
שופטים • JUDGES

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

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

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

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

שופטים פרק א

א ויהי אחרי מות יהושע וישאלו בני ישראל ביהוה לאמר מי יעלה לנו אלהכנעני בתחלה להלחם בו: ב ויאמר יהוה יהודה יעלה הנה נתתי אתהארץ בידו: ג ויאמר יהודה לשמעון אחי עלה אתי בגרלי ונלחמה בכנעני והלכתי גם-אני אתך בגורלך וילך אתו שמעון: ד ויעל יהודה ויתן יהוה אתהכנעני והפרזי בידם ויכוס בבזק עשרת אלפים איש: ה וימצאו את-אדני בזק בבזק וילחמו בו ויכו אתהכנעני ואתהפרזי: ו וינס אדני בזק וירדפו אחריו ויאחזו אותו ויקצצו את-בהנות ידיו ורגליו: ז ויאמר אדני-בזק

JUDGES 1

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

JUDGES 1

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

שְׁבַעִים | מְלָכִים בְּהִנּוּת יְדֵיהֶם וְרַגְלֵיהֶם מִקְצָצִים
הָיוּ מִלְקָטִים תַּחַת שְׁלַחְנֵי כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּכֵן שְׁלֹם־
לִי אֱלֹהִים וַיְבִיֵאֵהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיָּמָת שָׁם: {פ}

ח וַיִּלְחַמּוּ בְנֵי־יְהוּדָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּכּוּהָ
לְפִי־חָרֵב וְאֶת־הָעִיר שְׁלַחוּ בְּאֵשׁ: ט וְאַחַר יָרְדוּ
בְנֵי יְהוּדָה לְהִלָּחֵם בְּכַנְעֲנֵי יוֹשְׁבֵי הַהָר וְהַנֶּגֶב
וְהַשְּׁפֵלָה: י וַיִּלָּךְ יְהוּדָה אֶל־הַכַּנְעֲנִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב
בְּחֶבְרוֹן וְשֵׁם־חֶבְרוֹן לְפָנִים קָרִית אַרְבַּע וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־
שֵׁשַׁי וְאֶת־אַחִימָן וְאֶת־תַּלְמַי: יא וַיִּלָּךְ מִשָּׁם אֶל־
יוֹשְׁבֵי דְבִיר וְשֵׁם־דְבִיר לְפָנִים קָרִית־סֶפֶר:
יב וַיֹּאמֶר כָּלֵב כָּלֵב אֲשֶׁר־יִכּוּ אֶת־קָרִית־סֶפֶר וְלָכְדָהּ
וְנָתַתִּי לוֹ אֶת־עַכְסָה בְּתִי לְאִשָּׁה: יג וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ
עַתְנִיָּאל בֶּן־קִנְזִי אַחִי כָלֵב הַקָּטָן מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ אֶת־
עַכְסָה בְּתוֹ לְאִשָּׁה: יד וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאָהּ וַתְּסִיתָהּ

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹ The identification of Debir (דְּבִיר) with Tell Beit Mirsim is not certain; Khirbet-er-Rabub is another possibility.

¹² In place of 'attacks and takes', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'conquers and captures'.

¹³ 'Caleb's younger brother' may refer to Othniel or to Kenaz (in which case Othniel was Caleb's nephew; so CEV).

¹⁴ In place of 'she urged him', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (ἐπέσεισεν αὐτὴν) has 'he urged her' (cf. Jos 15:18).

לְשׂאֵל מֵאֵת־אָבִיהָ הַשָּׂדֶה וַתִּצְנַח מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר
וַיֹּאמֶר־לָהּ כָּלֵב מִה־לָּךְ: ^ט וְתֹאמַר לוֹ הִבֵּה־לִּי
בְרָכָה כִּי אֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב נָתַתָּנִי וְנָתַתָּה לִּי גִלְתַּי מִיָּם
וַיִּתֶּן־לָהּ כָּלֵב אֶת גִּלְתַּי עָלָיִת וְאֶת גִּלְתַּי
תַּחֲתִית: {פ}

^{טז} וּבְנֵי קִינִי חָתָן מֹשֶׁה עָלוּ מֵעִיר הַתְּמָרִים אֶת־
בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה מִדְּבַר יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר בְּנֶגֶב עָרַד וַיֵּלְךְ
וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶת־הָעָם: ^{יז} וַיֵּלְךְ יְהוּדָה אֶת־שִׁמְעוֹן אָחִיו
וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב צֶפֶת וַיַּחְרִימוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרָא
אֶת־שֵׁם־הָעִיר חֲרָמָה: ^{יח} וַיִּלְכֹּד יְהוּדָה אֶת־עֵזָה
וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ וְאֶת־אֲשְׁקֶלֶן וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ וְאֶת־עַקְרוֹן
וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָהּ: ^{יט} וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה וַיִּרֶשׂ אֶת־
הַהָר כִּי לֹא לְהוֹרִישׁ אֶת־יֹשְׁבֵי הָעֲמָק כִּי־רַכֵּב
בְּרֹזַל לָהֶם: ^כ וַיִּתְּנוּ לְכָלֵב אֶת־חֶבְרוֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰ NETB has ‘Anakites’ in place of ‘sons of Anak’, here following the NJB & NRSV.

מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּרֶשׁ מִשָּׁם אֶת־שְׁלֹשָׁה בְנֵי הָעֲנָק: כֹּא וְאֶת־
הַיְבוּסִי יֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַם לֹא הֹרִישׁוּ בְנֵי בְנִימֵן וַיֹּשְׁב
הַיְבוּסִי אֶת־בְּנֵי בְנִימֵן בִּירוּשָׁלַם עַד הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה: {פ}

כִּב וַיַּעֲלוּ בֵית־יוֹסֵף גַּם־הֵם בֵּית־אֵל וַיְהִי עִמָּם:
כג וַיִּתְּרוּ בֵית־יוֹסֵף בְּבֵית־אֵל וְשֵׁם־הָעִיר לְפָנִים
לְזוֹ: כד וַיִּרְאוּ הַשְּׂמֵרִים אִישׁ יוֹצֵא מִן־הָעִיר וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לֹא הִרְאָנוּ נָא אֶת־מְבוֹא הָעִיר וְעָשִׂינוּ עִמָּךְ חֶסֶד:
כה וַיִּרְאֵם אֶת־מְבוֹא הָעִיר וַיָּכּוּ אֶת־הָעִיר לְפִי־
חָרֵב וְאֶת־הָאִישׁ וְאֶת־כָּל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ שְׁלָחוּ: כו וַיֵּלֶךְ
הָאִישׁ אֶרֶץ הַחִתִּים וַיְבַן עִיר וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמָהּ לְזוֹ הוּא
שְׁמָהּ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: {פ}

כז וְלֹא־הֹרִישׁ מִנְּשֵׂה אֶת־בֵּית־שֶׁאֵן וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ
וְאֶת־תַּעֲנָךְ וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־הָאֵל וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי יוֹשֵׁב דּוֹר
וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי יִבְלֵעַם וְאֶת־בְּנֵי־הָאֵל
וְאֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי מִגְדוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ וַיֹּאֲלֵ הַכְּנַעֲנִי

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

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

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

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

²² 'House' here is a metonym for the warriors of the tribe.

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

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

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

²⁶ Note that the man names his new town after his former city.

²⁷ The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

²⁸ These towns were not actually conquered until the early days of the monarchy (1K 9:15-22).

לְשֵׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת: כֹּחַ וַיְהִי כִּי-חִזַּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע
אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי לְמַסַּ וְהוֹרִישׁ לֹא הוֹרִישׁוּ: {ס}

כֹּחַ וַאֲפַרְיִם לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּגֶזֶר
וַיֵּשֶׁב הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ בְּגֶזֶר: {ס}

לְזִבּוּלָן לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-יּוֹשְׁבֵי קִטְרוֹן וְאֶת-יּוֹשְׁבֵי
נַהֲלָלוֹל וַיֵּשֶׁב הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וַיְהִיוּ לְמַסַּ: {ס}

לֹא אֲשֵׁר לֹא הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-יּוֹשְׁבֵי עַכּוֹ וְאֶת-יּוֹשְׁבֵי
צִידוֹן וְאֶת-אֲחֻלַּב וְאֶת-אֲחֻזִּיב וְאֶת-חֵלְבָה וְאֶת-
אֲפִיק וְאֶת-רְחֵב: לֵב וַיֵּשֶׁב הָאֲשֻׁרִי בְּקִרְבֵי הַכְּנַעֲנִי
יּוֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ כִּי לֹא הוֹרִישׁוּ: {ס}

לֵב נַפְתָּלִי לֹא-הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-יּוֹשְׁבֵי בֵּית-שֶׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת-
יּוֹשְׁבֵי בֵּית-עֲנַת וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּקִרְבֵי הַכְּנַעֲנִי יּוֹשְׁבֵי הָאֶרֶץ
וַיֵּשֶׁב בֵּית-שֶׁמֶשׁ וּבֵּית עֲנַת הָיוּ לָהֶם לְמַסַּ:
לֵד וַיִּלְחָצוּ הָאֲמֹרִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-דָן הַהָרָה כִּי-לֹא נָתְנוּ
לָרֶדֶת לְעַמָּק: לֵה וַיּוֹאֵל הָאֲמֹרִי לְשֵׁבֶת בְּהַר-חֶרֶס
בְּאֵילֹן וּבְשַׁעֲלָבִים וּתְכַבֵּד יַד בֵּית-יוֹסֵף וַיְהִיוּ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁴ NETB adds 'coastal' before 'plain'.

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

לָמַס׃ לִי וְגִבּוֹל הָאֲמֹרִי מִמַּעַלָּה עֲקֵרְבִים מִהַסְלַע
וּמִמַּעַלָּה׃ {פ} grew heavy and they became subject to forced labour.³⁶ The border of
the Amorites ran from the Ascent of Akrabbim to Sela and up.

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

שופטים פרק ב

JUDGES 2

א וַיַּעַל מַלְאֲכֵי־יְהוָה מִן־הַגִּלְגָּל אֶל־הַבְּכִים {פ} 1 The Angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bochim.
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אַתְּכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאָבִיא אֶתְכֶם אֶל־
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְתִּיכֶם וְאָמַר לֹא־אֶפְרָר
בְּרִיתִי אֶתְכֶם לְעוֹלָם: ב וְאַתֶּם לֹא־תִכְרְתוּ בְרִית
לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִזְבַּחֹתֵיהֶם תִּתְצוּן וְלֹא־
שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי מֵהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַשִׂיתֶם: ג וְגַם אָמַרְתִּי
לֹא־אֶגְרֹשׁ אֹתָם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לְכֶם לְצַדִּים
וְאֵלֵהֶם יִהְיוּ לְכֶם לְמוֹקֵשׁ: ד וַיְהִי כַּדְּבַר מַלְאֲכֵי
יְהוָה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּשְׂאוּ הָעָם אֶת־קוֹלָם וַיִּבְכוּ: ה וַיִּקְרְאוּ שֵׁם־
הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא בְּכִים וַיִּזְבְּחוּ־שָׁם לַיהוָה: {פ} 2
וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת־הָעָם וַיֵּלְכוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ
לְנַחֲלָתוֹ לְרֶשֶׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ: ז וַיַּעֲבְדוּ הָעָם אֶת־

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

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

JUDGES 2

- ¹ In place of 'Bochim' (בְּכִים), the NJB, following the LXX (*Βαιθμηλ*), has 'Bethel' and adds, 'and came to the House of Israel' (*καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραηλ*).
- ² The literal translation of 'obeyed my orders' is 'listened to my voice'.
- ³ 'Oppressors' follows the Vg; the MT has 'sides' (צַדִּים). The term may be related to an Accadian cognate meaning 'snare', giving 'they will become snares to you'; alternatively, on the basis of Nb 33:55, some suggest the word for 'thorns' has been accidentally omitted, so that the text should read 'they will become thorns in your sides' (cf. NASB, NIV, NLT).
- ⁴ In place of 'lifted up their voices and wept', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has 'began to groan and weep'.
- ⁵ 'Bochim' (בְּכִים) means, 'The Weepers'; the place is unknown and occurs nowhere else in the OT; cf. the 'Oak of Tears', near Bethel (Gn 35:8).
- ⁶ Vv. 2:20–3:6 have been added to explain the persistence of foreign nations in Israelite territory.
- ⁷ This verse repeats Jos 24:31.

יְהוָה כָּל יְמֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וְכָל יְמֵי הַזְּקֵנִים אֲשֶׁר
הָאָרְיִכוּ יָמִים אַחֲרָי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ אֶת כָּל־
מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה הַגְּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: ^ח וַיָּמָת
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵינֹן עֶבֶד יְהוָה בֶּן־מֵאָה וְעֶשֶׂר שָׁנָיִם:
^ט וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּגִבּוֹל נַחֲלָתוֹ בְּתִמְנַת־חֶרֶס בְּהַר
אֶפְרַיִם מִצְפּוֹן לְהַר־גֶּעֶשׁ: ^י וְגַם כָּל־הַדּוֹר הַהוּא
נֶאֱסָפוּ אֶל־אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקַּם דּוֹר אַחֵר אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־יָדְעוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וְגַם אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

^{יא} וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבְדוּ
אֶת־הַבְּעֵלִים: ^{יב} וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָם
הַמוֹצֵיא אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרָי | אֱלֹהִים
אַחֲרִים מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר סָבִיבוֹתֵיהֶם
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם וַיִּכְעֶסוּ אֶת־יְהוָה: ^{יג} וַיַּעֲזְבוּ אֶת־

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

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

⁸ This verse repeats the statement of Jos 24:29.

⁹ This verse is nearly identical to Jos 24:30.

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

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

¹² The NJB lacks 'to anger', here following the NRSV.

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

יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבְדוּ לְבַעַל וּלְעִשְׁתָּרוֹת: ^ט וַיַּחַר־אָף יְהוָה
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּיַד־שָׂסִים וַיִּשְׁסוּ אוֹתָם וַיִּמְכְּרֵם
בְּיַד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם מִסָּבִיב וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ עוֹד לַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי
אוֹיְבֵיהֶם: ^{טו} בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ יַד־יְהוָה הִיתְהַבֵּם
לְרָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה וּכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לָהֶם
וַיַּצֵּר לָהֶם מְאֹד:

^{טז} וַיִּקַּם יְהוָה שֹׁפְטִים וַיּוֹשִׁיעוּם מִיַּד שִׁסִּיהֶם: ^{יז} וְגַם
אֶל־שֹׁפְטֵיהֶם לֹא שָׁמְעוּ כִּי זָנוּ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים
אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם סָרוּ מִהָר מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
הָלְכוּ אֲבוֹתָם לִשְׁמֹעַ מִצְוֹת־יְהוָה לֹא־עָשׂוּ כֵן:
^{יח} וְכִי־הָקִים יְהוָה לָהֶם שֹׁפְטִים וְהָיָה יְהוָה עִם־
הַשֹּׁפֵט וְהוֹשִׁיעַם מִיַּד אוֹיְבֵיהֶם כָּל יְמֵי הַשּׁוֹפֵט כִּי־
יִנָּחֵם יְהוָה מִנְּאֻקָּתָם מִפְּנֵי לַחְצֵיהֶם וּדְחָקֵיהֶם:
^{יט} וְהָיָה בְּמוֹת הַשּׁוֹפֵט יֵשְׁבוּ וְהִשְׁחִיתוּ מֵאֲבוֹתָם
לְלַכֵּת אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לְעַבְדָּם וּלְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

לָהֶם לֹא הִפִּילוּ מִמַּעַלְלֵיהֶם וּמִדַּרְכֵּם הַקָּשָׁה:
 בַּ וַיַּחֲרֹאֲף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר יְעֹן אֲשֶׁר עָבְרוּ
 הַגֹּיִם הַזֵּה אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם וְלֹא
 שָׁמְעוּ לְקוֹלִי: כֹּא גַם־אֲנִי לֹא אוֹסִיף לְהוֹרִישׁ אִישׁ
 מִפְּנֵיהֶם מִן־הַגֹּיִם אֲשֶׁר־עָזַב יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיָּמַת:
 כִּב לְמַעַן נִסּוֹת בָּם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַשֹּׁמְרִים הֵם אֶת־
 דְּרֹךְ יְהוָה לְלַכֵּת בָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְרוּ אֲבוֹתָם אִם־
 לֹא: כִּי־וַיִּנַּח יְהוָה אֶת־הַגֹּיִם הָאֵלֶּה לְבִלְתִּי הוֹרִישׁם
 מִהָרָ וְלֹא נָתַנְם בְּיַד־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק ג

א ואלה הגוים אשר הנח יהוה לנסות בם את ישראל את כל אשר לא ידעו את כל מלחמות כנען: ב רק למען דעת דרות בני ישראל ללמדם מלחמה רק אשר לפנים לא ידעום: ג חמשת סרני פלשתים וכל הכנעני והצידני והחוי ישב הר הלבנון מהר בעל חרמון עד לבוא חמת: ד ויהיו לנסות בם את ישראל לדעת הישמעו את מצות יהוה אשר צוה את אבותם ביד משה: ה ובני ישראל ישבו בקרב הכנעני החתי והאמרי והפרזי והחוי והיבוסי: ו ויקחו את בנותיהם להם לנשים ואת בנותיהם נתנו לבניהם ויעבדו את אלהיהם: {פ}

JUDGES 3

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

JUDGES 3

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

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁכַּחוּ
אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־הַבְּעָלִים וְאֶת־
הָאֲשֵׁרוֹת: ^ח וַיַּחַר־אַף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּמְכְּרֵם בְּיַד
כּוּשָׁן רִשְׁתַּיִם מֶלֶךְ אַרֶם נַהֲרַיִם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ בְנֵי־
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־כּוּשָׁן רִשְׁתַּיִם שְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנִים: ^ט וַיִּזְעַקוּ
בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּקַּם יְהוָה מוֹשִׁיעַ לְבְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁיַעֵם אֶת עֲתַנְיָאֵל בֶּן־קִנְזִי אַחֵי כָלָב
הַקָּטָן מִמֶּנּוּ: ^י וַתְּהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ־יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁפָּט אֶת־
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּצֵא לְמַלְחָמָה וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ אֶת־כּוּשָׁן
רִשְׁתַּיִם מֶלֶךְ אַרֶם וַתֵּעַז יָדוֹ עַל כּוּשָׁן רִשְׁתַּיִם:
^{יא} וַתִּשְׁקֹט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבַּעַיִם שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת עֲתַנְיָאֵל בֶּן־
קִנְזִי: {פ}

יב וַיִּסְפוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
וַיַּחֲזֶק יְהוָה אֶת־עֲגִלּוֹן מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ An alternative reading for 'prevailed' is 'was strong'.

