it is derived from an objection suggested. For there are strange divergencies in the sacred text. In describing the lots of Judah

regards the lot, we may probably accept the Rabbinical tradition, that two urns were set out, one containing the names of the ten (or rather nine and a half) tribes, the other the designation of the various districts into which the country had been arranged, and that from each a lot was successively drawn, to designate first the tribe, and then the locality of its inheritance.

This is not the place, however interesting the task, to describe the exact boundaries and cities of each tribe. We can only attempt the most general outline, which the reader must fill up for himself. Beginning in the far south, at Kadesh in the wilderness, and along the borders of Edom, we are within the territory of Simeon; north of it, bounded on the west by the land of the Philistines, and on the east by the Dead Sea, is the possession of Judah; beyond it, to the east, that of Benjamin, and to the west, that of Dan; north of Dan we reach Ephraim, and then Manasseh, the possession of Issachar running along the east of these two territories, and ending at the southern extremity of the Lake of Gennesaret; by the shore of that lake and far beyond it is the territory of Naphtali, first a narrow slip, then widening, and finally merging into a point. Asher occupied the seaboard, north of Manasseh; while, lastly, Zebulun is as it were wedged in between Issachar, Manasseh, Asher, and Naphtali.

and of Benjamin, the boundaries are accurately marked, and a complete list of cities is given; in those of Ephraim and half Manasseh there is no register of cities; in those of Simeon and Dan only lists of cities: in those of the other tribes evidently an incomplete tracing of boundaries and lists of cities. Now when we consider the history, we conclude that this is just what we would have expected in a contemporary document. Joshua 15, 16 assigns a definite portion to Judah; ch. 17 to Ephraim and half Manasseh, about which, however, they complain as being partly occupied by Canaanites whom they dared not attack (vs.16). Hence in their case there is no register of cities. On the other hand, the lot of Benjamin, being between Judah and Joseph (18:11), was completely occupied, and the register is complete. The territories of Simeon and Dan have no boundary mark, only a register of cities, because they really formed part of the territories of Judah and Ephraim. Lastly, the defectiveness in the description of the other tribal lots arises from so much of the country being still in the hands of the Canaanites. It is evident that such a register could not have dated from a later period, when the tribes were in full possession, but must be the original register of Joshua.

It only remains briefly to notice the incidents recorded in connection with the territorial division of the land.

1. It seems that before the first lot was drawn in the camp at Gilgal, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, came forward with a special claim. It will be remembered, that of the twelve princes sent from Kadesh only he and Joshua had brought "a good report of the land," in the spiritual sense of the expression, as encouraging the people to go forward. And when the Divine sentence doomed that rebellious generation to death in the wilderness, Caleb and Joshua alone were excepted. Strictly speaking, no more than this might have been implied in the promise by Moses, now claimed by Caleb: "Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance" (Joshua 14:9), since to have survived was to obtain the inheritance.⁵⁶

But there seems to have been more than merely a promise of survival, although it alone is mentioned in Numbers 14:24, 30. For we infer from the words and the attitude of Caleb, and from the similar privileges afterwards accorded to Joshua (19:49, 50), that Moses had, by direction of the Lord, given these two a right of special and personal choice. This on account of their exceptional faithfulness, and as the sole survivors of the generation to whom the land had been given. It was as if the surviving proprietors might choose their portion,⁵⁷ before those who, so to speak, were only next of kin had theirs allotted to them. Of this Caleb now reminds Joshua, and in words of such vigorous faith, as make us love still better the tried old warrior of Jehovah. Appearing at the head of "the house of fathers," in Judah, of which he was the head,⁵⁸ he first refers to the

⁵⁶ Even these words (14:12): "Now therefore give me this mountain, where of Jehovah spake in that day;" do not necessarily imply that that "mountain" was actually assigned to Caleb on "that day."

⁵⁷ It is difficult to arrive at a certain conclusion, whether at Kadesh districts were actually assigned to Caleb and to Joshua, or to Caleb alone, or whether the choice of districts was accorded to both, or to one of them. The reader will infer our conclusion from the text.

⁵⁸ "Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenazite," that is, a son of Kenaz, who was a descendant of Hezron, the son of Pharez,

past, then owns God's faithfulness in having preserved him to the age of eighty-five, with strength and courage undiminished for the holy war.

From 14:9 we infer that, when the twelve spies distributed themselves singly over the land, for the purposes of their mission, Caleb specially "searched" that "mountain," which was the favorite haunt of the dreaded Anakim. If this be so, we discover a special meaning and special faith on the part of Caleb, when he, rather than Joshua, attempted to "still the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once" (Numbers 13:30). In that case there was also special suitableness in the Divine bestowal made then and there:

"Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance" (Joshua 14:9, 12).

But even if otherwise, the courage and faith of the old warrior shine only the more brightly, as, recalling the terror formerly inspired by the Anakim and the strength of their cities, he claims that very portion for his own. Yet his courage bears no trace of self-sufficiency,⁵⁹ only of believing dependence upon the Lord. "If so be Jehovah will be with me, and I shall drive them out" (ver. 12).

The claim thus made was immediately acknowledged, Joshua adding his blessing on Caleb's proposed undertaking. But it was some time later that the expedition was actually made,⁶⁰ when Caleb offered the hand of his daughter, Achsah, as the prize of taking the great stronghold of Debir, the ancient Kirjath-sepher, or "book-city," - probably the fortified depository of the

a grandson of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:5, 18). The name "Kenaz" seems to have been rather marked in the family, as it recurs again later, 1 Chronicles 4:15. Caleb was the chieftain or head of one of "the houses of fathers" in Judah, and to the presence of this his "house" - not of the whole tribe - refer the words (Joshua 14:6): "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua."

⁵⁹ In this sense the words must be understood (Joshua 14:7): "I brought word again, as it was in mine heart," that is, according to my conscientious conviction. Similarly the expression (ver. 8): "but I wholly followed the Lord," means, that his allegiance to the Lord was not shaken either by the evil report of the other spies, or by the murmuring and threatening of the people.

⁶⁰ It seems to have taken place after the death of Joshua, and is recorded in Judges 1:11, etc.

sacred books of the Anakim. The prize was won by a near kinsman, Othniel,⁶¹ who, after the death of Joshua, was the first "judge" of Israel (Judges 3:9). The history of the campaign, with its accompanying incidents, is inserted in Joshua 15:13-19, because, both geographically and historically, it fits into that part of the description of the inheritance of Judah.⁶²

2. The first signs of future weakness and disagreement appeared so early as when the lot designated the possession of the children of Joseph (Ephraim and half the tribe of Manasseh). Theirs was the richest and most fertile in the land, including the plain of Sharon, capable of producing almost boundless store, and of becoming the granary of the whole land. On that ground then no complaint could be made. Nor could any reasonable objection be taken to the size of their lot,⁶³ provided they were prepared to go forward in faith and occupy it as against the Canaanites, who still held the principal towns in the valley, all the way from Bethshean by the Jordan to the plain of Jezreel and farther. But the children of Joseph were apparently afraid of such encounter because of the iron chariots of their enemies. Equally unwilling were they to clear the wooded heights of Ephraim, which connect the range north of Samaria with Mount Carmel, and where the Perizzites and the Rephaim had their haunts. Rather did they clamor for an additional

"portion" (17:14). Their demands were, of course, refused; Joshua turning the boastful pride in which they had been made into an argument for action on their part against the common enemy (ver. 18).⁶⁴

But this murmuring of the children of Joseph, and the spirit from which it proceeded, gave sad indications of dangers in the near future. National disintegration, tribal jealousies, coupled with boast-fullness and unwillingness to execute the work given them of God, were only too surely foreboded in the conduct of the children of Joseph.

3. If such troubles were to be averted, it was high time to seek a revival of religion. With that object in view, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel" were now gathered at Shiloh, and the tabernacle set up there (18:1). The choice of Shiloh was, no doubt, Divinely directed (Deuteronomy 12:11). It was specially suitable for the purpose, not only from its central situation - about eight hours' north of Jerusalem, and five south of Shechem - but from its name, which recalled rest⁶⁵ and the promised rest-giver (Genesis 49:10). Then Joshua solemnly admonished the assembled people as to their "slackness" in taking possession of the land which Jehovah had given them. To terminate further jealousies, he asked the people to choose three representatives from each of the seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been allotted. These were to "go through the land and describe it," that is, to make a general estimate and valuation, rather than an accurate survey, "with reference to their inheritance," that is, in view of their inheriting the land. After their return to Shiloh these twenty-one delegates were to divide the land into seven portions, when the lot would assign to each tribe the place of its inheritance.

⁶¹ It is not easy to decide whether Othniel was the son of Kenaz, who was a younger brother of Caleb, or whether he was himself Caleb's younger brother (Judges 3:9). The punctuation of the Masorethists is in favor of the latter view, nor was the marriage of an uncle with his niece contrary to the Mosaic law.

⁶² Two other critical remarks may here find a place. 1. Our present Hebrew text seems incomplete between Joshua 15:59 and 60. Here the LXX. insert, no doubt from a more perfect MS., a list of other eleven cities, among them Bethlehem. 2. The closing notice of ver. 63 helps us to fix the date of the Book of Joshua. Two other critical remarks may here find a place. 1. Our present Hebrew text seems incomplete between Joshua 15:59 and 60. Here the LXX. insert, no doubt from a more perfect MS., a list of other eleven cities, among them Bethlehem. 2. The closing notice of ver. 63 helps us to fix the date of the Book of Joshua.

⁶³ Ephraim numbered 32,500 and half Manasseh 26,350 men capable of bearing arms (Numbers 26:34, 37), or, both together, 58,850, while Judah numbered 76,500, and even Dan and Issachar respectively 64,400 and 64,300.

⁶⁴ The Authorized Version renders the last clause of ver. 18: "though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." The true rendering is not "though," but "for." Most commentators regard this as an irony, implying that it needed such strong tribes as the sons of Joseph! But I regard it as rather a covert appeal to their faith - "just because it is so, ye shall drive them out."

⁶⁵ Shiloh means rest.

4. The arrangement thus made was fully carried out.⁶⁶ After its completion Joshua, who, like Caleb, had received a special promise, was allowed to choose his own city within his tribal inheritance of Ephraim.⁶⁷ Finally, the cities of refuge, six in number; the Levitical cities, thirty-five in number; and the thirteen cities of the priests,⁶⁸ the sons of Aaron, were formally set aside.