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

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

כִּי־עָשׂוּ אֶת־הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה: ^ג וַיֵּאָסֶף אֵלָיו אֶת־
בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְעַמְלָק וַיִּלְדְּ וַיֵּד אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּרְשׁוּ אֶת־
עִיר הַתְּמָרִים: ^ד וַיַּעֲבְדוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֲגֻלּוֹן
מֶלֶךְ־מוֹאָב שְׁמוֹנֶה עָשָׂר שָׁנָה:

^{טו} וַיִּזְעַקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיִּקַּם יְהוָה לָהֶם
מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־אֶהוּד בֶּן־גֵּרָא בֶן־הִימִינִי אִישׁ אֵטָר
יְד־יְמִינֹו וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּידֹו מִנְחָה לְעֲגֻלּוֹן
מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב: ^{טז} וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ אֶהוּד חֶרֶב וְלָהּ שְׁנֵי פְּיוֹת
גָּמַד אַרְבֵּה וַיַּחְגֵּר אוֹתָהּ מִתַּחַת לְמַדְיוֹ עַל יָרֵךְ
יְמִינוֹ: ^{יז} וַיִּקְרַב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה לְעֲגֻלּוֹן מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב
וְעֲגֻלּוֹן אִישׁ בָּרִיא מְאֹד: ^{יח} וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה
לְהַקְרִיב אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הָעַם נֹשְׂאֵי

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

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

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

¹⁴ In place of 'served', here following the *NJB* & *NRSV*, *NETB* has 'were subject to'.

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

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

¹⁷ *NETB* places the last sentence in parentheses.

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

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

הַמְנַחָה: יִטְ וְהוּא שָׁב מִן־הַפְּסִילִים אֲשֶׁר אֶת־
הַגְּלָגָל וַיֹּאמֶר דְּבַר־סֵתֶר לִי אֱלֹהִי הַמַּלְדָּךְ וַיֹּאמֶר
הִס וַיֵּצְאוּ מֵעָלָיו כָּל־הָעַמֻּדִים עָלָיו: כִּי וְאֶהוּד | בָּא
אֵלָיו וְהוּא יָשָׁב בַּעֲלִית הַמְּקָרָה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ לְבַדּוֹ
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהוּד דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים לִי אֱלֹהִי וַיִּקַּם מֵעַל
הַכֶּסֶּא: כֵּא וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶהוּד אֶת־יָד שְׁמֹאלוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־
הַחֶרֶב מֵעַל יָרֵךְ יְמִינוֹ וַיִּתְקַעָה בְּבִטְנוֹ: כִּב וַיָּבֹא
גַם־הַנֶּצֶב אַחַר הַלֶּהָב וַיִּסְגֹּר הַחֶלֶב בְּעַד הַלֶּהָב כִּי
לֹא שָׁלַף הַחֶרֶב מִבִּטְנוֹ וַיֵּצֵא הַפְּרִשְׁדָּנָה: כִּג וַיֵּצֵא
אֶהוּד הַמִּסְדְּרוֹנָה וַיִּסְגֹּר דַּלְתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה בְּעַדּוֹ
וַיִּנְעַל:

כִּד וְהוּא יֵצֵא וְעַבְדָּיו בָּאוּ וַיִּרְאוּ וְהִנֵּה דַלְתוֹת
הָעֲלִיָּה נִעְלוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִךְ מִסִּיךְ הוּא אֶת־רַגְלָיו
בַּחֲדָר הַמְּקָרָה: כִּה וַיַּחֲלִיאוּ עַד־בֹּשׁ וְהִנֵּה אֵינָנוּ

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

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

²⁰ The ‘cool upper room’ probably refers to a room with latticed windows which allowed the breeze to pass through.

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

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

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

²⁴ ‘Covering his feet’ is a euphemism for relieving himself.

²⁵ Literally translated, this verse ends, “See, their master, fallen to the ground, dead.”

פָּתַח דְּלֹתוֹת הָעֲלִיָּה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־הַמִּפְתָּח וַיִּפְתְּחוּ
וַהֲנִיחַ אֲדָנֵיהֶם נָפֶל אֶרְצָה מָת:

כ^ו וְאַהוּד נִמְלֹט עַד הַתְּמַהֲמָהּ וְהוּא עָבַר אֶת־
הַפְּסִילִים וַיִּמְלֹט הַשְּׁעִירָתָה: כ^ז וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאוֹ וַיִּתְקַע
בְּשׁוֹפָר בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם וַיֵּרְדוּ עִמּוֹ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־
הַהָר וְהוּא לִפְנֵיהֶם: כ^ח וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים רַדְפוּ אַחֲרַי
כִּי־נָתַן יְהוָה אֶת־אִיבֵיכֶם אֶת־מוֹאָב בְּיַדְכֶם וַיֵּרְדוּ
אַחֲרָיו וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְמוֹאָב וְלֹא־
נָתְנוּ אִישׁ לְעֵבֶר: כ^ט וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־מוֹאָב בַּעַת הַיָּא
כַּעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ כָּל־שִׁמּוֹן וְכָל־אִישׁ חֵיל וְלֹא
נִמְלֹט אִישׁ: ל וַתִּכְנַע מוֹאָב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא תַּחַת יַד
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתִּשְׁקַט הָאָרֶץ שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

ל^א וְאַחֲרָיו הָיָה שַׁמְגָר בֶּן־עֲנָת וַיִּד אֶת־פְּלִשְׁתִּים
שִׁש־מֵאוֹת אִישׁ בְּמִלְמַד הַבָּקָר וַיֹּשֶׁע גַּם־הוּא
אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

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

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

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

²⁶ On the nature of these ‘Idols’, see #19.

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

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

²⁹ The literal translation of ‘beat the Moabites’ is ‘struck Moab’.

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

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

שופטים פרק ד

א וַיִּסְפּוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
וְאַהוּד מָת: ב וַיִּמְכְּרֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד יַבִּין מֶלֶךְ-כְּנָעַן
אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ בַּחצֹר וְשֶׁר־צָבָאוּ סִיסְרָא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב
בְּחַרְשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם: ג וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה כִּי
תָשַׁע מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב-בְּרוֹזָל לוֹ וְהוּא לַחֵץ אֶת-בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲזָקָה עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

ד וּדְבוֹרָה אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה אָשֶׁת לַפִּידוֹת הִיא שֹׁפֵטָה
אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַת הַהִיא: ה וְהָיָא יוֹשֶׁבֶת תַּחַת-
תְּמָר דְּבוֹרָה בֵּין הָרְמָה וּבֵין בֵּית-אֵל בְּהַר אֶפְרַיִם
וַיַּעֲלוּ אֵלֶיהָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לִמְשַׁפֵּט: ו וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא
לְבָרַק בֶּן-אֲבִינֵעַם מִקְדֵּשׁ נַפְתָּלִי וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
הֲלֹא צוּהָ | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵךְ וּמַשְׁכַּת בְּהַר
תָּבוֹר וּלְקַחְתָּ עִמָּךְ עֲשָׂרֵת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי

JUDGES 4

¹ The Israelites again began to do what displeases Yahweh after Ehud's death, ² so Yahweh handed them over to Jabin the king of Canaan who reigned at Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-Goiim. ³ Then the Israelites cried to Yahweh; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots plated with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

⁴ At that time, Deborah the wife of Lappidoth, a prophetess, judged Israel. ⁵ She used to sit under Palm Tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the highlands of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for judgement. ⁶ She summoned and sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. And she said to him, "This is the order of Yahweh, the God of Israel: "march to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and the sons of

JUDGES 4

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

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

³ The number of chariots is unusually high and reflects the hopelessness of the situation.

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

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

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

נִפְתָּלִי וּמִבְּנֵי זְבֻלוֹן: וּמִשְׁכְּתֵי אֵלֶיךָ אֶל־נַחַל
 קִישׁוֹן אֶת־סִיסְרָא שׁר־צָבָא יָבִין וְאֶת־רֶכְבּוֹ וְאֶת־
 הַמּוֹנֹו וּנְתַתִּיהוּ בְיַדְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ בָּרַק אִם־
 תֵּלְכִי עִמִּי וְהִלַּכְתִּי וְאִם־לֹא תֵלְכִי עִמִּי לֹא אֵלֶיךָ:
 וַתֹּאמֶר הֲלֵךְ אֵלֶיךָ עִמָּךְ אֲפֹס כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה
 תַּפְאֲרֹתְךָ עַל־הַדָּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ כִּי בִיד־
 אִשָּׁה יִמָּכַר יְהוָה אֶת־סִיסְרָא וְתִקַּם דְּבוּרָה וְתִלְוֶךָ
 עִם־בָּרַק קְדֹשָׁה: וַיִּזְעַק בָּרַק אֶת־זְבוּלוֹן וְאֶת־
 נִפְתָּלִי קְדֹשָׁה וַיַּעַל בְּרַגְלָיו עֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפֵי אִישׁ
 וַתַּעַל עִמּוֹ דְּבוּרָה:

י^א וְחֵבֶר הַקֵּינִי נִפְרָד מִקֵּין מִבְּנֵי חֵבֶב חֵתָן מֹשֶׁה
 וַיֵּט אָהְלוֹ עַד־אֵילָוִן בְּצַעֲנִים בְּצַעֲנִים אֲשֶׁר אֶת־
 קְדֹשׁ: י^ב וַיִּגְדּוּ לְסִיסְרָא כִּי עָלָה בָּרַק בֶּן־אֲבִינֵעַם
 הַר־תָּבוֹר: י^ג וַיִּזְעַק סִיסְרָא אֶת־כָּל־רֶכְבּוֹ תִשָּׁע
 מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בְּרֹל וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ

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

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

⁷ The *Wadi Kishon* is a stream that flows westward through the Plain of Jezreel, which runs from the Carmel range to the Jordan.
⁸ At the end of this verse, the *NJB*, following the *LXX* (ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τῆν ἡμέραν, ἐν ἣ εὐοδοί κύριος τὸν ἄγγελον μετ’ ἐμοῦ), adds ‘for, I do not know how to choose the day when the Angel of Yahweh will grant me success’.
⁹ The *NRSV* translates the 2nd part of Deborah’s speech more literally: ‘the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory’; the translation here (‘the way you are going about it’, following the *NJB*) makes direct reference to Barak’s hesitancy as the reason for his loss of glory.
¹⁰ Zebulun and Naphtali are two tribes from Galilee.
¹¹ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
¹² The *NJB* has ‘heard’ in place of ‘was told’, here following the *NRSV*; the literal translation of the *MT* is ‘and they told Sisera’.
¹³ In place of ‘Sisera’, the *NJB* has simple ‘he’; here, we follow the *MT* & *NRSV*.

מִחֲרֹשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־נַחַל קִישׁוֹן: ^ד וַתֹּאמֶר דְּבָרָה
אֶל־בָּרַק קוּם כִּי זֶה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֶת־
סִסְרָא בְיָדְךָ הֲלֹא יְהוָה יֵצֵא לְפָנֶיךָ וַיִּרַד בָּרַק
מֵהָר תָּבוֹר וַעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ אַחֲרָיו: ^ט וַיְהִים
יְהוָה אֶת־סִסְרָא וְאֶת־כָּל־הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת־כָּל־
הַמַּחֲנֶה לְפִי־חֶרֶב לְפָנֵי בָרַק וַיִּרַד סִסְרָא מֵעַל
הַמָּרְכָבָה וַיָּנֶס בְּרַגְלָיו: ^ט וּבָרַק רָדַף אַחֲרֵי הָרֶכֶב
וְאַחֲרֵי הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד חֲרֹשֶׁת הַגּוֹיִם וַיִּפֹּל כָּל־מַחֲנֶה
סִסְרָא לְפִי־חֶרֶב לֹא נִשְׁאַר עַד־אַחַד:

^י וְסִסְרָא נָס בְּרַגְלָיו אֶל־אֵהָל יַעֲלֵ אֵשֶׁת חֶבֶר
הַקֵּינִי כִּי שָׁלוֹם בֵּין יִבְיָן מִלְּדָ־חֲצוֹר וּבֵין בֵּית חֶבֶר
הַקֵּינִי: ^י וַתֵּצֵא יַעֲלֵ לְקִרְאֵת סִסְרָא וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
סוּרָה אֲדֹנָי סוּרָה אֵלָי אֶל־תִּירָא וַיִּסַּר אֵלֶיהָ
הָאֵהָלָה וַתִּכְסֶהוּ בַשְּׂמִיכָה: ^י וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ
הַשְּׂקִינִי־נָא מֵעֵט־מַיִם כִּי צִמְאֹתִי וַתִּפְתַּח אֶת־
נְאוֹד הַחֲלָב וַתִּשְׁקֶהוּ וַתִּכְסֶהוּ: ^כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ
עֲמַד פֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהִיָּה אִם־אִישׁ יָבֹא וּשְׂאֵלְךָ

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

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Sisera fled away on foot towards the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for, there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸ And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, “My lord, stay here with me; do not be afraid!” He stayed there in her tent, and she covered him with a rug. ¹⁹ He said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” She opened the skin that had milk in it, gave him some to drink and covered him up again. ²⁰ Then he said to her, “Stand at the tent entrance and, if

¹⁴ For the last sentence, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, “The LORD is indeed going out before you.”

¹⁵ The NJB, following the LXX, omits ‘by the edge of the sword before Barak’; the NRSV has, instead ‘into a panic before Barak’.

¹⁶ The NJB has ‘escaped’ in place of ‘was left’, here following the MT & NRSV.

¹⁷ The NRSV has ‘clan’ in place of ‘family’, here following the NJB.

¹⁸ NETB has ‘blanket’ in place of ‘rug’, here following the NJB & NRSV.

¹⁹ ‘Milk’ translates הַחֲלָב – the sour milk of the nomad.

²⁰ In place of ‘stand’, here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has the more explicit ‘stand watch’.

וְאָמַר הַיֵּשׁ-פֶּה אִישׁ וְאָמְרָתָ אָיוֹ: כֹּא וְתַקַּח יַעַל
 אֲשֶׁת-חֶבֶר אֶת-יְתֵד הָאֵהָל וַתִּשֶׂם אֶת-הַמַּקְבֵּת
 בַּיָּדָה וַתְּבֹא אֵלָיו בַּלָּאט וַתַּתְקַע אֶת-הַיְתֵד
 בְּרִקְתּוֹ וַתַּצְנַח בְּאָרֶץ וְהוּא-נֹרֵדִים וַיַּעַף וַיָּמָת:
 כִּבְּ וְהִנֵּה בָרַק רֹדֵף אֶת-סִיסְרָא וַתֵּצֵא יַעַל לִקְרֹאתוֹ
 וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֵךְ וְאַרְאֶךָ אֶת-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה
 מִבְּקֵשׁ וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיָהּ וְהִנֵּה סִיסְרָא נֹפֵל מִתּוֹ וְהַיְתֵד
 בְּרִקְתּוֹ:

כִּג וַיִּכְנַע אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יַבִּין מֶלֶךְ-כְּנַעַן
 לְפָנָי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּד וַתִּלְךְ יָד בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל הַלּוֹךְ
 וְקָשָׁה עַל יַבִּין מֶלֶךְ-כְּנַעַן עַד אֲשֶׁר הִכְרִיתוּ אֶת
 יַבִּין מֶלֶךְ-כְּנַעַן:
 {ש}

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

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

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

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

²² No reason is given for Jael’s switch of loyalty from Sisera to Barak.

²³ The NJB opens this verse with ‘thus, on that day’, the NRSV has ‘so, on that day’ and NETB has just ‘that day’.

²⁴ The NJB has the pronoun, ‘him’ in place of the final ‘King Jabin of Canaan’, here following the MT & NRSV.

שופטים פרק ה

א וַתִּשֶׁר דְּבוּרָה וּבָרַק בֶּן־אֲבִינוֹם {ס}
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא {ר} לֵאמֹר: {ס}
ב בְּפָרַע פְּרָעוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}
ג בְּהַתְּנַדֵּב {ר} עַם בָּרְכוּ יְהוָה: {ס}
ד שָׁמְעוּ מַלְכִים הָאֲזִינוּ {ר} רְזִימוֹ {ס}
ה אֲנֹכִי לַיהוָה אֲנֹכִי אֲשִׁירָה {ס} אֲזַמֵּר {ר}
ו לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}
ז יְהוָה בְּצֵאתְךָ {ר} מִשֵּׁעִיר {ס}
ח בְּצַעֲדֶךָ מִשְׂדֵּה אֲדוֹם {ס} אֶרֶץ {ר}
ט רָעָשָׁה גַם־שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ {ס}
י גַם־עָבִים נָטְפוּ {ר} מֵיָם: {ס}
יא הָרִים נָזְלוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה {ס} זֶה {ר}
יב סִינֵי מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס}
יג בְּיָמֵי שָׁמְגַר בֶּן־ {ר} עֲנַת {ס}
יד בְּיָמֵי יַעֲלֵ חֲדָלוּ אַרְחֹת {ס} וְהַלְכֵי {ר}

JUDGES 5

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

JUDGES 5

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

<p>נְתִיבוֹת יִלְכוּ אַרְחוֹת עַקְלָלוֹת: {ס} חֲדָלוּ פְּרוֹזוֹן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ר} חֲדָלוּ {ס} עַד שֶׁקָּמְתִי דְבוֹרָה שֶׁקָּמְתִי אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס} יִבְחַל {ר}</p>	<p>7 Scarce were warriors in Israel, scarce, until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel.</p>
<p>אֱלֹהִים חֲדָשִׁים אִזּוֹ לַחֵם שַׁעְרִים {ס} מִגֵּן אִם-יִרְאָה {ר} וְרֵמַח {ס} בְּאַרְבָּעִים אֶלֶף בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: {ס} לְבִי {ר} לְחוֹקְקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}</p>	<p>8 Then, when God chose new leaders, war appeared in the city gates: not a spear or shield could be found from forty thousand in Israel!</p>
<p>הַמִּתְנַדְּבִים בְּעַם בָּרְכוּ {ר} יְהוָה: {ס} רֹכְבֵי אֲתָנוֹת צְהָרוֹת {ס} יֹשְׁבֵי {ר} עַל-מִדְּיָן וְהַלְכֵי עַל-דָּרֶךְ שִׁיחוּ: {ס}</p>	<p>9 My heart beats fast for Israel's chieftains, for the people who answered the call to war. Bless Yahweh.</p>
<p>מְקוֹל מְחַצְצִים בֵּין {ר} מְשֹׁאֲבִים {ס} שֵׁם יִתְנֹוּ צְדָקוֹת יְהוָה {ס} צְדָקַת {ר} פְּרוֹזוֹנוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל {ס}</p>	<p>10 Sing, you who ride on the white she-asses, and sit on saddle-blankets, and you who go on foot.</p>
<p>אִזּוֹ יִרְדּוּ לְשַׁעְרֵים עִם- {ר} יְהוָה: {ס}</p>	<p>11 Hear the sound of the shepherds at the watering places! There they extol Yahweh's blessings, his saving acts for his warriors in Israel. Then Yahweh's people marched down to the gates.</p>

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

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

⁹ In the MT, the last sentence has simply the Divine Name.