Thus, so far as the Lord was concerned, He "gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:43-45).

⁶⁶ According to Josephus, it took seven months; according to the Rabbis, seven years. It need scarcely be said, that both suppositions are equally void of foundation. Josephus also imagines, that there was only one deputy from each tribe - or seven in all - to whom he adds three men expert in surveying (Ant. v. 1, 20, 21).

⁶⁷ Considering that Joshua was himself a descendant of Joseph, his reply to the complaints of his tribe showed the more clearly his uprightness and fitness for his calling.

⁶⁸ Of the six cities of refuge three were west of the Jordan: Kadesh (Naphtali - north), Shechem (Ephraim - center), and Hebron (Judah - south); three east of the Jordan: Bezer (Reuben - south), Ramoth (Gad - center), and Golan (Manasseh - north). The number of cities assigned to the Levites (thirty-five) cannot be regarded as too large. The second census gave the number of male Levites at 23,000. This, with a proportionate number of females, has been calculated to give a population of about 1300 for each of the thirty-five towns. Besides, it should be remembered, that the Levites were not the sole inhabitants of such towns. This should also be taken into account in regard to the assignment of thirteen cities to the descendants of Aaron, although their number has been computed at the time at two hundred families. Probably this is exaggerated, even admitting that as Aaron's two sons had 24 descendants (1 Chronicles 24), the next generation might have numbered 144 males, and the next again (at the time of Joshua) between 800 and 900 descendants. But, irrespective of this, the law had to provide not for that period, but for all time to come.

III_12 Return Of The Two And A Half Tribes To Their Homes - Building Of An Altar By Them - Embassy To Them - Joshua's Farewell Addresses - Death Of Joshua - Review Of His Life And Work

Joshua 22 to 24

YET another trial awaited Joshua, ere he put off the armor and laid him down to rest. Happily, it was one which he rather dreaded than actually experienced. The work given him to do was ended, and each of the tribes had entered on its God-given inheritance. And now the time had come for those faithful men who so truly had discharged their undertaking to recross Jordan, and "get unto to the land of their possession." These many years had the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh fought and waited by the side of their brethren. And now that God had given them rest, Joshua dismissed the tried warriors with a blessing, only bidding them fight in their own homes that other warfare, in which victory meant loving the Lord, walking in His ways, keeping His commandments, and cleaving unto and serving Him.

It must have been with a heavy heart that Joshua saw them depart from Shiloh.⁶⁹ It was not merely that to himself it would seem like the beginning of the end, but that misgivings and fears could not but crowd upon his mind.

They parted from Shiloh to comparatively far distances, to be separated from their brethren by Jordan, and scattered amid the wide tracts, in which their nomadic pastoral life would bring them into frequent and dangerous contact with heathen neighbors. They were now united to their brethren; they had fought by their side; would this union continue? The very riches with which they departed to their distant homes (22:8) might become a source of danger. They had parted with Jehovah's blessing and monition from the central sanctuary at Shiloh. Would it remain such to them, and they preserve the purity of their faith at a distance from the tabernacle and its services? Joshua remembered only too well the past history

⁶⁹ From Joshua 22:9 we learn that they "departed out of Shiloh," hence after the land had been finally apportioned among the tribes. Of course, this does not imply that the same warriors had continued all through the wars without changing.

of Israel; he knew that even now idolatry, although publicly non-existent, had still its roots and fibers in many a household as a sort of traditional superstition (24:23). Under such circumstances it was that strange tidings reached Israel and Joshua. Just before crossing Jordan the two and a half tribes had built an altar that could be seen far and wide, and then departed without leaving any explanation of their conduct. At first sight this would have seemed in direct contravention of one of the first principles of Israel's worship. Place, time, and manner of it were all God-ordained and full of meaning, and any departure there from, even in the slightest particular, destroyed the meaning, and with it the value of all. More especially would this appear an infringement of the express commands against another altar and other worship (Leviticus 17:8, 9; Deuteronomy 12:5-7), to which the terrible punishment of extermination attached (Deuteronomy 13:12-18). And yet there was something so strange in rearing this altar on the western side of the Jordan,⁷⁰ and not on the eastern, and in their own possession, that their conduct, however blameworthy, might possibly bear another explanation than that of the great crime of apostasy.

It was an anxious time when the whole congregation gathered, by their representatives, at Shiloh, not to worship, but to consider the question of going to war with their own brethren and companions in arms, and on such grounds. Happily, before taking decided action, a deputation was sent to expostulate with the two and a half tribes. It consisted of ten princes, representatives, each of a tribe, and all "heads of houses of their fathers," though, of course, not the actual chiefs of their tribes. At their head was Phinehas, the presumptive successor to the high priesthood, to whose zeal, which had once stayed the plague of Peor, the direction might safely be left. We are not told how they gathered the representatives of the offending tribes, but the

⁷⁰ This we gather from 12:10: "And when they came to the circle (circuits) of Jordan, that is in the land of Canaan" (in contrast to "the land of Gilead"), ver. 9. Again in ver. 11 "built an altar in face (or, in front) of the land of Canaan (that is, at its extreme boundary, looking towards it), in the circuits of Jordan, by the side of (or, 'over against') the children of Israel."

language in which, as recorded, the latter were addressed, is quite characteristic of Phinehas.

The conduct of the two and a half tribes had been self-willed and regardless of one of the first duties - that of not giving offense to the brethren, nor allowing their liberty to become a stumbling-block to others. For a doubtful good they had committed an undoubted offense, the more unwarranted, that they had neither asked advice nor offered explanation. Phinehas could scarcely help assuming that they had "committed unfaithfulness towards the God of Israel."⁷¹ He now urged upon them the remembrance, yet fresh in their minds, of the consequences of the sin of Peor, and which had, alas! still left its bitter roots among the people.⁷² If, on account of their uncleanness, they felt as if they needed nearer proximity to the altar, he invited them back to the western side of the Jordan where the other tribes would make room for them. But if they persisted in their sin, he reminded them how the sin of the one individual, Achan, had brought wrath on all the congregation. If so, then the rest of Israel must take action, so as to clear themselves of complicity in their "rebellion."

In reply, the accused tribes protested, in language of the most earnest expostulation, that their conduct had been wholly misunderstood.⁷³ So far from wishing to separate from the tabernacle and worship of Jehovah, this great altar had been reared as a witness to all ages that they formed an integral part of Israel, lest in the future they might be debarred from the service of Jehovah. That, and that alone, had been their meaning, however ill expressed. The explanation thus offered was cause

⁷¹ So literally, and not, as in Authorized Version (22:16): "What trespass is this that ye have committed?" This sin is very significantly viewed here as an "unfaithfulness" towards the God of Israel.

⁷² So in Joshua 22:17. Such a judgment as the death of 24,000 (Numbers 25:9) must have left many painful gaps in Israel. But this was not the saddest consequence. For, evidently, the worship of Baal-Peor had struck root among the people, even although for the present it was outwardly suppressed.

⁷³ There is a fervency of utterance in their protestation, which appears even in the accumulation of the names of God. The particle rendered "if" is here used as the formula for an oath.

of deep thankfulness to the deputies and to all Israel. Thus, in the good providence of God, this cloud also passed away.

A twofold work had been entrusted to Joshua: to conquer the land (Joshua 1:8), and to divide it by inheritance among the people ⁷⁴ (1:6). Both had been done, and in the spirit of strength, of courage, and of believing obedience enjoined at the outset (1:7). Unlike his great predecessor and master, Moses, he had been allowed to finish his task, and even to rest after its completion. ⁷⁵ And now he had reached one hundred and ten years, the age at which his ancestor Joseph had died (Genesis 50:26). Like a father who thinks of and seeks to provide for the future of his children after his death; ⁷⁶ like Moses when he gathered up all his life, his mission, and his teaching in his last discourses; as the Apostle Peter, when he endeavored that Christians might "be able after his Exodus ⁷⁷ to have these things always in remembrance," so did Joshua care for the people of his charge. On two successive occasions he gathered all Israel, through their representative "elders," ⁷⁸ to address to them last words. They are in spirit and even in tenor singularly like those of Moses, as indeed he had no new truth to communicate.

The first assembly must have taken place either in his own city of Timnath-serah, ⁷⁹ or else at Shiloh. The address there given had precisely the same object as that afterwards delivered by him, and

⁷⁴ So also the Book of Joshua is divided into two parts: the first (ch. 1-12), descriptive of the conquest, the second of the division of the land

⁷⁵ Joshua seems to have lived about fifteen years after the final division of the land.

⁷⁶ This idea is suggested by Calvin.

⁷⁷ The word used by the apostle (2 Peter 1:15) is "Exodus," the same as employed in the conversation on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:31), to which St. Peter in his epistle makes pointed reference (2 Peter 1:16-18).

⁷⁸ All Israel were summoned through their elders, which is a generic name including the three divisions: "heads" of tribes, clans, and houses of fathers, "judges," and "officers."

⁷⁹ Literally "the possession of the sun" - properly Timnath serach, also called Timnath-Cheres (Judges 2:9) by a transposition of letters, not uncommon in the Hebrew.

indeed may be described as preparatory to the latter.

Probably the difference between the two lies in this, that the first discourse treated of the future of Israel rather in its political aspect, while the second, as befitted the circumstances, chiefly dwelt on the past mercies of Jehovah, and urged upon the people decision in their spiritual choice. Both discourses are marked by absence of all self-exaltation or reference to his own achievements. It is the language of one who, after long and trying experience, could sum up all he knew and felt in these words: "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." The first discourse of Joshua consisted of two parts (23:2-13, and 14-16), each beginning with an allusion to his approaching end, as the motive of his admonitions. Having first reminded Israel of all God's benefits and of His promises, in case of their faithfulness, he beseeches them: "Take heed very much to your souls to love Jehovah your God" (ver. 11), the danger of an opposite course being described with an accumulation of imagery that shows how deeply Joshua felt the impending danger. Proceeding in the same direction, the second part of Joshua's address dwells upon the absolute certainty with which judgment would follow, as surely as formerly blessing had come.