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

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

<p style="text-align: center;">עֹרֵי עֹרֵי דְבוּרָה {ס}</p> <p>עֹרֵי {ר} עֹרֵי דְבַר־יִשָּׁיר {ס}</p> <p>קוּם בָּרַק וְשִׁבֵּה שְׁבִיָּה בֶן- אַבִּינוֹם: {ס}</p> <p>אֲזַ יֵרֵד שָׁרִיד לְאֲדִירִים עַם {ס}</p> <p>יְהוֹה {ר} יֵרֵד־לִי בַגְּבוּרִים: {ס}</p> <p>מִנֵּי אֶפְרַיִם שָׁרָשָׁם {ר} בַּעַמְלָק {ס}</p> <p>אַחֲרָיֶךָ בְּנִימִין בַּעַמְמִיָּה {ס} מִנֵּי {ר}</p> <p>מִכִּיר יֵרְדוּ מַחְקָקִים {ס}</p> <p>וּמִזְבוּלֹן מִשְׁכִּים בְּשֵׁבֶט {ר} סַפֵּר: {ס}</p> <p>וְיִשָּׁרֵי בִישָׁשְׁכָר עַם־דְּבֹרָה {ס} וְיִשָּׁשְׁכָר {ר}</p> <p>בֶּן בָּרַק בַּעַמְקָ שֶׁלַח בְּרַגְלָיו {ס}</p> <p>בְּפִלְגֹת רְאוּבֵן גְּדוּלִים חֲקָקִי- {ר} לֵב: {ס}</p> <p>לָמָּה יִשְׁבֹּת בֵּין הַמְּשֻׁפְתִּים {ס}</p> <p>לִשְׁמָע {ר} שְׂרָקוֹת עֲדָרִים {ס}</p> <p>לְפִלְגֹת רְאוּבֵן גְּדוּלִים חֲקָרִי- {ר} לֵב: {ס}</p>	<p>12 Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake; awake, declaim a song! Arise, Barak! Lead away your captives, son of Abinoam!</p> <p>13 Then Israel marched down to the gates; Yahweh's people, like heroes, marched down to fight for me.</p> <p>14 From Ephraim they came, who uprooted Amalek. Following you is Benjamin, with your kin; From Machir, captains have come down, and from Zebulun, those who wield the commander's staff.</p> <p>15 The princes of Issachar are with Deborah; and Issachar, faithful to Barak, into the valley they rushed out at his feet. Among the clans of Reuben, there was much searching of heart.</p> <p>16 Why did you linger among the sheepfolds listening for whistles, with the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben, there was much searching of heart.</p>
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¹² At the beginning of the 3rd line, the *NJB*, following the *LXX* (*ἐνισχύων*), adds 'take heart'.

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

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

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

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

<p>זי גִּלְעָד בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן שָׁכַן {ס} וְדָן {ר} לָמָּה יָגוּר אֲנִיּוֹת {ס} אֲשֶׁר יָשַׁב לַחֹף {ר} יָמִים {ס} וְעַל מִפְּרָצָיו יִשְׁכֹּן: {ס} יח זְבֻלֹן {ר} עִם חֶרֶף נִפְשׁוּ לָמוֹת {ס} וְנַפְתָּלִי עַל מְרוֹמָיו {ר} שְׂדֵה: {ס} יט בָּאוּ מְלָכִים נִלְחָמוּ {ס} אָז {ר} נִלְחָמוּ מִלְכֵי כְנַעַן {ס} בַּתְּעַנְךָ עַל־מֵי {ר} מִגְדּוֹ {ס} בְּצַע כֶּסֶף לֹא לָקְחוּ: {ס} כ מִן־ {ר} שָׁמַיִם נִלְחָמוּ {ס} הַכּוֹכָבִים מִמְּסֻלוֹתָם נִלְחָמוּ עִם־ {ר} סִיסְרָא: {ס} כא נַחַל קִישׁוֹן גָּרַפָם {ס} נַחַל {ר} קְדוּמִים נַחַל קִישׁוֹן {ס} תִּדְרְכֵי נַפְשִׁי {ר} עֹז: {ס}</p>	<p>17 Gilead stayed on the other side of the Jordan, and why should Dan have stayed aboard ship? Asher remained by the sea, peacefully living within his ports.</p> <p>18 Zebulun is a people who have braved death, Naphtali too, on the high ground of the country.</p> <p>19 The kings came, they fought; they fought, those kings of Canaan, at Taanach, by Megiddo's waters, yet bore away no silver spoils.</p> <p>20 From high in heaven fought the stars, from their courses, the fought against Sisera.</p> <p>21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, the torrent, onrushing; the torrent of Kishon. March on, be strong my soul!</p>
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17 'Gilead' does not refer to a tribe of this name, but Gad, indicated by the name of its tribal territory (see Nb 32:1ff), Reuben and Gad, the Transjordanian tribes, being normally mentioned together. By this time, Dan had presumably migrated northwards (see 1:34–35, 17–18 and #Jos 19:40). Apparently, the men of Dan hired out their labour to Phoenician shipmasters.

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

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

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

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

<p>כב אַז הַלְמוּ עֲקֵבֵי־סוּס {ס}</p> <p>מְדַהְרוֹת {ר} דְּהָרוֹת אַבְיָרָיו: {ס}</p> <p>כג אֲרוּ מְרוֹז אָמַר מֶלֶאךָ יְהוָה</p> <p>אֲרוּ אָרוֹר {ר} יִשְׁבִּיָּה {ס}</p> <p>כִּי לֹא־בָאוּ לְעֶזְרַת יְהוָה {ס}</p> <p>לְעֶזְרַת {ר} יְהוָה בַּגְּבוּרִים: {ס}</p> <p>כד תְּבָרַךְ מְנַשִּׁים יַעַל אִשְׁתְּ חֶבֶר {ר}</p> <p>הַקֵּינִי {ס}</p> <p>מְנַשִּׁים בְּאֵהֶל תְּבָרַךְ: {ס}</p> <p>כה מַיִם {ר} שָׁאַל חֶלֶב נָתַנָּה {ס}</p> <p>בְּסִפְלֵ אֲדִירִים הִקְרִיבָה {ר} חֲמָאָה: {ס}</p> <p>כו יָדָהּ לִיתֵד תִּשְׁלַחְנָה {ס} וַיְמִינָה {ר}</p> <p>לְהִלְמוֹת עַמְלִים {ס}</p> <p>וְהִלְמָה סִיסְרָא מִחֻקָּה {ר}</p> <p>רִאשׁוֹ {ס} וּמִחֻצָּה וַחֲלַפָּה רִקְתּוֹ: {ס}</p> <p>כז בֵּין {ר} רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע נָפַל שָׁכַב {ס}</p> <p>בֵּין רַגְלֶיהָ כָּרַע {ר} נָפַל {ס}</p>	<p>22 The horses' hoofs beat the ground with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.</p> <p>23 "Curse Meroz," said the Angel of Yahweh, "curse bitterly its inhabitants, for not having come to the help of Yahweh, to the help of Yahweh as warriors."</p> <p>24 Blessed be Jael among women the wife of Heber the Kenite; of tent-dwelling women, may she be most blessed!</p> <p>25 He asked for water; she gave him milk; she offered him curds in a lordly dish.</p> <p>26 She reached her hand out to seize the peg, her right hand to seize the workman's mallet. She struck Sisera, crushed his head, pierced his temple and shattered it.</p> <p>27 At her feet he tumbled, he fell, he lay; at her feet he tumbled, he fell.</p>
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22 The MT as it stands has a singular noun for 'horses' but, if one moves the prefixed מ from the beginning of the next word to the end of סוּס, the expected plural form is achieved; another option is to assume an error of haplography here, where the letter מ should appear in both places.

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

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

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

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

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

בְּאֲשֶׁר כָּרַע שָׁם נָפַל שְׂדוּד: {ס}	Where he tumbled, there he fell dead.
כח בְּעַד {ר} הַחֲלוּזִין נִשְׁקָפָה וַתִּיבֹב	28 Through her window she looked,
אִם סִיסְרָא בְּעַד הָאֲשֻׁנָב {ס}	Sisera's mother cried out
מִדּוּעַ בִּשְׁשׁ רִכְבוֹ {ר} לָבוֹא {ס}	through the lattice: "Why is his chariot long in coming?
מִדּוּעַ אֶחְרוּ פַעַמֵי מִרְכַּבוֹתָיו: {ס}	Why are the harnessed horses slow?"
כט חֲכָמוֹת {ר} שְׂרוּתֶיהָ תַעֲנִינָה {ס}	29 The wisest of her ladies answers;
אִף־הִיא תִשָּׁיב אֲמָרֶיהָ {ר} לָהּ: {ס}	indeed, she answers the question herself:
ל הֲלֹא יִמְצְאוּ יַחְלְקוּ שְׁלָל {ס} רַחֵם {ר}	30 They are gathering, doubtless, sharing the spoil:
רַחֲמָתִים לְרֹאשׁ גִּבּוֹר {ס} שְׁלָל צְבָעִים {ר}	a girl, two girls, for each man of war;
לְסִיסְרָא {ס} שְׁלָל צְבָעִים רַקְמָה {ס}	spoil of dyed stuff for Sisera, spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered;
צִבְעַת {ר} רַקְמָתִים לְצוּאֵרֵי שְׁלָל: {ס}	two embroidered cloths for my neck as spoil!"
לא כִּן יֵאבְדוּ כָּל־אוֹיְבֵיךָ יְהוָה {ר}	31 So, perish all your enemies, Yahweh!
וְאַהֲבֵיךָ כַּצָּאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בַּגְּבֻרָתוֹ {ס}	But may your friends be like the sun as it rises in its might!
ותִשְׁקַט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבַּעַם שָׁנָה: {ר}	Then the land had peace for forty years.
{ש}	

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק ו

א ויעשו בני ישראל הרע בעיני יהוה ויתנם יהוה
ב ביד־מדין שבע שנים: ב ותעזו יד־מדין על־ישראל
ג מפני מדין עשו להם בני ישראל את־המנהרות
ד אשר בהרים ואת־המערות ואת־המצודות: ויהיה
ה אס־זרע ישראל ועלה מדין ועמלק ובני־קדם
ו עלו עליו: ז ויחנו עליהם וישחיתו את־יבול
ח הארץ עד־בוא־גזא ולא־ישאירו מחיה בישראל
ט ושה ושור וחמור: י כי הם ומקניהם יעלו
יא ואהליהם יבאו ובאו כדי־ארבה לרב ולהם
יב ולגמליהם אין מספר ויבאו בארץ לשחתה: יג וידל
יד ישראל מאד מפני מדין ויזעקו בני־ישראל אל־
יהוה: {פ}

יז ויהי כִּי־זעקו בני־ישראל אל־יהוה על אדות
יח מדין: יט וישלח יהוה איש נביא אל־בני ישראל

JUDGES 6

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

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

JUDGES 6

1 'Midian' was among the descendants of Abraham (Gn 25:2-4, 1Ch 1:32-33).

2 Behind the text of vv. 2-6 may be the harvest season taxes imposed on peasants by groups with the military power to make such impositions.

3 The Midianites were a nomadic people living in north-western Sinai (see #Ex 2:11). The Amalekites, (Gn 36:12), were mainly settled in southern Palestine but the name here may apply vaguely to nomadic groups. The 'sons of the East' were desert tribes living to the east of the Jordan.

4 'Gaza' is a Philistine city some 72 km south of Jaffa.

5 The *Kethib/Qere* difference here (possible *yod/vav* confusion) would benefit from an explanation.

6 The NRSV opens this verse, here following the NJB, with, "Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian."

7 This paragraph recounts the first appearance of a prophet in Israelite history.

8 The NJB swaps the words 'led' and 'brought', here following the NRSV.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנֹכִי
הֶעֱלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֶצִּיא אֶתְכֶם מִבֵּית
עַבְדִּים: ^ט וְאֶצֶּל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל־
לְחֻצֵיכֶם וְאֶגְרַשׁ אוֹתָם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶתְּנָה לָכֶם אֶת־
אַרְצָם: ^י וְאָמַרְהָ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא
תִירְאוּ אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יוֹשְׁבִים
בְּאַרְצָם וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלִי: {פ}

^{יא} וַיָּבֹא מִלֶּאֲדָי יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר
בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאָשׁ אֲבִי הָעֲזָרִי וְגִדְעוֹן בְּנוֹ חַבְט
חַטִּים בָּנָת לְהַנִּיס מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: ^{יב} וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֲדָי
יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה עִמָּךְ גִּבּוֹר הַחַיִל: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלָיו גִּדְעוֹן בִּי אֲדֹנָי וַיֵּשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מִצָּאתָנוּ
כָּל־זֹאת וְאֵיךְ כָּל־נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר סִפְרוּ־לָנוּ
אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֵאמֹר הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם הֶעֱלָנוּ יְהוָה וְעַתָּה
נִטְשָׁנוּ יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵנוּ בְּכַף־מִדְיָן: ^{יד} וַיַּפֵּן אֵלָיו יְהוָה

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

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

⁹ The literal translation of ‘power’ (twice in this verse) is ‘hand’.

¹⁰ The literal translation of ‘words’ is ‘voice’.

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

¹² In place of ‘valiant’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘mighty’ and NETB has ‘courageous’.

¹³ The NJB opens Gideon’s reply, here following the NRSV, with ‘forgive me, my lord’.

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

וַיֹּאמֶר לָךְ בְּכַחַךְ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף
 מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ: ^{טו} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בִּי אֲדֹנָי בְּמָה
 אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲנֵה אֶלְפֵי הַדָּל בַּמְנַשֶּׁה וְאַנְכִי
 הַצָּעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי: ^{טז} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה כִּי אֵתִיהָ
 עִמָּךְ וְהִבִּיתָ אֶת־מִדְיָן כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד: ^{יז} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
 אֶסְנֶא מִצְּאֹתַי חֹן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת שְׂאֵתָהּ
 מִדְּבַר עַמִּי: ^{יח} אֶל־נָא תִמַּשׁ מִזֶּה עַד־בֹּאִי אֵלֶיךָ
 וְהִצַּאֲתִי אֶת־מִנְחָתִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי
 אֲשׁוּב עַד שׁוֹבֶךָ: ^{יט} וַיִּגְדַּעוֹן בָּא וַיַּעַשׂ גְּדֵי־עֲזִים
 וַאֲיִפְתַּקְמַח מִצֹּת הַבָּשָׂר שֵׁם בַּסֵּל וְהִמְרִק שָׁם
 בַּפְּרוֹר וַיּוֹצֵא אֵלָיו אֶל־תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּגַּשׁ: {פ}

^כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִלֶּאךָ הָאֱלֹהִים קַח אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר
 וְאֶת־הַמִּצֹּת וְהִנַּח אֶל־הַסֵּלַע הַלֵּז וְאֶת־הִמְרִק
 שָׁפֹךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: ^{כא} וַיִּשְׁלַח מִלֶּאךָ יְהוָה אֶת־קַצֵּה

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

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

²¹ Then the Angel of Yahweh reached out the tip of the staff in his hand

¹⁵ The NJB opens with ‘Gideon’ in place of ‘he’, here following the MT & NRSV. Here, אֲדֹנָי (‘Adonai’) is translated as ‘sir’.

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

¹⁷ The NJB opens with ‘Gideon’ in place of ‘he’, here following the MT & NRSV.

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

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

²⁰ The NJB has ‘Yahweh’ in place of ‘God’, but the Divine Name is not used here in the MT (but cf. v. 21, where it is).

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

הַמְשַׁעֲנֵת אֲשֶׁר בִּידּוֹ וַיִּגַע בַּבָּשָׂר וּבַמִּצּוֹת וַתַּעַל
הָאֵשׁ מִן־הַצּוּר וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת־הַמִּצּוֹת
וּמִלֶּאֱדָי יְהוָה הִלָּךְ מֵעֵינָיו: ^{כב} וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן כִּי־מִלֶּאֱדָי
יְהוָה הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אָהֳהָ אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה כִּי־עַל־כֵּן
רָאִיתִי מִלֶּאֱדָי יְהוָה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים: ^{כג} וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם לָךְ אֶל־תִּירָא לֹא תָמוּת: ^{כד} וַיִּבֶן שָׁם
גִדְעוֹן מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם עַד הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה עוֹדְנֵנוּ בְּעַפְרַת אָבִי הָעֶזְרָי: {ס}

^{כה} וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה קַח אֶת־פָּר־
הַשּׁוֹר אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיךָ וּפָר הַשְּׁנַי שִׁבְעַ שָׁנִים וְהַרְסֵתָ
אֶת־מִזְבַּח הַבַּעַל אֲשֶׁר לְאָבִיךָ וְאֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה
אֲשֶׁר־עָלָיו תִּכְרֹת: ^{כו} וּבְנִיתָ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
עַל רֹאשׁ הַמַּעֲזוֹ הַזֶּה בַּמַּעֲרָכָה וּלְקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַפָּר
הַשְּׁנַי וְהַעֲלִיתָ עוֹלָה בְּעֵצֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּכְרֹת:
^{כז} וַיִּקַּח גִּדְעוֹן עֲשָׂרָה אַנְשִׁים מֵעַבְדָּיו וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבֶּר אֱלֹוֹ יְהוָה וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרָא אֶת־בַּיִת אָבִיו
וְאֶת־אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר מַעֲשׂוֹת יוֹמָם וַיַּעַשׂ לַיְלָה:

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ ‘Sacred pole’ is a translation of אֲשֵׁרָה (‘Asherah’).