The second address of Joshua, delivered to the same audience as the first, was even more solemn. For, this time, the assembly took place at Shechem, where, on first entering the land, Israel had made solemn covenant by responding from Mounts Ebal and Gerizim to the blessings and the curses enunciated in the law. And the present gathering also was to end in renewal of that covenant. Moreover, it was in Shechem that Abraham had, on entering Canaan, received the first Divine promise, and here he had built an altar unto Jehovah (Genesis 12:6, 7). Here also had Jacob settled after his return from Mesopotamia, and purged his household from lingering idolatry, by burying their Teraphim under an oak (Genesis 33:20; 35:2, 4). It was truly a "sanctuary of Jehovah" (Joshua 24:26), and they who came to it,

"gathered before God" ⁸⁰ (ver.1). In language the most tender and impressive, reminding us of Stephen's last speech before the Sanhedrim (Acts 7), Joshua recalled to them the mercies of God (Joshua 24:2-13), specially in those five great events: the calling of Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, the defeat of the Amorites and of the purpose of Balaam, ⁸¹ the miraculous crossing of Jordan and taking of Jericho, and finally, the Divine victory ⁸² given them over all the nations of Canaan. On these grounds he now earnestly entreated them to make decisive choice of Jehovah as their God. ⁸³

And they replied by solemnly protesting their determination to cleave unto the Lord, in language which not only re-echoed that of the preface to the ten commandments (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6), but also showed that they fully responded to Joshua's appeals. To bring the matter to a clear issue, Joshua next represented to them that they could not serve Jehovah (24:19) - that is, in their then state of heart and mind - "in their own strength, without the aid of grace; without real and serious conversion from all idols; and without true repentance and faith." To attempt this were only to bring down judgment instead of the former blessing. And when the people still persevered in their profession, Joshua, having made it a condition that they were to put away the strange gods from among them and "direct" their hearts "unto Jehovah, God of Israel," ⁸⁴ made again

⁸⁰ In the Hebrew with the article "the God," to indicate that it was the only true and living Elohim. Israel in Canaan.

⁸¹ In 24:9: "Then Balak.... arose and warred against Israel;" not with outward weapons, but through Balaam.

⁸² The expressive figure is here used: "And I sent the hornet before you," to designate that which carries terror among the inhabitants of a place. Comp. Exodus 23:28; Deuteronomy 7:20.

⁸³ The call to "choose this day" whom they would serve (ver. 15), does not place the duty of their allegiance to Jehovah in any doubt, but is rather the strongest and most emphatic mode of enforcing the admonition of ver. 14, especially followed, as it is, by the declaration: "but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."

⁸⁴ Keil argues that the expression (ver. 23), "put away the strange gods which are among you," means "in your hearts." But this interpretation is critically untenable, while such passages as Amos 5:26 and Acts 7:43 prove the existence of

solemn covenant with them. Its terms were recorded in a document which was placed within the book of the Law, ⁸⁵ and in memory there of a great stone was set up under the memorable tree at Shechem which had been the silent witness of so many solemn transactions in the history of Israel.

With this event the history of Joshua closes. ⁸⁶ Looking back upon it, we gather the lessons of his life and work, and of their bearing upon the future of Israel. Born a slave in Egypt, he must have been about forty years old at the time of the Exodus. Attached to the person of Moses, he led Israel in the first decisive battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:9, 13), while Moses, in the prayer of faith, held up to heaven the God-given "rod."

It was no doubt on that occasion that his name was changed from Oshea, "help," to Jehoshua, "Jehovah is help" (Numbers 13:16). And this name is the key to his life and work. Alike in bringing the people into Canaan, in his wars, and in the distribution of the land among the tribes - from the miraculous crossing of Jordan and taking of Jericho to his last address - he was the embodiment of his new name: "Jehovah is help!" To this outward calling his character also corresponded. It is marked by singleness of purpose, directness, and decision. There is not indeed about him that elevation of faith, or comprehensiveness of spiritual view which we observed in Moses. Witness Joshua's despondency after the first failure at Ai. Even his plans and conceptions lack breadth and depth. Witness his treaty with the Gibeonites, and the commencing disorganization among the tribes at Shiloh. His strength always lies in his singleness of purpose. He sets an object before him, and unswervingly follows it. So in his campaigns: he marches rapidly, falls suddenly upon the enemy, and follows up the victory with unflagging energy. But there he stops - till another object is again set

idolrous rites among the people, even though they may have been discarded in public.

⁸⁵ He took, as we would say, "Minutes" of this transaction, which were placed inside the roll of the law of Moses.

⁸⁶ The deaths of Joshua and Eleazar were, of course, chronicled at a later period. According to the Talmud (Baba Bathra, 15 a), the former was written down by Eleazar, and the latter by Phinehas.

before him, which he similarly pursues. The same singleness, directness, and decision, rather than breadth and elevation, seem also to characterize his personal religion.