²⁷ The literal translation of ‘ten of his servants’ is ‘ten men from among his servants’.

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

כח וישפִּימוּ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּבֶּקֶר וְהִנֵּה נִתְּן מִזְבַּח הַבָּעַל וְהָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו כָּרְתָהּ וְאֵת הַפֶּר הַשְּׂנִי הָעֵלָה עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַבְּנוּי: ^{כט} וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ מִי עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה וַיִּדְרְשׁוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גִדְעוֹן בֶּן-יֹזָאֵשׁ עָשָׂה הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ^ל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר אֶל-יֹזָאֵשׁ הוֹצֵא אֶת-בְּנֶךָ וַיָּמַת כִּי נִתְּן אֶת-מִזְבַּח הַבָּעַל וְכִי כָרַת הָאֲשֵׁרָה אֲשֶׁר-עָלָיו: ^{לא} וַיֹּאמֶר יֹזָאֵשׁ לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-עָמְדוּ עָלָיו הָאֲתָם וְתָרִיבוּן לַבָּעַל אִם-אַתֶּם תּוֹשִׁיעוֹן אוֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יָרִיב לֹו יוֹמַת עַד-הַבֶּקֶר אִם-אֱלֹהִים הוּא יָרֵב לֹו כִּי נִתְּן אֶת-מִזְבְּחוֹ: ^{לב} וַיִּקְרָא-לֹו בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא יִרְבֵּעַל לֵאמֹר יָרֵב בּוֹ הַבָּעַל כִּי נִתְּן אֶת-מִזְבְּחוֹ: {ס}

^{לג} וְכָל-מִדְיָן וְעַמְלָק וּבְנֵי-קַדְמֹן נֹאֲסְפוּ יַחְדָּו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְעַמְקֵי יִזְרְעֵאל: ^{לד} וְרוּחַ יְהוָה לָבְשָׁה אֶת-גִּדְעוֹן וַיִּתְקַע בַּשּׁוֹפָר וַיִּזְעַק אַבְיָעָזֶר אַחֲרָיו:

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

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

²⁹ The literal translation of ‘to each other’ is ‘each one to his neighbour’.

³⁰ Literally translated, ‘for he must die’ is ‘and let him die’, but the jussive form with *vav* after the imperative is best translated as a purpose clause.

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

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

³³ On the ‘Plain of Jezreel’, see #4:7.

³⁴ The ‘spirit of Yahweh’ empowered Gideon, so the victory belongs to God.

לָהּ וּמְלָאכִים שָׁלַח בְּכָל־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּזְעַק גַּם־הוּא
 אַחֲרָיו וּמְלָאכִים שָׁלַח בְּאַשֶׁר וּבְזִבְלוֹן וּבְנַפְתָּלִי
 וַיֵּצְאוּ לִקְרַאתָם: ^ל וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אִם־
 יִשְׁדֹּף מוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיַדִּי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
^{לו} הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מַצִּיג אֶת־גִּזְתְּ הַצֹּמֵר בְּגֵרֶן אִם טֹל
 יִהְיֶה עַל־הַגִּזָּה לְבֹדָה וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ חָרֵב וַיִּדְעֹתִי
 כִּי־תוֹשִׁיעַ בְּיַדִּי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
^{לז} וַיְהִי־כֵן וַיִּשְׁכֶם מִמַּחֲרַת וַיִּזֹר אֶת־הַגִּזָּה וַיִּמָּץ טֹל
 מִן־הַגִּזָּה מְלֹא הַסֶּפֶל מִיָּם: ^{לט} וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן אֶל־
 הָאֱלֹהִים אֵל־יִחָר אַפְּךָ בִּי וְאִדְבַּרְהָ אֲדָהּ הַפֶּעַם
 אֶנְסֶה נְאֻר־ק־הַפֶּעַם בַּגִּזָּה יִהְיֶנָּה חָרֵב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה
 לְבֹדָה וְעַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה־טֹל: ^מ וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים כֵּן
 בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיְהִי־חָרֵב אֶל־הַגִּזָּה לְבֹדָה וְעַל־כָּל־
 הָאָרֶץ הָיָה טֹל: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק ז

א וַיִּשְׁכֶם יִרְבֵּעַל הוּא גִדְעוֹן וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל־עֵין חֶרֶד וּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן הָיְהִי־לּוֹ מִצְפּוֹן מִגְּבַעַת הַמּוֹרָה בְּעֵמֶק: {ס}

ב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן רַב הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתְּךָ מִתַּתִּי אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּיָדָם פְּרִי־תִפְאָר עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יָדַי הוֹשִׁיעָה לִּי: ג וְעַתָּה קְרָא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי־יֵרָא וַחֲרָד יֵשֶׁב וַיִּצְפֹּר מֵהַר הַגִּלְעָד וַיֵּשֶׁב מִן־הָעָם עֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אָלֶף וַעֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים נִשְׁאַרוּ: {ס}

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

JUDGES 7

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

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

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

JUDGES 7

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

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

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

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

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

בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ מִן־הַמַּיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר יִלֵּק הַכֶּלֶב תִּצְיֵג אוֹתוֹ
לְבָד וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יִכְרַע עַל־בְּרַכְיֹו לְשִׁתּוֹת: וַיְהִי
מִסְפַּר הַמַּלְקָקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל־פִּיהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת
אִישׁ וְכֹל יֵתֵר הָעָם כָּרְעוּ עַל־בְּרַכְיֵיהֶם לְשִׁתּוֹת
מֵיִם: {ס}

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן בְּשִׁלְשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ
הַמַּלְקָקִים אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־מִדְיָן בְּיַדְךָ
וְכָל־הָעָם יֵלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמִקְמוֹ: וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־צִדָּה
הָעָם בְּיָדָם וְאֵת שׁוֹפְרֹתֵיהֶם וְאֵת כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
שָׁלַח אִישׁ לְאֹהֲלָיו וּבְשִׁלְשׁ־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַחֲזִיק
וּמַחֲנֵה מִדְיָן הָיָה לוֹ מִתַּחַת בְּעַמְק: {פ}

וַיְהִי בַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה קוּם רֵד
בְּמַחֲנֵה כִּי נָתַתִּיו בְּיַדְךָ: וְאִם־יֵרָא אֶתָּה לְרֵדֹת
רֵד אֶתָּה וּפְרָה נְעֻרָךְ אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֵה: וְשָׁמַעְתָּ מֵה־
יְדִבְרוּ וְאַחַר תַּחֲזֹקְנָה יְדִיךָ וַיֵּרֶד בְּמַחֲנֵה וַיֵּרֶד
הוּא וּפְרָה נְעֻרוֹ אֶל־קִצֵּה הַחֲמֻשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּמַחֲנֵה:
יְב וּמִדְיָן וְעַמְלֵק וְכָל־בְּנֵי־קֵדָם נִפְלִים בְּעַמְק

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

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

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

¹² Midian and Amalek, and all the sons of the East stretched through the

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

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

⁸ The literal translation of ‘his own’ is ‘him’.

⁹ Dreams were believed to be a means of divine-human communication.

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

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

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

כַּאֲרֵבָה לָרֶב וּלְגַמְלֵיהֶם אֵין מִסְפָּר בַּחֹל שְׁעַל-
 שִׁפְתַּי הַיָּם לָרֶב: י' וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וְהִנֵּה-אִישׁ מִסְפָּר
 לָרַעְהוּ חִלּוֹם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה חִלּוֹם חִלְמֹתַי וְהִנֵּה צָלִיל
 לֶחֶם שְׁעָרִים מִתְהַפֵּךְ בְּמַחֲנֵה מְדִין וַיָּבֹא עַד-
 הָאֶהָל וַיִּכְהוּ וַיִּפֹּל וַיִּהְפְּכֵהוּ לְמַעַלָּה וּנְפֹל הָאֶהָל:
 י" וַיֵּעַן רַעְהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין זֹאת בְּלִמְתִּי אִם-חֶרֶב גִּדְעוֹן
 בְּיָדוֹ אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָתַן הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדוֹ אֶת-מְדִין
 וְאֶת-כָּל-הַמַּחֲנֶה: {פ}

טו וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַע גִּדְעוֹן אֶת-מִסְפָּר הַחִלּוֹם וְאֶת-
 שִׁבְרוֹ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר
 קוּמוּ כִּי-נָתַן יְהוָה בְּיַדְכֶם אֶת-מַחֲנֵה מְדִין: טז וַיַּחַץ
 אֶת-שְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ שְׁלֹשָׁה רֵאשִׁים וַיִּתֵּן
 שׁוֹפְרוֹת בְּיַד-כָּלֶם וּכְדִים רִיקִים וּלְפָדִים בְּתוֹךְ
 הַכְּדִים: יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִמְּנִי תִרְאוּ וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ
 וְהִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי בָא בְּקֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהִיָּה כְאֲשֶׁר-אֲעֲשֶׂה
 כֵּן תַּעֲשׂוּ: יח וְתִקְעֹתִי בְּשׁוֹפָר אֲנֹכִי וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר אִתִּי

valley as thick as locusts; their camels were innumerable like the sand on the seashore. ¹³ Gideon came up just as a man was telling his comrade a dream; he was saying, "I had a dream; a cake made of barley bread came rolling through the camp of Midian; it reached the tent, struck against it so that it fell, and turned it upside down, and the tent lay flat." ¹⁴ His comrade answered, "This can be nothing else but the sword of Gideon son of Joash the Israelite. God has put Midian and all the camp into his power."

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, he fell to his knees; then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, "On your feet, for Yahweh has put the camp of Midian into your power!" ¹⁶ He then divided his three hundred men into three companies and, to each man, he gave a trumpet and an empty pitcher, with a torch inside each pitcher. ¹⁷ He said to them, "Watch me, and do as I do. When I reach the outskirts of the camp, whatever I do, you do too. ¹⁸ When I sound the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you too must sound

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

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

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

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

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

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

וּתְקַעְתֶּם בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת גַּם־אֲתֶם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה
וְאָמַרְתֶּם לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: {פ}

יט וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן וּמֵאֵה־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אָתּוֹ בְּקֶצֶה
הַמַּחֲנֶה רָאשׁ הָאֲשֻׁמְרֹת הַתִּיכוֹנָה אַךְ הָקֵם
הַקִּימוּ אֶת־הַשְּׁמָרִים וַיִּתְקְעוּ בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת וּנְפוּץ
הַכַּדִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדָם: כ וַיִּתְקְעוּ שְׁלֹשַׁת הָרָאשִׁים
בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ הַכַּדִּים וַיַּחֲזִיקוּ בַיַּד־שְׁמֹאֲלָם
בְּלַפְדִּים וּבַיַּד־יְמִינָם הַשׁוֹפְרוֹת לְתַקּוֹעַ וַיִּקְרְאוּ
חֶרֶב לַיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: כא וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ אִישׁ תַּחְתּוֹ סְבִיב
לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרָץ כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְעוּ וַיִּנְסוּ וַיִּנּוּסוּ:
כב וַיִּתְקְעוּ שְׁלֹשׁ־מֵאוֹת הַשׁוֹפְרוֹת וַיִּשֶׁם יְהוָה אֶת
חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ וּבְכָל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּנָּס הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד־
בֵּית הַשֵּׁטָה צְרֹתָה עַד שַׁפְת־אֲבֵל מְחוּלָה עַל־
טַבַּת: כג וַיִּצְעַק אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנַּפְתָּלִי וּמִן־אֲשֶׁר
וּמִן־כָּל־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרָיו מִדִּין: כד וּמִלְאָכִים
שָׁלַח גִּדְעוֹן בְּכָל־הָר אֲפְרָיִם לֵאמֹר רְדוּ לְקִרְאֵת

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

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

¹⁹ The NJB omits 'that were' before 'in their hands'.

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

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

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

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

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

מִדְיָן וְלִכְדוּ לָהֶם אֶת־הַמַּיִם עַד בֵּית בָּרָה וְאֶת־
הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּצְטַק כָּל־אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־הַמַּיִם
עַד בֵּית בָּרָה וְאֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן: כִּי וַיִּלְכְּדוּ שְׁנֵי־שָׂרֵי
מִדְיָן אֶת־עֲרֵב וְאֶת־זַאב וַיַּהַרְגוּ אֶת־עֲוֹרֵב בְּצוּר־
עֲוֹרֵב וְאֶת־זַאב הָרְגוּ בְּקַב־זַאב וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶל־מִדְיָן
וְרֹאש־עֲרֵב וְזַאב הֵבִיאוּ אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן מֵעֵבֶר לַיַּרְדֵּן:

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

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

שופטים פרק ח

א וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אִישׁ אֶפְרַיִם מִה־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ לְבַלְתִּי קְרָאוֹת לָנוּ כִּי הִלַכְתָּ לְהִלָּחֵם בְּמִדְיָן וַיִּרְיִבוּן אִתּוֹ בַּחֲזָקָה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מִה־עָשִׂיתָ עִתָּה כִּכֶּם הֲלֹא טוֹב עַלְלוֹת אֶפְרַיִם מִבְּצִיר אֲבִיעֶזֶר: ג בִּידְכֶם נָתַן אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שָׂרֵי מִדְיָן אֶת־עֶרֶב וְאֶת־זַבָּח וּמִה־יִכְלַתִּי עֲשׂוֹת כִּכֶּם אֲזַרְכֶּנּוּ רֹחַם מֵעַלְיוֹ בְּדַבְּרוֹ הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה: ד וַיָּבֹא גִדְעוֹן הַיַּרְדֵּנָה עֶבֶר הוּא וּשְׁלֹש־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ עֵיפִים וְרֹדְפִים: ה וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת תְּנוּ־נָא כֶּבֶד לָחֵם לָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרַגְלֵי כִּי־עֵיפִים הֵם וְאֲנֹכִי רֹדֵף אַחֲרֵי זַבָּח וְצַלְמֻנֶּע מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן: ו וַיֹּאמֶר שָׂרֵי סְכוֹת הֲכֹף זַבָּח וְצַלְמֻנֶּע עִתָּה בִּידֶךָ כִּי־נָתַן לְצַבָּאֶךָ לָחֵם: ז וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן לָכֵן בָּתַת יְהוָה אֶת־

JUDGES 8

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

JUDGES 8

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

זָבַח וְאֶת־צַלְמֻנֶּעַ בְּיַדִּי וְדַשְׁתִּי אֶת־בְּשָׂרְכֶם אֶת־
 קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרֻקָּנִים: ^ח וַיַּעַל מִשָּׁם פְּנוּאֵל
 וַיְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם כְּזֹאת וַיַּעֲנוּ אוֹתוֹ אַנְשֵׁי פְנוּאֵל
 כְּאֲשֶׁר עָנוּ אַנְשֵׁי סֻכּוֹת: ^ט וַיֹּאמֶר גַּם־לְאַנְשֵׁי
 פְּנוּאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּשׁוּבִי בְּשָׁלוֹם אֶתֶּן אֶת־הַמִּגְדָּל
 הַזֶּה: {פ}

י וְזָבַח וְצַלְמֻנֶּעַ בְּקַרְקֹר וּמַחְנֵיהֶם עִמָּם כַּחֲמֹשֶׁת
 עָשָׂר אֲלֹף כֹּל הַנּוֹתָרִים מִכָּל מַחֲנֵה בְּנֵי־קַדְמֹן
 וְהַנִּפְלִים מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים אֲלֹף אִישׁ שְׁלֹף־חֶרֶב:
^{יא} וַיַּעַל גְּדֵעוֹן דְּרֹךְ הַשְּׂכּוּנִי בְּאֵהָלִים מִקַּדְמֹן לְנֹבַח
 וַיִּגְבְּהָהּ וַיִּדֹּף אֶת־הַמַּחֲנֶה וְהַמַּחֲנֶה הָיָה בְּטַח:
^{יב} וַיִּנְסוּ זָבַח וְצַלְמֻנֶּעַ וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־
 שְׁנֵי מַלְכֵי מִדְיָן אֶת־זָבַח וְאֶת־צַלְמֻנֶּעַ וְכָל־
 הַמַּחֲנֶה הִחְרִיד: ^{יג} וַיָּשָׁב גְּדֵעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאָשׁ מִן־

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

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

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

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

⁹ Alternative readings for 'victoriously' are 'safely' and 'in peace'.

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

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

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

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

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

הַמְּלַחֲמָה מִלְּמַעְלָה הַחֶרֶס׃ ^ד וַיִּלְכְּדוּ גַּעַר מֵאֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ וַיִּכְתֹּב אֵלָיו אֶת־שְׂרֵי סְכוֹת וְאֶת־זְקֵנֶיהָ שְׁבַעִים וּשְׁבַעָה אִישׁ׃ ^{טו} וַיִּבֹּא אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנֵה זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע אֲשֶׁר חִרְפֹתֶם אֹתִי לֵאמֹר הֲכֹף זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע עִתָּה בְיָדְךָ כִּי נִתְּן לְאֲנָשֵׁיךָ הַיְעַפִּים לֶחֶם׃ ^{טז} וַיִּקַּח אֶת־זְקֵנֵי הָעִיר וְאֶת־קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וְאֶת־הַבְּרֻקָּנִים וַיֵּדַע בְּהֵם אֶת־אֲנָשֵׁי סְכוֹת׃ ^{יז} וְאֶת־מַגְדָּל פְּנוּאֵל נָתַן וַיַּהַרֵג אֶת־אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר׃ ^{יח} וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־זָבַח וְאֶל־צִלְמֻנֶּע אֵיפֹה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הִרְגַתֶם בְּתַבּוּר וַיֹּאמְרוּ כַּמּוֹדֵךָ כַּמּוֹהֵם אֶחָד כְּתָאֵר בְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ׃ ^{יט} וַיֹּאמֶר אֲחִי בְּנֵי־אִמִּי הֵם חִי־יְהוֹה לֹו הַחַיִּיתֶם אֹתָם לֹא הִרְגַתִּי אֶתְכֶם׃ ^כ וַיֹּאמֶר לִיְתֵר בְּכוֹרוֹ קוּם הֲרֹג אֹתָם וְלֹא־שָׁלַף הַנַּעַר חֶרְבּוֹ כִּי יָרָא כִּי עוֹדְנּוֹ נַעַר׃ ^{כא} וַיֹּאמֶר זָבַח וְצִלְמֻנֶּע קוּם אֶתָּה וּפְגַע־בָּנוּ כִּי כָאִישׁ גְּבוּרָתּוֹ

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

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

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

¹⁷ The NJB omits 'also', here following the NRSV & NETB.