There is another remarkable circumstance about Joshua. The conquest and division of the land seem to have been his sole work. He does not appear to have even ruled as a judge over Israel. But so far also as the conquest and division of the land were concerned, his work was not complete, nor, indeed, intended to be complete. And this is characteristic of the whole Old Testament dispensation, that no period in its history sees its work completed, but only begun and pointing forward to another yet future, till at last all becomes complete in the "fullness of time" in Christ Jesus. Thus viewed, a fresh light is cast upon the name and history of Joshua. Assuredly Joshua did not give "rest" even to his own generation, far less to Israel as a nation. It was rest begun, but not completed - a rest which even in its temporal aspect left so much unrest; and as such it pointed to Christ. What the one Joshua could only begin, not really achieve, even in its outward typical aspect, pointed to, and called for the other Joshua, the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom and by Whom all is reality, and all is perfect, and all is rest forever. And so also it was only after many years that Oshea became Joshua, while the name Joshua was given to our Lord by the angel before His birth (Matthew 1:21). The first became, the second was Joshua. And so the name and the work of Joshua pointed forward to the fullness in Christ, alike by what it was and by what it was not, and this in entire accordance with the whole character and object of the Old Testament.

III_13 Summary Of The Book Of Judges - Judah's And Simeon's Campaign - Spiritual And National Decay Of Israel - "From Gilgal To Bochim."

Judges 1:1 to 3:4

IF evidence were required that each period of Old Testament history points for its completion to one still future, it would be found in the Book of Judges. The history of the three and a half centuries which it records brings not anything new to light, either in the life or history of Israel; it only continues what is already found in the Book

of Joshua, carrying it forward to the Books of Samuel, and thence through Kings, till it points in the dim distance to the King, of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gives perfect rest in the perfect kingdom. In the Book of Joshua we see two grand outstanding facts, one explaining the outer, the other the inner history of Israel. As for the latter, we learn that ever since the sin of Peor, if not before, idolatry had its hold upon the people. Not that the service of the Lord was discarded, but that it was combined with the heathen rites of the nations around. But as true religion was really the principle of Israel's national life and unity, "unfaithfulness" towards Jehovah was also closely connected with tribal disintegration, which, as we have seen, threatened even in the time of Joshua. Then, as for the outer history of Israel, we learn that the completion of their possession of Canaan was made dependent on their faithfulness to Jehovah. Just as the Christian can only continue to stand by the same faith in which, in his conversion to God, he first had access to Him (Romans 5:2), so Israel could only retain the land and complete its conquest by the same faith in which they had at first entered it. For faith is never a thing of the past. And for this reason God allowed a remnant of those nations to continue in the land "to prove Israel by them" ⁸⁷ (Judges 3:1), so that, as Joshua had forewarned them (Joshua 23:10-16, comp. Judges 2:3), "faithfulness" on their part would lead to sure and easy victory, while the opposite would end in terrible national disaster.

Side by side with these two facts, there is yet a third, and that the most important: the unchanging faithfulness of the Lord, His unfailing pity and loving-kindness, according to which, when Israel was brought low and again turned to Him, He "raised them up judges,... and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (Judges 2:18).

The exhibition of these three facts forms the subject-matter of Israel's history under the Judges,

⁸⁷ This is not in any way inconsistent with Exodus 23:29, etc., Deuteronomy 7:22. For, as Keil rightly remarks, there is a vast difference between exterminating the whole of the ancient inhabitants of the land, say, in one year, and suspending even their gradual extermination.

as clearly indicated in Judges 2:21, 3:4.

Accordingly, we must not expect in the Book of Judges a complete or successive history of Israel during these three and half centuries, but rather the exhibition and development of those three grand facts. For Holy Scripture furnishes not - like ordinary biography or history - a chronicle of the lives of individuals, or even of the successive history of a period, save in so far as these are connected with the progress of the kingdom of God. Sacred history is primarily that of the kingdom of God, and only secondarily that of individuals or periods. More particularly is this the reason why we have no record at all of five of the Judges⁸⁸ - not even that Jehovah had raised them up.

For this cause also some events are specially selected in the sacred narrative, which, to the superficial reader, may seem trivial; sometimes even difficult or objectionable. But a more careful study will show that the real object of these narratives is, to bring into full view one or other of the great principles of the Old Testament dispensation. For the same reason also we must not look for strict chronological arrangement in the narratives. In point of fact, the Judges ruled only over one or several of the tribes, to whom they brought special deliverance. Accordingly, the history of some of the Judges overlaps each other, their reign having been contemporaneous in different parts of the land. Thus while in the far east across Jordan the sway of the children of Ammon lasted for eighteen years, till Jephthah brought deliverance (Judges 10:6-12:7), the Philistines at the same time oppressed Israel in the far southwest. This circumstance renders the chronology of the Book of Judges more complicated.

The Book of Judges divides itself into three parts: a general introduction (1-3:6), a sketch of the period of the Judges (3:7-16:31), arranged in six groups of events (3:7-11; 3:12-31; 4, 5; 6-10:5; 10:6-12:15; 13-16), and a double Appendix (17-21). The two series of events, recorded in the latter, evidently took place at the commencement of the period of the Judges. This appears from a

comparison of Judges 18:1 with 1:34, and again of Judges 20:28 with Joshua 22:13 and 24:33. The first of the two narratives is mainly intended to describe the religious, the second the moral decadence among the tribes of Israel. In these respects they throw light upon the whole period. We see how soon, after the death of Joshua and of his contemporaries, Israel declined - spiritually, in combining with the heathen around, and mingling their idolatrous rites with the service of Jehovah; and nationally, the war with the Canaanites being neglected, and the tribes heeding on every great occasion only their private interests and jealousies, irrespective of the common weal (5:15-17, 23; 8:1-9), until "the men of Ephraim" actually levy war against Jephthah (12:1-6), and Israel sinks so low as to deliver its Samson into the hands of the Philistines (15:9-13)!

Side by side with this decay of Israel we notice a similar decline in the spiritual character of the Judges from an Othniel and a Deborah down to Samson. The mission of these Judges was, as we have seen, chiefly local and always temporary, God raising up a special deliverer in a time of special need. It is quite evident that such special instruments were not necessarily always under the influence of spiritual motives. God has at all periods of history used what instruments He pleased for the deliverance of His people - a Darius, a Cyrus, a Gamaliel, and in more modern times often what appeared the most unlikely, to effect His own purposes. Yet in the history of the Judges it seems always the best and most religious whom the locality or period affords who is chosen, so that the character of the Judges affords also an index of the state of a district or period. And in each of them we mark the presence of real faith (Hebrews 11), acting as the lever-power in their achievements, although their faith is too often mingled with the corruptions of the period. The Judges were Israel's representative men - representatives of its faith and its hope, but also of its sin and decay. Whatever they achieved was "by faith." Even in the case of Samson, all his great deeds were achieved in the faith of God's gift to him as a Nazarite, and when "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him." Hence the Judges deserved to be enrolled in the catalogue of Old Testament "worthies." Besides, we must not forget the

⁸⁸ Tola (10:1), Jair (10:3), Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15).

necessary influence upon them of the spirit of their age. For we mark in the Bible a progressive development, as the light grew brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. In truth, if this were not the case, one of two inferences would follow. Either we would be tempted to regard its narratives as partial, or else be driven to the conclusion that these men could not have been of the period in which they are placed, since they had nothing in common with it, and hence could neither have been leaders of public opinion, nor even been understood by it.

From these brief preliminary observations we turn to notice, that there were altogether twelve, or rather, including Deborah (Judges 4:4), thirteen Judges over Israel. Of only eight of these are any special deeds recorded. The term Judge must not, however, be regarded as primarily referring to the ordinary judicial functions, which were discharged by the elders and officers of every tribe and city. Rather do we regard it as equivalent to leader or ruler. The period of the Judges closes with Samson. Eli was mainly high priest, and only in a secondary sense "Judge," while Samuel formed the transition from the Judges to royalty. With Samson the period of the Judges reached at the same time its highest and its lowest point. It is as a Nazarite, devoted to God before his birth, that he is "Judge," and achieves his great feats - and it is as a Nazarite that he falls and fails through selfishness and sin. In both respects he is the representative of Israel - God-devoted, a Nazarite people, and as such able to do all things, yet falling and failing through spiritual adultery. And thus the period of the Judges ends as every other period. It contains the germ of, and points to something better; but it is imperfect, incomplete, and fails, though even in its failure it points forward. Judges must be succeeded by kings, and kings by the King - the true Nazarite, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The period between the death of Joshua and the first "Judge" is summarized in Judges 1-3:6. It appears, that under the influence of Joshua's last address, deepened no doubt by his death, which followed soon afterwards, the "holy war" was resumed. In this instance it was purely aggressive on the part of Israel, whereas formerly, as a matter of fact, the attack always came from the

Canaanites (except in the case of Jericho and of Ai). But the measure of the sin of the nations who occupied Palestine was now full (Genesis 15:13-16), and the storm of judgment was to sweep them away. For this purpose Israel, to whom God in His mercy had given the land, was to be employed - but only in so far as the people realized its calling to dedicate the land unto the Lord. On the ruins of what not only symbolized, but at the time really was the kingdom of Satan,⁸⁹ the theocracy was to be upbuilt. Instead of that focus whence the vilest heathenism overspread the world, the kingdom of God was to be established, with its opposite mission of sending the light of truth to the remotest parts of the earth. Nor can it be difficult to understand how, in such circumstances, at such a time, and at that period of religious life, any compromise was impossible - and every war must be one of extermination.

Before entering on this new "war," the children of Israel asked Jehovah, no doubt through the Urim and Thummim, which tribe was to take the lead. In reply, Judah was designated, in accordance with ancient prophecy (Genesis 49:8). Judah, in turn, invited the co-operation of Simeon, whose territory had been parceled out of its own. In fact, theirs were common enemies. The two tribes encountered and defeated the Canaanites and Perizzites in Bezek, a name probably attaching to a district rather than a place, and, as the word seems to imply, near the shore of the Dead Sea. In the same locality Adoni-bezek appears to have made a fresh stand, but with the same disastrous result. On that occasion a remarkable, though most cruel retaliation overtook him. As chieftain of that district he must have been equally renowned for his bravery and cruelty. After a custom not uncommon in antiquity, the many chieftains whom

⁸⁹ It is difficult to resist the impression that Canaan was not only the focus of ancient heathenism in its worst abominations, but the center whence it spread. Very much in the mythology, and almost all the vileness of Greek and Roman heathenism is undoubtedly of Canaanitish origin. Indeed, we may designate the latter as the only real missionary heathenism at the time in the world. Consider the significance of planting in its stead the kingdom of God, with its untold missionary influences and its grand purpose to the world! We must also bear in mind, that the spread of Canaanitish idolatry would be greatly promoted by the chain of colonies which extended from Asia Minor into Europe.

he had subdued were kept, like dogs, "for lengthened sport," under the banqueting table of the proud conqueror in a mutilated condition, their thumbs and great toes cut off, in token that they could never again handle sword and bow, nor march to war.