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

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

²⁰ In place of 'go kill them', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'stand up and kill them'.

²¹ The literal translation of 'as a man is, so is his strength' is 'as the man is his strength'.

וַיִּקַּם גִּדְעוֹן וַיַּהַרְגֵם אֶת־זֶבַח וְאֶת־צַלְמוֹנֶעַ וַיִּקַּח
אֶת־הַשְּׁהֲרָנִים אֲשֶׁר בְּצוּאֲרֵי גְמְלֵיהֶם: {פ}
כב וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן מִשְׁלֵבְנוּ גַם־
אַתָּה גַם־בְּנֶדְךָ גַם בֶּן־בְּנֶדְךָ כִּי הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ מִיַּד מִדְיָן:
כג וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם גִּדְעוֹן לֹא־אֶמְשָׁל אֲנִי בָכֶם וְלֹא־
יִמְשָׁל בְּנֵי בָכֶם יְהוָה יִמְשָׁל בָּכֶם: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם
גִּדְעוֹן אֲשַׁאלְהֶם מִכֶּם שְׂאֵלָה וְתַנּוּ־לִי אִישׁ גִּזְם
שְׁלָלוּ כִּי־נִזְמִי זֶהָב לָהֶם כִּי יִשְׁמַעְאֲלִים הֵם:
כה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן נָתַן וַיִּפְרְשׂוּ אֶת־הַשְּׂמֹלָה וַיִּשְׁלִיכוּ
שָׂמָה אִישׁ גִּזְם שְׁלָלוּ: כו וַיְהִי מִשְׁקַל הַזָּהָב
אֲשֶׁר שָׂאֵל אֵלֶּף וּשְׁבַע־מֵאוֹת זָהָב לְבַד מִן־
הַשְּׁהֲרָנִים וְהַנְּטִיפּוֹת וּבִגְדֵי הָאֲרָגָמָן שֶׁעַל מַלְכֵי
מִדְיָן וּלְבַד מִן־הָעֲנָקוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּצוּאֲרֵי גְמְלֵיהֶם:
כז וַיַּעַשׂ אוֹתוֹ גִּדְעוֹן לְאֵפוֹד וַיִּצַּג אוֹתוֹ בְּעִירוֹ
בְּעַפְרָה וַיִּזְנוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרָיו שֵׁם וַיְהִי לְגִדְעוֹן

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

²² The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson, for you have rescued us from the power of Midian.”

²³ Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor my son; Yahweh will rule over you.” ²⁴ Then Gideon said to them, “Let me make a request of you: each of you give me an earring out of his spoils.” (For,

they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) ²⁵ They answered, “Gladly.” So, they spread out a cloak and, on it, they threw,

each of them, an earring taken from their spoils. ²⁶ The weight of the golden earrings he had asked for reached seventeen hundred shekels of

gold, besides the crescents and the pendants and purple garments worn by the kings of Midian, and besides the collars round their camels’

necks, too. ²⁷ Of all this, Gideon made an ephod and put it in his own city of Ophrah. All Israel, following his example, prostituted themselves

²² The NJB has ‘sons’ and ‘grandsons’ in place of ‘son’ and ‘grandson’, here following the MT & NRSV.

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

²⁴ In place of ‘for they had’, here following the MT, the NJB has ‘for the vanquished army had’ and the NRSV has ‘for the enemy had’ and NETB has ‘for the Midianites had’.

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

²⁶ 1,700 shekels would be about 19.4 Kg of gold.

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

וּלְבֵיתוֹ לְמוֹקֵשׁ: כִּחַ וַיִּפְנַע מִדִּין לְפָנָי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא יָסְפוּ לָשֹׂאת רֹאשׁם וַתִּשְׁקֹט הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים
שָׁנָה בַיָּמֵי גִדְעוֹן: {פ}

כֹּט וַיֵּלֶךְ יִרְבֵּעַל בֶּן־יֹאֲשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּבֵיתוֹ: ל וַלְגִדְעוֹן הָיוּ
שִׁבְעִים בָּנִים יִצְאֵי יָרְכוּ בֵּי־נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת הָיוּ לוֹ:
לֹא וּפְלִגְשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁכֶם יְלָדָהּ לּוֹ גַם־הָיָא בֶן וַיִּשֶׂם
אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ: לִב וַיָּמָת גִּדְעוֹן בֶּן־יֹאֲשׁ
בְּשֵׂיבָה טוֹבָה וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּקִבְרֵ יֹאֲשׁ אָבִיו בְּעַפְרָה
אָבִי הָעֹזְרִי: {פ}

לג וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר מֵת גִּדְעוֹן וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּזְנֶוּ
אַחֲרֵי הַבְּעָלִים וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ לָהֶם בַּעַל בְּרִית לְאֱלֹהִים:
לד וְלֹא זָכְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הַמַּצִּיל
אוֹתָם מִיַּד כָּל־אֲבִייהֶם מִסָּבִיב: לה וְלֹא־עָשׂוּ חֶסֶד
עִם־בֵּית יִרְבֵּעַל גִּדְעוֹן כְּכָל־הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
עִם־יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

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

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

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

²⁸ The literal translation of 'as long as Gideon lived' is 'in Gideon's days'.

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

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

³¹ The name, 'Abimelech' (אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ), means 'my father is king'.

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

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

³⁴ Freed from the Midianite threat, Israel returns to its familiar faults.

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

שופטים פרק ט

א וילך אבימלך בן-ירבעל שכמה אל-אחי אמו
וידבר אליהם ואל-כל-משפחת בית-אבי אמו
לאמר: ב דברו-נא באזני כל-בעלי שכם מה-טוב
לכם המשל בכם שבעים איש כל בני ירבעל אם-
משל בכם איש אחד וזכרתם פי-עצמכם
ובשרכם אני: ג וידברו אחי-אמו עליו באזני כל-
בעלי שכם את כל-הדברים האלה ויט לבם אחרי
אבימלך כי אמרו אחינו הוא: ד ויתנו-לו שבעים
כסף מבית בעל ברית וישכר בהם אבימלך
אנשים ריקים ופחזים וילכו אחריו: ה ויבא בית-
אביו עפרתה ויהרג את-אחיו בני-ירבעל שבעים
איש על-אבן אחת ויותר יותם בן-ירבעל הקטן
כי נחבא: {ס}

ו ויאספו כל-בעלי שכם וכל-בית מלוא וילכו
וימליכו את-אבימלך למלך עם-אלון מצב אשר

JUDGES 9

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

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

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

JUDGES 9

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

² The literal translation of 'your own flesh and blood' is 'your bone and your flesh'.

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

⁴ The god, 'Baal-Berith' (בעל ברית, 'the lord of the covenant') is otherwise unknown.

⁵ The literal translation of 'escaped' is 'remained'.

⁶ 'Pillar' (following the NRSV & NETB) is a conjectural translation (מצבה) of the MT's מצב (meaning uncertain); the NJB uses 'cultic stone'.

⁷ The subjected of the plural verb, 'reported', is indefinite.

בְּשִׁכְמֶם: ^ז וַיִּגְדוּ לְיוֹתָם וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּרֹאשׁ הַר־
גְּרִזִים וַיִּשָּׂא קוֹלוֹ וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמְעוּ אֵלַי
בְּעַלְי שְׁכֶם וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים:
ח הַלֹּדֶז הֵלְכוּ הָעֵצִים לְמִשַׁח עֲלֵיהֶם מִלֹּדֶז
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְזֵית מְלוּכָה מְלוּכָה עָלֵינוּ:
ט וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַזֵּית הַחֲדַלְתִּי אֶת־דְּשְׁנֵי
אֲשֶׁר־בִּי יִכְבְּדוּ אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים
וְהִלְכֹתִי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:
י וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לְתֹאנָה
לְכִי־אֵת מַלְכֵי עָלֵינוּ:
יא וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַתֹּאנָה הַחֲדַלְתִּי
אֶת־מִתְקֵי וְאֶת־תְּנוּבֹתַי הַטּוֹבָה
וְהִלְכֹתִי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:
יב וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעֵצִים לְגֶפֶן
לְכִי־אֵת מְלוֹכֵי עָלֵינוּ:
יג וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַגֶּפֶן הַחֲדַלְתִּי
אֶת־תִּירוּשֵׁי הַמְּשַׁמַּח אֱלֹהִים וְאֲנָשִׁים

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

8 One day the trees went out to anoint a king to rule them.

They said to the olive tree, “Rule over us!”

9 The olive tree replied, “Must I forego my oil,

which gives honour to gods and men,

to stand and sway over the trees?”

10 Then the trees said to the fig tree,

“You come and rule over us!”

11 The fig tree replied, “Must I forego my sweetness,

forego my excellent fruit,

to go and sway over the trees?”

12 Then the trees said to the vine,

“You come and rule over us!”

13 The vine replied, “Must I forego my wine,

which cheers the heart of gods and men,

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

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

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

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

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

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

וְהִלַּכְתִּי לָנוּעַ עַל־הָעֵצִים:
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָל־הָעֵצִים אֶל־הָאֶטֶד ד'
 לָךְ אַתָּה מֶלֶךְ־עָלֵינוּ:
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֶטֶד אֶל־הָעֵצִים ט'
 אִם בְּאֵמֶת אַתֶּם מְשִׁחִים אֹתִי לְמֶלֶךְ עָלֵיכֶם
 בָּאוּ חֲסוּ בְצִלִּי
 וְאִם־אֵין תֵּצֵא אֵשׁ מִן־הָאֶטֶד
 וְתֹאכַל אֶת־אַרְזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן :

טו וְעַתָּה אִם־בְּאֵמֶת וּבְתָמִים עָשִׂיתֶם וְתַמְלִיכוּ
 אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וְאִם־טוֹבָה עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־יִרְבֵּעַל וְעִם־
 בֵּיתוֹ וְאִם־כְּגִמּוֹל יָדָיו עָשִׂיתֶם לוֹ: ״ אֲשֶׁר־נִלְחַם
 אָבִי עָלֵיכֶם וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ מִמִּנְגַד וַיִּצַּל אֶתְכֶם
 מִיַּד מִדְיָן: ״ וְאַתֶּם קָמְתֶם עַל־בֵּית אָבִי הַיּוֹם
 וְתַהַרְגוּ אֶת־בָּנָיו שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת
 וְתַמְלִיכוּ אֶת־אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ בֶּן־אִמְתּוֹ עַל־בַּעַלִּי שְׁכֶם כִּי
 אַחִיכֶם הוּא: ״ וְאִם־בְּאֵמֶת וּבְתָמִים עָשִׂיתֶם עִם־

to go and sway over the trees?"

14 Then the trees all said to the bramble,

"You come and rule over us!"

15 And the bramble answered the trees,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

יִרְבֵּעַל וְעַם־בֵּיתוֹ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שִׁמְחוּ בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ
וַיִּשְׂמַח גַּם־הוּא בְכֶם: ^כ וְאִם־אֵין תֵּצֵא אֵשׁ
מֵאַבִּימֶלֶךְ וְתֹאכַל אֶת־בְּעֵלֵי שְׁכֶם וְאֶת־בֵּית מְלוֹא
וְתֵצֵא אֵשׁ מִבְּעֵלֵי שְׁכֶם וּמִבֵּית מְלוֹא וְתֹאכַל אֶת־
אַבִּימֶלֶךְ: ^{כא} וַיֵּנָס יוֹתָם וַיִּבְרַח וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָשָׁב
שָׁם מִפְּנֵי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אָחִיו: {פ}

^{כב} וַיֵּשֶׁר אַבִּימֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים:
^{כג} וַיִּשְׁלַח אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ רָעָה בֵּין אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וּבֵין בְּעֵלֵי
שְׁכֶם וַיִּבְגְּדוּ בְּעַלְי־שְׁכֶם בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: ^{כד} לְבֹא חֲמָס
שְׁבָעִים בְּנֵי־יִרְבֵּעַל וּדְמָם לְשׁוֹם עַל־אַבִּימֶלֶךְ
אָחִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הִרְגוּ אוֹתָם וְעַל בְּעֵלֵי שְׁכֶם אֲשֶׁר־
חִזְקוּ אֶת־יָדָיו לְהִרְגוֹת אֶת־אָחִיו: ^{כה} וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ לוֹ בְּעַלְי־
שְׁכֶם מֵאַרְבָּיִם עַל רְאֵשֵׁי הַהָרִים וַיִּגְזְלוּ אֶת כָּל־
אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲבֹר עֲלֵיהֶם בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַיִּגְדוּ לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

כו וַיְבֹא גַעַל בֶּן־עֶבֶד וְאָחִיו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ בְּשַׂכְּם וַיִּבְטְחוּ־
 בוּ בַעֲלֵי שַׂכְּם: כז וַיֵּצְאוּ הַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּבְצְרוּ אֶת־
 כַּרְמֵיהֶם וַיִּדְרְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הַלֹּלִים וַיְבֹאוּ בֵּית
 אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׂתּוּ וַיִּקְלְלוּ אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ:
 כח וַיֹּאמֶר | גַּעַל בֶּן־עֶבֶד מִי־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וּמִי־שַׂכְּם כִּי
 נַעֲבֹדְנֹה הַלֵּא בֶן־יִרְבֵּעַל וְזַבְל פִּקְדוֹ עֲבָדוֹ אֶת־
 אַנְשֵׁי חַמּוֹר אָבִי שַׂכְּם וּמִדּוֹעַ נַעֲבֹדְנֹה אֲנַחְנוּ:
 כט וּמִי יִתֵּן אֶת־הָעַם הַזֶּה בְּיָדִי וְאֶסְרֶה אֶת־
 אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֲבִימֶלֶךְ רַבָּה צְבָאֶךָ וְצֵאה:
 ל וַיִּשְׁמַע זַבְל שֶׁר־הָעִיר אֶת־דְּבָרֵי גַעַל בֶּן־עֶבֶד
 וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ: לא וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ
 בְּתַרְמָה לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה גַעַל בֶּן־עֶבֶד וְאָחִיו בָּאִים
 שְׂכָמָה וְהִנֵּם צָרִים אֶת־הָעִיר עֲלֶיךָ: לב וְעַתָּה קוּם
 לַיְלָה אֲתָה וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתְּךָ וְאַרְבַּ בְּשָׂדֶה:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

לֹג וְהָיָה בַבֶּקֶר כְּזֶרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּשְׁכְּמוּ וּפִשְׁטוּ עַל-
 הָעִיר וְהִנְהִיחָהּ וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ יֵצְאוּ אֵלָיִךָ
 וַעֲשִׂיתָ לוֹ כְּאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יַדְּךָ:
 לִדְוִיקָם אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וְכָל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-עִמּוֹ לַיְלָה
 וַיֵּאָרְבוּ עַל-שִׁכְמָם אַרְבַּעַת רֵאשִׁים: ³³ לִי וַיֵּצֵא גָעַל
 בֶּן-עֶבֶד וַיַּעֲמֵד פֶּתַח שַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּקָּם אַבִּימֶלֶךְ
 וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אִתּוֹ מִן-הַמְּאָרְבִּים: ³⁴ לֹא וַיֵּרֵא-גָעַל אֶת-
 הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-זָבֹל הִנֵּה-עַם יוֹרֵד מִרְאשֵׁי
 הַהָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו זָבֹל אֵת צֶל הַהָרִים אַתָּה רֹאֶה
 כְּאֲנָשִׁים: ³⁵ לֹא וַיִּסֹּף עוֹד גָּעַל לְדַבֵּר וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-עַם
 יוֹרְדִים מֵעַם טַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ וְרֹאשׁ-אֶחָד בָּא מִדְּרֹךְ
 אֵלּוֹן מְעוֹנָנִים: ³⁶ לִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו זָבֹל אֵיךְ אֶפּוֹא פִּיךָ
 אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר מִי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ כִּי נַעֲבֹדְנֹה הֲלֹא זֶה הָעָם
 אֲשֶׁר מֵאֲסָתָה בּוֹ צֵאנָא עִתָּה וְהִלַּחֵם בּוֹ: ³⁷ לֹט וַיֵּצֵא

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

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

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

³⁴ The literal translation of 'companies' is 'heads'.

³⁵ In place of 'paused', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'stood'.

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

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

³⁸ The literal translation of 'boasting' is 'mouth'.

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

גָּעַל לְפָנָיו בְּעַלֵּי שָׁכֶם וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: ^מ וַיִּרְדְּפֵהוּ
אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיִּנָּס מִפָּנָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ חֲלָלִים רַבִּים עַד־פֶּתַח
הַשָּׁעַר: ^{מא} וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבִּימֶלֶךְ בְּאַרְוֹמָה וַיִּגְרֶשׁ זְבֻל
אֶת־גָּעַל וְאֶת־אָחִיו מִשְׁבַּת בְּשָׁכֶם: {ס}

^{מב} וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרַת וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם הַשָּׂדֶה וַיִּגְדּוּ
לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ: ^{מג} וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָעָם וַיַּחְצֵם לְשֵׁלֶשֶׁה
רֵאשִׁים וַיֵּאָרֵב בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּרְא וְהִנֵּה הָעָם יֹצֵא מִן־
הָעִיר וַיִּקַּם עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּכָּם: ^{מד} וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְהָרֵאשִׁים
אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ פָּשְׁטוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ פֶתַח שַׁעַר הָעִיר וּשְׁנֵי
הָרֵאשִׁים פָּשְׁטוּ עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּכּוּם:
^{מה} וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ נָלַחֵם בָּעִיר כָּל הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּלְכְּד
אֶת־הָעִיר וְאֶת־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּהּ הִרְגָה וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־
הָעִיר וַיִּזְרְעֶהָ מֶלַח: {פ}

^{מו} וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָּל־בְּעַלֵּי מִגְדַל־שָׁכֶם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־צִרְיָח
בֵּית אֵל בְּרִית: ^{מז} וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאַבִּימֶלֶךְ כִּי הִתְקַבְּצוּ כָּל־

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴³ Literally translated, this verse ends, "... and he rose against them and struck them."