It need scarcely be said, that the Mosaic law never contemplated such horrors. Nevertheless the allied tribes now inflicted mutilation upon Adoni-bezek. The victors carried him to Jerusalem, where he died. On that occasion the city itself, so far as it lay within the territory of Judah, was taken and burnt. But the boundary line between Judah and Benjamin ran through Jerusalem, the Upper City and the strong castle, which were held by the Jebusites, being within the lot of Benjamin. In the war under Joshua, the Jebusites had foiled Judah (Joshua 15:63). Now also they retired to their stronghold, whence the Benjamites did not even attempt to dislodge them (Judges 1:21). From Jerusalem the tribes continued their victorious march successively to "the mountain," or highlands of Judah, then to the Negeb, or south country, and finally to the Shephelah, or lowlands, along the sea-shore. Full success attended the expedition, the tribes pursuing their victories as far south as the utmost borders of the ancient kingdom of Arad, where, as their fathers had vowed (Numbers 21:2), they executed the ban upon Zephath or Hormah. The descendants of Hobab (Judges 4:11) the Kenite⁹⁰ the brother-in-law of Moses, who had followed Israel to Canaan (Numbers 10:29), and had since pitched their tents near Jericho, now settled in this border land, as best suited to their nomadic habits and previous associations (Judges 1:8-11, 16). The campaign ended⁹¹ with the incursion into the Shephelah, where Judah wrested from the Philistines three out of their five great cities. This conquest, however, was not permanent (14:19; 16:1), nor were the

inhabitants of the valley driven out, "because they had chariots of iron."⁹²

But the zeal of Israel did not long continue. In fact, all that follows after the campaign of Judah and Simeon is a record of failure and neglect, with the single exception of the taking of Bethel by the house of Joseph. Thus the tribes were everywhere surrounded by a fringe of heathenism. In many parts, Israelites and heathens dwelt together, the varying proportions among them being indicated by such expressions as that the "Canaanites dwelt among" the Israelites, or else the reverse. Sometimes the Canaanites became tributary. On the other hand, the Amorites succeeded in almost wholly⁹³ driving the tribe of Dan out of their possessions, which induced a considerable proportion of the Danites to seek fresh homes in the far north (Judges 18).

Israel was settling down in this state, when their false rest was suddenly broken by the appearance among them of "the Angel of Jehovah." No Divine manifestation had been vouchsafed them since the Captain of Jehovah's host had stood before Joshua in the camp at Gilgal (Joshua 5:13-15). And now, at the commencement of a new period, and that one of spiritual decay, He "came" from Gilgal to Bochim, not to announce the miraculous fall of a Jericho before the ark of Jehovah, but the continuance of the heathen power near them in judgment upon their unfaithfulness and disobedience. "From Gilgal to Bochim!" There is much in what these names suggest - and that even although Gilgal may have been the permanent camp, where leading representatives of the nation were always assembled, to whom "the Angel of Jehovah" in the first place addressed Himself, and Bochim, or "weepers," the designation given afterwards to the meeting-place by the ancient sanctuary (either Shechem or more probably Shiloh), where the elders of the people gathered to hear the Divine message.

⁹⁰ This notice is here inserted, probably, because the event happened between the taking of Debir (1:11) and that of Zephath (1:17).

⁹¹ Only Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron seem to have been taken, but neither Gath nor Ashdod.

⁹² These were armed with scythes on their wheels.

⁹³ They drove them out of the valley (1:35) which constituted the principal part of the possession of Dan (Joshua 19:40). The Amorites even "dared to dwell" in Har-Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shalbim (Judges 1:35), although they were afterwards made tributary by the house of Joseph.

And truly what had passed between the entrance into Canaan and that period might be thus summed up: "From Gilgal to Bochim!" The immediate impression of the words of the Angel of Jehovah was great. Not only did the place become Bochim, but a sacrifice was offered unto Jehovah, for wherever His presence was manifested, there might sacrifice be brought (comp. Deuteronomy 12:5; Judges 6:20, 26, 28; 13:16; 2 Samuel 24:25).

But, alas! the impression was of but short continuance. Mingling with the heathen around, "they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."⁹⁴ Such a people could only learn in the school of sorrow. National unfaithfulness was followed by national judgments.

Yet even so, Jehovah, in His mercy, ever turned to them when they cried, and raised up "deliverers." In the truest sense these generations "had not known all the wars of Canaan" (Judges 3:1). For the knowledge of them is thus explained in the Book of Psalms (Psalm 44:2, 3):

"Thou didst drive out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them; Thou didst afflict the nations, and east them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favor unto them."

This lesson was now to be learned in bitter experience by the presence and power of the heathen around:

"to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses" (Judges 3:4).

⁹⁴ Ashtaroth is the "star-goddess" of the night, Astarte, whose symbol, properly speaking, was the Asherah. It is impossible to detail the vileness of her service. Mention of it occurs so early as in Genesis 14:5, where we read of Ashteroth Karnaim, the "star-goddess of the horns," i.e., the quarter of the moon.