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

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

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

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

בְּעַלֵי מִגְדַל־שֶׁכֶם: ^{מח} וַיַּעַל אַבִּימֶלֶךְ הַר־צַלְמוֹן
הוּא וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֶת־
הַקֶּרְדָּמוֹת בַּיָּדוֹ וַיִּכְרֹת שׁוֹכֵת עֵצִים וַיִּשְׂאֶה וַיִּשֶׁם
עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־עִמּוֹ מָה רָאִיתֶם
עֲשִׂיתִי מַהֲרוּ עֲשׂוּ כְמוֹנִי: ^{מט} וַיִּכְרְתוּ גַם־כָּל־הָעָם
אִישׁ שׁוֹכֵה וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי אַבִּימֶלֶךְ וַיִּשִׂימוּ עַל־
הַצִּרְיָח וַיִּצִּיתוּ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־הַצִּרְיָח בְּאֵשׁ וַיָּמָתוּ גַם
כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי מִגְדַל־שֶׁכֶם כְּאַלְף אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה: {פ}

^נ וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבִּימֶלֶךְ אֶל־תַּבְּצַן וַיַּחֲזֵן בַּתַּבְּצַן וַיִּלְכְּדֶהָ:
^{נא} וּמִגְדַל־עֵז הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ־הָעִיר וַיִּנְסוּ שָׁמָּה כָּל־
הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׂים וְכָל בְּעַלֵי הָעִיר וַיִּסְגְּרוּ בַּעֲדָם
וַיַּעֲלוּ עַל־גַּג הַמִּגְדָּל: ^{נב} וַיָּבֵא אַבִּימֶלֶךְ עַד־הַמִּגְדָּל
וַיִּלְחֶם בּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ עַד־פֶּתַח הַמִּגְדָּל לְשַׂרְפוֹ בְּאֵשׁ:
^{נג} וַתִּשְׁלֹךְ אִשָּׁה אַחַת פֶּלֶח רֶכֶב עַל־רֹאשׁ אַבִּימֶלֶךְ
וַתִּרְצַץ אֶת־גְּלִגְלָתוֹ: ^{נד} וַיִּקְרָא מִהֲרָה אֶל־הַנְּעָרָן
נֹשֵׂא כִלְיוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ שְׁלֹף חֶרֶבְךָ וּמוֹתֵתְנִי פֶן־

all the leaders of Migdal-Shechem had assembled, ⁴⁸ he went up to Mount Zalmon with all his men. Then taking an axe in his hands, he cut off the branch of a tree, picked it up and put it on his shoulder, and said to the men with him, “Do what you have seen me do, and do it quickly.” ⁴⁹ So, all his men set to work cutting down branches, one each; then they followed Abimelech and heaped the branches on the crypt and set it on fire over those inside. All the inhabitants of Migdal-Shechem perished too, about a thousand men and women.

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

⁴⁸ For ‘axe’, the MT has a plural noun.

⁴⁹ The burning would avoid the sacrilege of spilling blood in a consecrated sanctuary.

⁵⁰ ‘Thebez’ (תַּבְּצַן) is modern-day Tubas, about 16 km north of Shechem.

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

⁵² The literal translation of ‘set it on fire’ is ‘burn it with fire’.

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

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

יֹאמְרוּ לִי אִשָּׁה הֲרַגְתָּהוּ וַיִּדְקָרְהוּ נַעֲרוֹ וַיָּמָת:
נִה וַיִּרְאוּ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי מָת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וַיֵּלְכוּ אִישׁ
לְמִקְמוֹ: ^נ וַיֵּשֶׁב אֱלֹהִים אֶת רַעַת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה לְאָבִיו לְהַרְגֹת אֶת־שִׁבְעִים אָחָיו: ^ז וְאֵת כָּל־
רַעַת אַנְשֵׁי שָׁכֵם הֵשִׁיב אֱלֹהִים בְּרֹאשָׁם וַתָּבֹא
אֲלֵיהֶם קָלְלַת יוֹתָם בֶּן־יִרְבָּעֵל: {פ}

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

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

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

⁵⁷ The literal translation of ‘came true for them’ is simple ‘came on them’.

JUDGES 10

שופטים פרק י

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

JUDGES 10

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

יְהוָה וְלֹא עֲבָדוּהוּ: ז' וַיַּחַר־אֵף יְהוָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּמְכְּרֵם בְּיַד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּבְיַד בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: ח' וַיִּרְעֲצוּ
וַיִּרְצְצוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁנָה הַהִיא שְׁמֹנֶה
עָשָׂר שָׁנָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר
הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּגִלְעָד: ט' וַיַּעֲבְרוּ בְנֵי־
עַמּוֹן אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן לְהִלָּחֵם גַּם־בִּיהוּדָה וּבְבִנְיָמִן
וּבְבֵית אֶפְרַיִם וַתִּצַּר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מְאֹד: י' וַיִּזְעְקוּ בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר חָטְאנוּ לָךְ וְכִי עֲזַבְנוּ אֶת־
אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנַעֲבֹד אֶת־הַבְּעָלִים: {פ}

יא' וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִן־
הָאֱמֹרִי וּמִן־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וּמִן־פְּלִשְׁתִּים: יב' וַצִּדְדוּנִים
וְעַמְלֹק וּמַעֲזֹן לַחֲצוֹ אֶתְכֶם וַתִּצְעַקוּ אֵלַי וְאוֹשִׁיעָה
אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדָם: יג' וְאַתֶּם עֲזַבְתֶּם אוֹתִי וַתַּעֲבְדוּ
אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לְכֵן לֹא־אוֹסִיף לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם:
יד' לָכֵן וַזְעַקוּ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתֶּם בָּם הֲמָה
יוֹשִׁיעוּ לָכֵם בְּעֵת צָרַתְכֶם: טו' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ The act of repentance in v. 16 is the only such act in the book.

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

¹² The NJB & NETB, following the LXX (*Μαδιαν*), have 'Midian' in place of 'Maon' (מעון).

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

¹⁴ The literal translation of 'the time of your distress' is 'your time of trouble'.

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

אֶל־יְהוָה חָטְאנוּ עֲשֵׂה־אִתָּהּ לָנוּ כְּכֹל־הַטּוֹב
בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדָהּ הַצִּילֵנוּ נָא הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ^{טז} וַיִּסְרִיּוּ אֶת־
אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר מִקִּרְבָּם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה וַתִּקְצֹר
נַפְשׁוֹ בְּעַמְּלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק יא

JUDGES 11

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

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

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

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

JUDGES 11

¹ 'Gilead' is clearly a geographical name in 10:18 and 11:8 but the name is used here as a personal name, as in the genealogies (see Nb 26:29).

² The NJB has 'an alien woman' in place of 'another woman', here following the NRSV & NETB.

³ The NJB has 'adventurers' in place of 'outlaws', here following the NRSV; the literal translation is 'empty men'.

⁴ The NRSV has 'made war with' in place of 'took up arms against', here following the NJB.

⁵ The literal translation of 'attacked' is 'fought with'.

⁶ The NJB omits 'to Jephthah', here following the MT (ליפתח) & NRSV.

⁷ The literal translation of 'drove me out of' is 'made me leave'.

⁸ For 'nevertheless', the NJB has 'that is exactly why'; the literal translation is 'even so' (לכן) but the LXX has 'not so' (Οὐχ οὕτως), reading לא כן.

אֶל־יִפְתָּח לָכֵן עָתָה שָׁבְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ וְהִלַכְתָּ עִמָּנוּ
וְנִלְחַמְתָּ בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיִיתָ לָנוּ לְרֹאשׁ לְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי
גִלְעָד: ^ט וַיֹּאמֶר יִפְתָּח אֶל־זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד אִם־מְשִׁיבִים
אַתֶּם אוֹתִי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּבָנֵי עַמּוֹן וְנָתַן יְהוָה אוֹתָם
לְפָנַי אֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לְרֹאשׁ: ^י וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי־גִלְעָד
אֶל־יִפְתָּח יְהוָה יְהִיָּה שְׁמֵעַ בֵּינוֹתֵינוּ אִם־לֹא
כַּדְּבָרְךָ כֵּן נַעֲשֶׂה: ^{יא} וַיֵּלֶךְ יִפְתָּח עִם־זִקְנֵי גִלְעָד
וַיְשִׁימוּ הָעָם אוֹתוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם לְרֹאשׁ וּלְקַצֵּין וַיְדַבֵּר
יִפְתָּח אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרָיו לְפָנָיו יְהוָה בְּמִצְפָּה: {פ}

^{יב} וַיִּשְׁלַח יִפְתָּח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן לֵאמֹר
מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ כִּי־בָאתָ אֵלַי לְהִלָּחֵם בְּאַרְצִי: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמְרוּ
מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן אֶל־מַלְאָכָיו יִפְתָּח כִּי־לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶת־אַרְצִי בְּעִלוֹתוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם מֵאַרְנוֹן וְעַד־הַיַּבֵּק
וְעַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעָתָה הִשִּׁיבָה אֶתְהֶן בְּשָׁלוֹם: ^{יד} וַיֹּסֶף
עוֹד יִפְתָּח וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ At the beginning of this verse, the NRSV adds ‘once again’.

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

^{טו} וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה אָמַר יִפְתָּח לֹא-לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-
 אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: ^{טז} כִּי בַעֲלוֹתֵם
 מִמִּצְרַיִם וַיֵּלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבַר עַד-יַם-סוּף וַיָּבֹא
 קַדְשָׁה: ^{יז} וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָאכִים | אֶל-מֶלֶךְ
 אֱדוֹם | לֵאמֹר אֶעֱבְרָה-נָא בְּאֶרְצְךָ וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ
 אֱדוֹם וְגַם אֶל-מֶלֶךְ מוֹאָב שָׁלַח וְלֹא אָבָה וַיֵּשֶׁב
 יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקַדְשׁ: ^{יח} וַיֵּלֶךְ בְּמִדְבַר וַיָּסֹב אֶת-אֶרֶץ
 אֱדוֹם וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וַיָּבֹא מִמִּזְרַח-שָׁמֶשׁ לְאֶרֶץ
 מוֹאָב וַיַּחֲנוּן בְּעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן וְלֹא-בָאוּ בְּגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב
 כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל מוֹאָב: ^{יט} וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָאכִים
 אֶל-סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ-הָאֱמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
 יִשְׂרָאֵל נִעְבְּרָה-נָא בְּאֶרְצְךָ עַד-מִקּוֹמִי: ^כ וְלֹא-
 הֶאֱמִין סִיחֹן אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עָבַר בְּגִבּוֹלוֹ וַיֹּאסֹף סִיחֹן
 אֶת-כָּל-עַמּוֹ וַיַּחֲנוּ בִיהֶצָה וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל:
^{כא} וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-סִיחֹן וְאֶת-כָּל-
 עַמּוֹ בְּיַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּכּוּם וַיִּירֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ

“Israel seized neither the land of Moab nor the land of the Ammonites.
¹⁶ When Israel left Egypt, they marched through the desert to the Sea of
 Reeds and reached Kadesh. ¹⁷ Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom
 saying, “Let us pass through your land,” but the king of Edom would
 not listen. They sent similarly to the king of Moab, but he refused, and
 Israel remained at Kadesh; ¹⁸ they made their way through the desert,
 skirting the countries of Edom and Moab until they were to the east of
 Moab territory. The people camped beyond the Arnon but did not cross
 the border of Moab, for the Arnon itself is Moab’s boundary. ¹⁹ Then
 Israel sent messengers to Sihon the king of the Amorites, who ruled at
 Heshbon. Israel’s message was: “Let us pass through your land to our
 country.” ²⁰ But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory;
 he mustered his whole army; they encamped at Jahaz, and he then
 joined battle with Israel. ²¹ Yahweh the God of Israel delivered Sihon
 and his whole army into the power of Israel; Israel defeated them and
 took possession of the whole country of the Amorites who lived in that

¹⁶ The literal translation of ‘left’ is ‘went up from’.

¹⁷ Compare Nb 20:14–21.

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

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

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

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

הָאֲמֹרִי יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא: כִּי וַיִּירָשׁוּ אֶת כָּל-גְּבוּל
הָאֲמֹרִי מֵאֲרֹנוֹן וְעַד-הַיַּבֹּק וּמִן-הַמִּדְבָּר וְעַד-
הַיַּרְדֵּן: כִּי וְעַתָּה יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹרִישׁ אֶת-
הָאֲמֹרִי מִפְּנֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַתָּה תִירָשׁנוּ: כִּי הֲלֹא
אֶת אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִישֶׁךָ כְּמוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֶיךָ אוֹתוֹ תִירָשׁ וְאֵת
כָּל-אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ אוֹתוֹ נִירָשׁ:
כִּי וְעַתָּה הֲטוֹב טוֹב אֶתָּה מִבָּלַק בֶּן-צְפּוֹר מֶלֶךְ
מוֹאָב הַרְּזוֹב רַב עַם-יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם-נִלְחַם נִלְחַם בָּם:
כִּי בִשְׁבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֲשׂוֹן וּבְבִנְיָתָהּ וּבְעֵרְעוֹר
וּבְבִנְיָתָהּ וּבְכָל-הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-יַדֵּי אֲרֹנוֹן שְׁלֹשׁ
מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה וּמִדּוּעַ לֹא-הִצַּלְתָּם בָּעֵת הַהִיא:
כִּי וְאַנְכִי לֹא-חָטָאתִי לָךְ וְאַתָּה עָשִׂה אֵתִי רָעָה
לְהִלָּחֵם בִּי יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה הַשֹּׁפֵט הַיּוֹם בֵּין בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: כִּי וְלֹא שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן
אֶל-דְּבַרִי יִפְתָּח אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח אֵלָיו: {פ}

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

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

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

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

²⁵ On ‘Balak’, see Nb 22–24.

²⁶ The MT lacks the word ‘ago’ after ‘three hundred years’.

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

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

כט וַתְּהִי עַל־יַפְתָּח רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־הַגִּלְעָד
וְאֶת־מְנַשֶּׁה וַיַּעֲבֹר אֶת־מִצְפָּה גִלְעָד וּמִמִּצְפָּה
גִלְעָד עָבַר בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: ל וַיֵּדֶר יַפְתָּח נֹדֶר לַיהוָה
וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־נָתַן תִּתֶּן אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן בְּיָדִי: לא וְהָיָה
הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדְּלַתִּי בֵּיתִי לִקְרַאתִי בְּשׁוּבִי
בְּשָׁלוֹם מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהֵעֲלִיתִיהוּ
עֹלָה: {פ}

לב וַיַּעֲבֹר יַפְתָּח אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן לְהִלָּחֵם בָּם וַיִּתְּנֵם
יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ: לג וַיִּכֶם מֵעְרוֹעֵר וְעַד־בְּאֵד מִנֵּית
עֲשָׂרִים עִיר וְעַד אָבֶל כְּרָמִים מִכָּה גְדוּלָה מְאֹד
וַיִּכְנְעוּ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן מִפְּנֵי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: {פ}

לד וַיָּבֹא יַפְתָּח הַמִּצְפָּה אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְהִנֵּה בָתּוֹ יֹצֵאת
לִקְרַאתוֹ בְּתַפִּים וּבְמַחְלֹת וְרַק הִיא יַחֲידָה אֵין

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

לוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בֶן אֹיֶבֶת: לֵה וַיְהִי כִרְאוֹתָיו אוֹתָהּ וַיִּקְרַע
 אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵהָה בְּתִיל הַכְּרַע הַכְּרַעַתִּנִי וְאֵת
 הַיִּית בְּעַכְרִי וְאֲנֹכִי פָּצִיתִי פִּי אֶל־יְהוָה וְלֹא אוּכַל
 לָשׁוּב: לֵה וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אָבִי פָּצִיתָה אֶת־פִּיךָ אֶל־
 יְהוָה עָשָׂה לִי כַאֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִפִּיךָ אַחֲרַי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
 לָךְ יְהוָה נְקָמוֹת מֵאִיְבֹיֶיךָ מִבְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: לֵה וַתֹּאמֶר
 אֶל־אָבִיהָ יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַרְפָּה מִמֶּנִּי שְׁנַיִם
 חֳדָשִׁים וְאֶלְכָה וַיִּרְדֹּתִי עַל־הַהָרִים וְאֶבְכֶה עַל־
 בָּתוּלִי אֲנֹכִי וְרַעֲוִיתִי וְרַעֲוִיתִי: לֵה וַיֹּאמֶר לָכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח
 אוֹתָהּ שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים וַתֵּלֶךְ הִיא וְרַעֲוִתֶיהָ וַתִּבְדַּךְ עַל־
 בָּתוּלֶיהָ עַל־הַהָרִים: לֵט וַיְהִי מִקֶּץ שְׁנַיִם חֳדָשִׁים
 וַתָּשׁוּב אֶל־אָבִיהָ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֶת־נִדְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָדָר
 וְהִיא לֹא־יָדְעָה אִישׁ וַתְּהִי־חַק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: מִמִּיָּמַיִם
 יִמְיָמָה תִּלְכְּנָה בָנוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת־יִפְתָּח
 הַגִּלְעָדִי אַרְבַּעַת יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה: {פ}

only child; he had no son or daughter except her.³⁵ When he saw her, he tore his clothes and said, “Oh my daughter, what sorrow you are bringing me! Must it be you, the cause of my ill fortune! I have given a promise to Yahweh, and I cannot take back my vow.”³⁶ She answered him, “My father, you have given a promise to Yahweh; treat me as the vow you took binds you to, since Yahweh has given you vengeance on your enemies the Ammonites.”³⁷ Then she said to her father, “Grant me one request. Let me be free for two months. I shall go and wander in the hills, and with my companions bewail my virginity.”³⁸ He answered, “Go,” and let her depart for two months. So, she went away with her companions and bewailed her virginity in the hills.³⁹ After two months, she returned to her father and he treated her as his vow bound him. She had never known a man. From this comes the custom in Israel⁴⁰ for the daughters of Israel to leave home every year and lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite for four days every year.

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

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

³⁷ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

³⁸ The *NJB* has ‘mountains’ in place of ‘hills’ (as also in v. 37).

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

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

שופטים פרק יב

JUDGES 12

א ויצעק איש אפרים ויעבר צפונה ויאמרו ליפתח מדוע עברת להלחם בבני-עמון ולנו לא קראת ללכת עמך ביתך נשרף עליך באש: ב ויאמר יפתח אליהם איש ריב הייתי אני ועמי ובני-עמון מאד ואזעק אתכם ולא-הושעתם אותי מידם: ג ואראה כי-אינך מושיע ואשימה נפשי בכפי ואעברה אל-בני עמון ויתגם יהוה בידי ולמה עליכם אלי היום הזה להלחם בי: ד ויקבץ יפתח את-כל-אנשי גלעד וילחם את-אפרים ויכו אנשי גלעד את-אפרים כי אמרו פליטי אפרים אתם גלעד בתוך אפרים בתוך מנשה: ה וילכד גלעד את-מעברות הירדן לאפרים והיה כי יאמרו פליטי אפרים אעברה ויאמרו לו אנשי-גלעד האפרתי אתה ויאמר לא: ויאמרו לו אמר-נא

1 The men of Ephraim mobilised; they crossed the Jordan, making for Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, “Why did you go to fight the Ammonites without asking us to go with you? We shall burn you and your house.”

2 Jephthah said, “My people and I were engaged in conflict with the Amorites. But when I called you, you did not rescue me from their hands. ³ When I saw that you would not deliver me, I took my life in my hands and marched against the Ammonites, and Yahweh handed them over to me. Why then today come up against me to fight me?” ⁴ Then Jephthah mustered all the men of Gilead and fought Ephraim, and the men of Gilead routed Ephraim, because they said, “You are fugitives from Ephraim, you Gileadites in the heart of Ephraim and Manasseh.”

⁵ So, Gilead took the fords of the Jordan from Ephraim and whenever an Ephraimite fugitive said, “Let me cross,” the men of Gilead asked him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he answered, “No,” ⁶ then they said,

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

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

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

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

⁵ The word here translated ‘fugitive’ is plural in the MT.

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

שְׁבֹלֶת וַיֹּאמֶר סְבֹלֶת וְלֹא יָכִין לְדַבֵּר כֵּן וַיֹּאחֲזוּ
 אוֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁחָטוּהוּ אֶל־מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּפֹּל בַּעַת
 הַהִיא מֵאַפְרַיִם אַרְבַּעַיִם וּשְׁנַיִם אָלֶף: וַיִּשְׁפֹּט
 יִפְתָּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וַיָּמָת יִפְתָּח הַגִּלְעָדִי
 וַיִּקְבַּר בְּעָרֵי גִלְעָד: {פ}

ח וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבָצָן מִבֵּית לָחֶם:
 ט וַיְהִי־לוֹ שְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנוֹת שָׁלַח
 הַחוּצָה וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנוֹת הֵבִיא לְבָנָיו מִן־הַחוּץ
 וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים: וַיָּמָת אֲבָצָן
 וַיִּקְבַּר בְּבֵית לָחֶם: {פ}

יא וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵילֹן הַזְּבוּלֹנִי וַיִּשְׁפֹּט
 אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים: יב וַיָּמָת אֵילֹן הַזְּבוּלֹנִי
 וַיִּקְבַּר בְּאֵילֹן בְּאֶרֶץ זְבוּלֹן: {פ}

יג וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אַחֲרָיו אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדֹּון בֶּן־הַלֵּל
 הַפְּרָעֲתוֹנִי: יד וַיְהִי־לוֹ אַרְבַּעַיִם בָּנִים וּשְׁלֹשִׁים בָּנִי

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

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

¹¹ And, after him, Elon of Zebulun was judge in Israel. He was judge in Israel for ten years. ¹² Then Elon of Zebulun died and was buried at Elon in the land of Zebulun.

¹³ And, after him, Abdon son of Hillel of Pirathon was judge in Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy

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

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

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

¹⁰ NETB uses the pronoun ‘he’ in place of ‘Ibzan’.

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

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

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

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

בְּנֵי־רֹכְבֵי־עַל־שִׁבְעִים־עִירָם וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל
שְׁמֹנֶה־שָׁנִים: ^{טו} וַיָּמָת עַבְדּוֹן בֶּן־הִלֵּל הַפְּרָעְתוֹנִי
וַיִּקְבֹּר בַּפְּרָעְתוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲפְרַיִם בְּהַר הָעֵמְלָקִי: {פ}

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

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

שופטים פרק יג

JUDGES 13

א וַיִּסְיֹפוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

ב וַיְהִי אִישׁ אֶחָד מִצֹּרָה מִמְּשַׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי וּשְׁמוֹ מְנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ עֵקְרָה וְלֹא יָלְדָה: ג וַיֵּרָא מַלְאָךְ־יְהוָה אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ הִנֵּה־נָא אֶת־עֵקְרָה וְלֹא יִלְדָתָ וְהָרִית וְיִלְדָתָ בֶּן: ד וְעַתָּה הַשְׁמְרִי נָא וְאַל־תִּשְׁתִּי יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאַל־תֹּאכְלִי כָּל־טָמֵא: ה כִּי הִנְךָ הָרָה וְיִלְדָתָ בֶּן וּמוֹרָה לֹא־יַעֲלֶה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה הַנֶּעַר מִן־הַבֶּטֶן וְהוּא יִחַל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד פְּלִשְׁתִּים: ו וַתְּבֹא הָאִשָּׁה וַתֹּאמֶר לְאִישָׁהּ לֵאמֹר אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא אֵלַי וּמְרָאֵהוּ כְּמֵרָאֵה מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים נֹרָא מְאֹד וְלֹא

1 Again, the Israelites began what was evil in Yahweh's eyes, and Yahweh gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

2 There was a man of Zorah of the tribe of Dan, called Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. 3 The Angel of Yahweh appeared to this woman and said to her, "You are barren and have had no child, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. 4 Now be careful to take no wine or strong drink or to eat anything unclean; 5 for, you shall conceive and give birth to a son. No razor is to touch his head; for, the boy shall be God's nazirite from his mother's womb; and he will deliver Israel from the power of the Philistines." 6 Then the woman went and told her husband, "A man of God has just come to me; his presence was like the presence of the Angel of God, he was so majestic. I did not ask

JUDGES 13

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

שאלתיהו אי־מזה הוא ואת־שמו לא־הגיד לי:
וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְעַתָּה אֶל־תִּשְׁתִּין
יַיִן וְשִׁכָר וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלִי כֹל־טִמְאָה כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים
יְהִיָּה הַנֶּעַר מִן־הַבֶּטֶן עַד־יוֹם מוֹתוֹ: {פ}

וַיַּעֲתֵר מְנוּחַ אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדוֹנָי אִישׁ
הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחְתָּ יְבוֹאֲנָא עוֹד אֵלֵינוּ וְיִזְרְנוּ
מִה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לַנֶּעַר הַיּוֹלֵד: וַיִּשְׁמַע הָאֱלֹהִים בְּקוֹל
מְנוּחַ וַיָּבֵא מִלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים עוֹד אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וְהִיא
יּוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּשָּׂדֶה וּמְנוּחַ אִישָׁה אֵין עִמָּה: וַתִּמְהַר
הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּרֶץ וַתִּגַּד לְאִישָׁהּ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה
נִרְאָה אֵלַי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא בַיּוֹם אֵלָי: וַיִּקָּם
וַיֵּלֶךְ מְנוּחַ אַחֲרָי אֲשֶׁתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ
הֲאֵתָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי:
וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ עַתָּה יָבֵא דְבַרְיָךְ מִה־יְהִיָּה מִשְׁפָּט־
הַנֶּעַר וּמַעֲשָׂהוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל־מְנוּחַ

him where he came from, and he did not reveal his name to me;⁷ but he said to me, “You will conceive and bear a son. From now on, take no wine or strong drink, and do not eat anything unclean. For, the boy shall be God’s nazirite from his mother’s womb to his dying day.”⁸

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

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

⁸ In place of ‘teach’ (וְיִזְרְנוּ), the LXX has ‘enlighten’ (φωτισάτω), understanding the MT to read וַיִּזְרְנוּ (‘to give light’).

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

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

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

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

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

מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־אָמַרְתִּי אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה תִּשְׁמַר: ^ד מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מִגֶּפֶן הַיַּיִן לֹא תֹאכַל וַיֵּיז וּשְׂכָר אֶל־תִּשֶׂה וְכָל־טַמְאָה אֶל־תֹּאכַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר־צִוִּיתִיהָ תִּשְׁמַר: {ס}

^{טו} וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל־מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה נַעֲצְרֶה־נָּא אוֹתָךְ וְנַעֲשֶׂה לְפָנֶיךָ גְּדִי עֲזִים: ^{טז} וַיֹּאמֶר מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֶל־מָנוּחַ אִם־תַּעֲצֹרְנִי לֹא־אֲכַל בְּלַחְמְךָ וְאִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה עֲלַי לַיהוָה תַּעֲלֶנָּה בִּי לֹא־יִדַּע מָנוּחַ בִּי־מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא: ^{יז} וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל־מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה מִי שְׁמֶךָ כִּי־יָבֵא דְבָרֶיךָ דְּבָרְךָ וְכַבֵּדְנוּךָ: ^{יח} וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשְׁמִי וְהוּא־פָּלְאִי: {פ}

^{יט} וַיִּקַּח מָנוּחַ אֶת־גְּדֵי הָעֲזִים וְאֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיַּעֲלֶה עַל־הַצֹּר לַיהוָה וּמִפְּלֵא לַעֲשׂוֹת וּמָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ

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

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

¹⁸ The Angel of Yahweh replied, “Why ask my name? It is a mystery.”

¹⁹ Then Manoah took the kid and the oblation and offered it as a whole offering on the rock to Yahweh, working wonders while Manoah and

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

¹⁵ In place of ‘please stay with us’, the NJB has ‘do us the honour of staying with us’; the NRSV, following the MT, has ‘allow us to detain you’.

¹⁶ The NJB rearranges and splits this verse (16a & 16b), placing the sentence, ‘For Manoah ... Angel of Yahweh’ at the beginning of the verse.

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

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

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

רָאִים: כִּי וַיְהִי בַעֲלוֹת הַלֶּהֶב מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַשְּׂמִימָה
 וַיַּעַל מִלְאָךְ־יְהוָה בְּלֶהֱב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמָנוּחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ
 רָאִים וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם אָרְצָה: כֹּא וְלֹא־יָסַף עוֹד
 מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה לְהִרְאֶה אֶל־מָנוּחַ וְאֶל־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲזַי יָדַע
 מָנוּחַ כִּי־מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא: כִּב וַיֹּאמֶר מָנוּחַ אֶל־
 אִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת נָמוֹת כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ: כִּג וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ
 אִשְׁתּוֹ לוֹ חִפְץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתֵנוּ לֹא־לִקַּח מִיַּדְנוּ עֹלָה
 וּמִנְחָה וְלֹא הִרְאָנוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֱלֹהִים וְכָתַת לֹא
 הַשְּׂמִיעֵנוּ כִּזְאֵת: כִּד וַתֵּלֶד הָאִשָּׁה בֶן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־
 שְׁמוֹ שַׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּגְדַּל הַנְּעָר וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה: כִּה וַתַּחֲלֵ
 רוּחַ יְהוָה לִפְעָמוֹ בְּמַחְנֵה־דָן בֵּין צֹרְעָה וּבֵין
 אֲשַׁתָּאֵל: {פ}

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

²⁰ In place of ‘the flame of the altar’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘this flame’, following the LXX (τῆ φλογί).

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

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

²³ The NJB omits ‘shown us and’, here following the MT.

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

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

שופטים פרק יד

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א וַיֵּרֶד שָׁמְשׁוֹן תְּמַנָּה וַיֵּרָא אִשָּׁה בְּתַמְנָתָה מִבְּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים: ב וַיַּעַל וַיִּגְדַּל לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אִשָּׁה רָאִיתִי בְּתַמְנָתָה מִבְּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְעַתָּה קַחוּ-אוֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ הֲאִין בְּבָנוֹת אַחֵיךָ וּבְכָל-עַמִּי אִשָּׁה כִּי-אַתָּה הוֹלֵךְ לִקְחַת אִשָּׁה מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים הָעֲרָלִים וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל-אָבִיו אוֹתָהּ קַח-לִי כִּי-הִיא יִשְׂרָה בְּעֵינַי: ד וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי מִיְהוָה הִיא כִּי-תֵאָנֶה הוּא-מִבְּקֵשׁ מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים וּבָעֵת הַהִיא פְּלִשְׁתִּים מְשָׁלִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ה וַיֵּרֶד שָׁמְשׁוֹן וְאָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ תְּמַנָּתָה וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-כְּרַמֵּי תְּמַנָּתָה וְהִנֵּה כְּפִיר אַרְיֹת שֹׁאֵג לְקִרְאָתוֹ: ו וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁפְּעוּהוּ כְּשֶׁסַּע הַגְּדִי וּמֵאוֹמָה אִין בִּידוֹ וְלֹא הִגִּיד

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

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

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

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

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

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

6 The 'spirit of Yahweh' equipped Samson to overcome any physical threat.

לְאָבִיו וּלְאִמּוֹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: ⁷ וַיֵּרֶד וַיְדַבֵּר לְאִשָּׁה
 וּתְיָשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי שְׁמִשׁוֹן: ⁸ וַיָּשָׁב מִיָּמִים לְקַחְתָּהּ וַיִּסַּר
 לְרֵאוֹת אֵת מַפְלַת הָאֲרִיָּה וְהִנֵּה עֵדֶת דְּבוּרִים
 בְּגוּיַת הָאֲרִיָּה וּדְבֹשׁ: ⁹ וַיִּרְדֶּהוּ אֶל־כַּפְּיוֹ וַיִּלְחֵץ הַלּוֹךְ
 וַאֲכָל וַיִּלְחֵץ אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אִמּוֹ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ
 וְלֹא־הִגִּיד לָהֶם כִּי מִגּוּיַת הָאֲרִיָּה רָדָה הַדְּבֹשׁ:
¹⁰ וַיֵּרֶד אָבִיהוּ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה וַיַּעַשׂ שָׁם שְׁמִשׁוֹן מִשְׁתֵּה
 כִּי בֶן יַעֲשׂוּ הַבְּחוּרִים: ¹¹ וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָם אוֹתוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ
 שְׁלֹשִׁים מְרֻעִים וַיְהִיו אִתּוֹ:

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

¹² וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שְׁמִשׁוֹן אַחֲוִידָה־נָא לָכֶם חִידָה אִם־
 הִגַּדְתֶּם לִּי אֶת־חֵידוֹ אוֹתָהּ לִי שְׁבַעַת יָמֵי הַמִּשְׁתֵּה וּמָצֵאתֶם

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

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

⁸ The literal translation of 'marry' is 'get'.

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

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

¹¹ Samson contracts the type of marriage in which the husband does not set up house with his wife but pays her occasional visits, bringing presents (see 15:1). This form of marriage is known to ancient oriental law, and among the Arabs. Samson does not take his bridegroom's escort with him, as custom would require; the bride's clan provides this. In place of 'when they saw him', here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX (ἐν τῷ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς αὐτόν), has 'because they were frightened of him'; the figure of 30 is unusually large: perhaps the Philistines wanted to honour him or were frightened of him.

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

וּנְתַתִּי לָכֶם שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדֵינִים וְשְׁלֹשִׁים חֻלְפֹת
בְּגָדִים: ^י וְאִם-לֹא תוֹכְלוּ לְהַגִּיד לִי וְנִתַּתֶּם אֹתָם
לִי שְׁלֹשִׁים סְדֵינִים וְשְׁלֹשִׁים חֻלְפֹת בְּגָדִים
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ הַיּוֹדָה חִידָתְךָ וְנִשְׁמַעְנָה: ^י וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם
מִהָאֵכֶל יֵצֵא מֵאֲכָל וּמֵעַז יֵצֵא מִתּוֹק וְלֹא יִכְלוּ
לְהַגִּיד הַחִידָה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים: ^{טו} וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְאִשְׁת־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן פְּתִי אֶת-אִישְׁךָ וַיְגַד־לָנוּ
אֶת-הַחִידָה פֶּן-נִשְׂרֹף אוֹתְךָ וְאֶת-בַּיִת אָבִיךָ בְּאֵשׁ
הַלִּירֶשֶׁנוּ קְרֹאתֶם לָנוּ הַלֵּא: ^{טז} וַתִּבְךְ אִשְׁת־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן
עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר רַק-שָׁנֵאתָנִי וְלֹא אֶהְבַּתָּנִי הַחִידָה
חִדַּתְךָ לְבָנַי עִמִּי וְלִי לֹא הִגַּדְתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הֲנִה
לְאָבִי וּלְאִמִּי לֹא הִגַּדְתִּי וְלָךְ אֶגִּיד: ^{יז} וַתִּבְךְ עָלָיו
שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לָהֶם הַמְּשֻׁתָּה וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְגַד־לָהּ כִּי הִצִּיקְתָּהוּ וַתִּגַּד הַחִידָה לְבָנֵי
עָמָה: ^{יח} וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

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

¹³ The literal translation of ‘find the answer’ is ‘tell me’.

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

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

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

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

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

בְּטָרֶם יָבֵא הַחֶרֶסָה מֵהַמְּתוֹק מִדְּבַשׁ וּמֵה עֹז
מֵאָרִי וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֹא חָרַשְׁתֶּם בְּעִגְלָתִי לֹא
מִצְאֲתֶם חִידָתִי: ^{יט} וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַיֵּרֶד
אֲשַׁקְלוֹן וַיַּךְ מֵהֶם | שְׁלֹשִׁים אִישׁ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־
חֲלִיצוֹתָם וַיִּתֵּן הַחֲלִיפוֹת לְמַגִּידֵי הַחִידָה וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ
וַיַּעַל בֵּית אָבִיהוּ: ^כ וַתְּהִי אִשְׁתּוֹ שְׂמֻשׁוֹן לְמַרְעָהוּ
אֲשֶׁר רָעָה לוֹ: {פ}

him, before the sun went down: “What is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion?” And he said to them: “If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would never have guessed my riddle.” ¹⁹ Then the spirit of Yahweh seized on him. He went down to Ashkelon, killed thirty men, took their spoil and gave the festal robes to those who had answered the riddle. In hot anger, he returned to his father’s house. ²⁰ Samson’s wife was given to his companion, his best man.

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

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

שופטים פרק טו

JUDGES 15

א * וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים בַּיָּמִי קְצִיר־חֹטִים וַיִּפְקֹד שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּגִדֵי עֲזִים וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִיָּהּ אֶל־אִשְׁתּוֹ הַחֲדָרָה וְלֹא־נִתְּנָה אֲבִיָּהּ לָבוֹא: ב וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִיָּהּ אָמַר אִמְרָתִי כִּי־שָׁנָא שָׁנֵאתָהּ וְאַתְּנָנָה לְמַרְעָךְ הֲלֹא אַחֻתָּהּ הַקְּטָנָה טוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה תְּהִי־נָא לְךָ תַּחֲתֶיהָ: ג וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שִׁמְשׁוֹן נִקִּיתִי הַפְּעַם מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי־עָשָׂה אֲנִי עִמָּם רָעָה: ד וַיִּלְךְ שִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּלְכֹּד שְׁלֹשׁ־מֵאוֹת שׁוֹעֲלִים וַיִּקַּח לַפָּדִים וַיִּפֶן זָנָב אֶל־זָנָב וַיֵּשֶׂם לַפִּיד אֶחָד בֵּין־שְׁנֵי הַזָּנָבוֹת בַּתּוֹךְ: ה וַיִּבְעֶר־אֵשׁ בַּלְּפִידִים וַיִּשְׁלַח בַּקְּמוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּבְעֶר מִגְּדִישׁ וְעַד־קָמָה וְעַד־כַּרְם זֵית: ו וַיֹּאמְרוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים מִי עָשָׂה זֹאת וַיֹּאמְרוּ שִׁמְשׁוֹן חָתָן הַתַּמְנִי כִּי לָקַח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְמַרְעָהּ וַיַּעֲלוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּשְׂרְפוּ אוֹתָהּ וְאֶת־אָבִיָּהּ בָּאֵשׁ: ז וַיֹּאמֶר

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

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

לְהֵם שְׁמִשׁוֹן אִם־תַּעֲשׂוּן כְּזֹאת כִּי אִם־נִקְמַתִּי
בְּכֶם וְאַחַר אֶחָדְלָל: ^ח וַיֵּד אֹתָם שׁוֹק עַל־יָרֵךְ מִכָּה
גְּדוֹלָה וַיֵּרַד וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּסַעֲיָף סֶלַע עֵיטִים: {פ}

^ט וַיַּעֲלוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיַּחֲנוּ בִיהוּדָה וַיִּנְטְשׂוּ בַלְחִי:
^י וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ יְהוּדָה לְמָה עַלִיתֶם עָלֵינוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לְאַסּוֹר אֶת־שְׁמִשׁוֹן עָלֵינוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לּוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
לָנוּ: ^{יא} וַיֵּרְדוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת אַלְפִים אִישׁ מִיְהוּדָה אֶל־
סַעֲיָף סֶלַע עֵיטִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לְשְׁמִשׁוֹן הֲלֹא יָדַעְתָּ כִּי־
מִשְׁלִים בָּנוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמֵה־זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ וַיֹּאמֶר
לְהֵם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי בֶן עָשִׂיתִי לְהֵם: ^{יב} וַיֹּאמְרוּ לּוֹ
לְאַסְרֶךָ יֵרְדְנוּ לְתַתְּךָ בִיד־פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵם
שְׁמִשׁוֹן הֲשַׁבְעוּ לִי פֶן־תִּפְגְּעוּן בִּי אַתֶּם: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לּוֹ לֹא אֵמַר לָא כִי־אַסּוֹר נֶאֱסַרְךָ וְנִתְּנוּךָ בְיָדָם וְהִמַּת
לָא נִמִּיתְךָ וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בְשָׁנִים עֲבֹתִים חֲדָשִׁים
וַיַּעֲלוּהוּ מִן־הַסֶּלַע: ^{יד} הוּא־בָא עַד־לְחִי וּפְלִשְׁתִּים
הִרְיָעוּ לְקִרְאָתוֹ וַתִּצְלַח עָלָיו רוּחַ יְהוָה וַתִּהְיֶינָה

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

הַעֲבֹתַיִם אֲשֶׁר עַל־זְרוּעוֹתָיו כַּפְּשֵׁתַיִם אֲשֶׁר בָּעֵרוֹ
בָּאֵשׁ וַיִּמָּסוּ אֶסְרוּרָיו מֵעַל יָדָיו: ^{טו} וַיִּמְצָא לְחֵי־חַמּוֹר
טְרִיָּה וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיִּדְבְּבָהּ אֵלָף אִישׁ:
^{טז} וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמִשׁוֹן בְּלַחֵי הַחַמּוֹר חַמּוֹר חַמְרָתַיִם
בְּלַחֵי הַחַמּוֹר הַכִּיתִי אֵלָף אִישׁ: ^{יז} וַיְהִי כְּכַלְתּוֹ
לְדַבֵּר וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ הַלַּחֵי מִיָּדוֹ וַיִּקְרָא לַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא
רַמַּת לַחֵי: ^{יח} וַיִּצְמַא מְאֹד וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
אַתָּה נָתַתָּ בְיַד־עַבְדְּךָ אֶת־הַתְּשׁוּעָה הַגְּדוּלָּה
הַזֹּאת וְעַתָּה אָמוֹת בְּצַמָּא וְנִפְלַתִי בְיַד הָעֲרֻלִּים:
^{יט} וַיִּבְקַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַמַּכְתֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר־בְּלַחֵי וַיִּצְאוּ
מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם וַיִּשֶׁתַּ וַתִּשָּׁב רוּחוֹ וַיַּחֲי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא
שְׁמָהּ עֵין הַקּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר בְּלַחֵי עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
^כ וַיִּשְׁפֹּט אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו פְּלִשְׁתִּים עֶשְׂרִים
שָׁנָה: {פ}

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

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

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

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

¹⁸ NETB interprets the phrase ‘the uncircumcised’ as ‘the Philistines’.

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

²⁰ This verse is an editorial comment to authenticate Samson as Judge.

שופטים פרק טז

א וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁמְשׁוֹן עִזְתָּהּ וַיְרֵא־שָׁם אִשָּׁה זֹזְנָה וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ: ב לַעֲזָתִים | לֵאמֹר בָּא שָׁמְשׁוֹן הֵנָּה וַיִּסְבּוּ וַיֵּאָרְבוּ־לוֹ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה בְּשַׁעַר הָעִיר וַיִּתְחַרְשׁוּ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה לֵאמֹר עַד־אֹזֶר הַבֶּקֶר וְהִרְגָּנָהּ: ג וַיִּשְׁכַּב שָׁמְשׁוֹן עַד־חֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּקָּם | בַּחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וַיֵּאָחֵז בַּדְּלָתוֹת שַׁעֲרֵה־עִיר וּבִשְׁתֵּי הַמְּזֻזוֹת וַיִּסָּעֶם עִם־הַבְּרִיחַ וַיִּשֶׁם עַל־כַּתְּפָיו וַיַּעֲלֵם אֶל־רֹאשׁ הַהָר אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי חֶבְרוֹן: {פ}

ד וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵן וַיֵּאָהֵב אִשָּׁה בְּנַחַל שָׂרֵק וּשְׁמָהּ דְּלִילָה: ה וַיַּעֲלוּ אֵלֶיהָ סַרְנֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהּ פַּתֵּי אוֹתוֹ וּרְאֵי בַמָּה כַּחוֹ גְּדוֹל וּבַמָּה גּוֹכַל לוֹ וַאֲסַרְנוּהוּ לְעַנּוֹתוֹ וַאֲנַחְנוּ נִתְּנֶנָּה אִישׁ אֶלְךָ וּמֵאָה כֶּסֶף:

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

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

JUDGES 16

- ¹ The idiom, 'went into her' (וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיהָ), often has sexual connotations.
- ² There is no object to the verb 'surrounded' in the MT but the rest of the verse suggests it is the town, not the harlot's house.
- ³ This exploit of the Danite Hercules perhaps accounted for a place name near Hebron, at the beginning of the track leading down to Gaza. The distance from Gaza to Hebron is about 65 km and involves an ascent of around 1,000 m.
- ⁴ Women have led Samson into all his adventures and, from these, he has escaped, thanks to his God-given strength. Delilah, the last of them, destroys him by making him break his nazirate vow. The 'Vale of Sorek' is the modern Wadi-es-Sarar that begins 21 Km southwest of Jerusalem. The name, 'Delilah' may be related to an Arabic root that means 'flirt'. The text does not say that she was a Philistine – living in the Vale of Sorek would allow her to be either a Philistine or an Israelite.
- ⁵ In place of 'subdue him', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'reduce him to helplessness' and NETB has 'subdue him and humiliate him'.

וַיֹּאמֶר דְּלִילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן הַגִּידָה־נָא לִי בַמָּה
 כִּחַךְ גְּדוֹל וּבַמָּה תֵאָסֵר לְעֲנוּתֶךָ: ^ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ
 שֹׁמְשׁוֹן אִם־יֵאָסְרֵנִי בְּשִׁבְעָה יִתְּרִים לַחִים אֲשֶׁר
 לֹא־חָרְבוּ וְחֲלִיתִי וְהִיִּיתִי כְּאֶחָד הָאָדָם: ^ה וַיַּעֲלוּ־
 לָהּ סָרְנֵי פִלְשִׁתִּים שִׁבְעָה יִתְּרִים לַחִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־
 חָרְבוּ וַתֵּאָסְרָהּוּ בָהֶם: ^ט וְהָאֲרָב יָשָׁב לָהּ בַּחֲדָר
 וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו פִּלְשִׁתִּים עָלֶיךָ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּנְתֵּק אֶת־
 הַיִּתְּרִים כַּאֲשֶׁר יִנְתֵּק פְּתִיל־הַנְּעֹרֶת בְּהִרְיָחוֹ אֵשׁ
 וְלֹא נֹדַע כִּחוֹ: ^י וַתֹּאמֶר דְּלִילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְשׁוֹן הֲנִה
 הִתַּלַּת בִּי וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלַי כְּזָבִים עִתָּה הַגִּידָה־נָא לִי
 בַמָּה תֵאָסֵר: ^{יא} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ אִם־אֲסֹר יֵאָסְרוּנִי
 בַּעֲבֹתִים חֲדָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִעְשְׂהָ בָהֶם מִלְּאִכָּה
 וְחֲלִיתִי וְהִיִּיתִי כְּאֶחָד הָאָדָם: ^{יב} וַתִּקַּח דְּלִילָה
 עֲבֹתִים חֲדָשִׁים וַתֵּאָסְרָהּוּ בָהֶם וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
 פִּלְשִׁתִּים עָלֶיךָ שֹׁמְשׁוֹן וְהָאֲרָב יָשָׁב בַּחֲדָר
 וַיִּנְתֵּקֵם מֵעַל זְרַעְתָּיו כְּחוּט:

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

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

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

⁸ Before ‘bound him’, the NJB adds ‘took them and’.

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

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

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

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

י¹³ וַתֹּאמֶר דְּלִילָה אֶל־שֹׁמְרוֹן עַד־הֲנָה הַתְּלַף בִּי
וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלַי כְּזָבִים הַגִּידָה לִּי בַמָּה תִאֶסֶר וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלֶיהָ אִם־תֶּאֱרָגִי אֶת־שִׁבְעַת מַחְלָפוֹת רֹאשִׁי עִם־
הַמַּסְכֶּכֶת: י¹⁴ וַתִּתְקַע בִּיתָד וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו פְּלִשְׁתִּים
עָלִיךָ שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיִּיקֶץ מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיִּסַּע אֶת־הַיִּתְדַת הָאֶרֶץ
וְאֶת־הַמַּסְכֶּכֶת:

טו¹⁵ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֵיךְ תֹּאמַר אֶהְבֵּתִיךָ וּלְבָבְךָ אֵינִי
אֲתִי זֶה שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים הַתְּלַף בִּי וְלֹא־הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי
בַמָּה כַחֲךָ גָדוֹל: טז¹⁶ וַיְהִי כִי־הִצִּיקָהּ לּוֹ בַדְּבָרֶיהָ כָּל־
הַיָּמִים וַתֶּאֱלָצֶהוּ וַתִּקְצֹר נַפְשׁוֹ לָמוֹת: יז¹⁷ וַיַּגִּד־לָהּ
אֶת־כָּל־לִבּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִזְרָה לֹא־עָלָה עַל־רֹאשִׁי
כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי אִם־גָּלַחְתִּי וְסָר
מִמֶּנִּי כַחֲךָ וְחָלִיתִי וְהָיִיתִי כְּכֹל־הָאָדָם: יח¹⁸ וַתִּרְאֵ
דְּלִילָה כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהּ אֶת־כָּל־לִבּוֹ וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא

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

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

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

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

15 The literal translation of ‘you do not trust me’ is ‘your heart is not with me’.

16 In place of ‘nagged him and pestered him’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘persisted with her questions, and allowed him no rest’.

17 The literal translation of ‘his whole secret’ is ‘all his heart’.

18 In place of לִי (‘to me’), here following the Qere, the Ketiv has לָהּ (‘to her’).

לְסַרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים לֵאמֹר עָלוּ הַפֶּעַם כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהּ לִי
אֶת־כָּל־לְבוֹ וְעָלוּ אֵלֶיהָ סַרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים וַיַּעֲלוּ
הַכֶּסֶף בְּיָדָם: ^{יט} וַתִּישְׁנֶהוּ עַל־בְּרָכֶיהָ וַתִּקְרָא לְאִישׁ
וַתְּגַלֶּחַ אֶת־שִׁבְעַת מַחְלָפוֹת רֵאשׁוֹ וַתַּחַל לְעַנּוֹתוֹ
וַיִּסַּר כָּחוֹ מֵעָלָיו: ^כ וַתֹּאמֶר פִּלְשְׁתִּים עָלֶיךָ שִׁמְשֹׁן
וַיִּקֶץ מִשְׁנָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲצֵא כַּפְעַם בַּפֶּעַם וְאֲנַעַר
וְהוּא לֹא יָדַע כִּי יִהְיֶה סַר מֵעָלָיו: ^{כא} וַיֵּאחָזוּהוּ
פִּלְשְׁתִּים וַיִּנְקְרוּ אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיִּזְרִידוּ אוֹתוֹ עֵזְתָּהּ
וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בַּנְּחֹשְׁתִּים וַיְהִי טוֹחַן בְּבַיִת הָאֲסִירִים
הָאֲסוּרִים: ^{כב} וַיַּחַל שְׁעַר־רֵאשׁוֹ לְצִמַּח כְּאֲשֶׁר
גָּלַח: {פ}

כג וְסַרְנֵי פִלְשְׁתִּים נֶאֱסָפוּ לְזִבְחַ זִבְח־גְּדוֹל לְדָגוֹן
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וּלְשִׁמְחָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדְנוּ אֶת
שִׁמְשֹׁן אוֹיְבֵנוּ: ^{כד} וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ הָעָם וַיִּהְלְלוּ אֶת־

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

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

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

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

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

²² The literal translation of 'his hair' is 'the hair of his head'.

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

²⁴ Before 'our enemy', the NJB, following the LXX, adds the name, 'Samson'; here, we follow the MT & NRSV.

אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי אָמְרוּ נָתַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּיָדְנוּ אֶת-אֹיְבָנוּ
 וְאֵת מַחְרִיב אֶרְצֵנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר הִרְבָּה אֶת-חַלְלֵינוּ:
 כִּה וַיְהִי כִי טוֹב [כְּטוֹב] לָבָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ קִרְאוּ
 לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן וַיִּשְׁחַק-לָנוּ וַיִּקְרָאוּ לְשִׁמְשׁוֹן מִבַּיִת
 הָאֲסִירִים הָאֲסוּרִים וַיִּצְחַק לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲמִידוּ אוֹתוֹ
 בֵּין הָעַמּוּדִים: כו וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל-הַנָּעַר הַמְחֻזֵּק
 בְּיָדוֹ הַנִּיחָה אוֹתִי וְהִימְשֵׁנִי וְהִמִּישְׁנִי אֶת-הָעַמּוּדִים
 אֲשֶׁר הֵבִית נְכוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וְאֶשְׁעַן עֲלֵיהֶם: כז וְהַבַּיִת
 מָלֵא הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים וְשָׂמָה כָּל סַרְנֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים
 וְעַל-הַגֹּג כְּשִׁלְשֵׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה הָרָאִים
 בְּשַׁחֲזֹק שִׁמְשׁוֹן: כח וַיִּקְרָא שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶל-יְהוָה
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה זְכַרְנִי נָא וְחֻזְקִי נָא אֲדָּהּ הַפַּעַם
 הַזֶּה הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲנַקְמָה נִקְם-אֶחָת מִשְׁתִּי עֵינַי
 מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים: כט וַיִּלְפַּת שִׁמְשׁוֹן אֶת-שְׁנֵי עַמּוּדֵי
 הַתֹּדָד אֲשֶׁר הֵבִית נְכוֹן עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּסְמְךְ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶחָד
 בְּיָמֵינוּ וְאֶחָד בְּשִׁמְאָלוֹ: ל וַיֹּאמֶר שִׁמְשׁוֹן תָּמוּת
 נַפְשִׁי עִם-פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיִּטּ בְּכַח וַיִּפֹּל הַבַּיִת עַל-

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

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

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

²⁷ The *MT & NRSV* have 'house' in place of 'building', here following the *NJB*, and *NETB* has 'temple' (as also in v. 26).

²⁸ An alternative translation for the end of this verse is, "...so that I may be avenged upon the Philistines for one of my two eyes."

²⁹ The literal translation of 'the two middle pillars supporting the building' is 'the pillars upon which the house was founded'.

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

הַסֵּרְנִים וְעַל-כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ וַיְהִיו הַמֵּתִים
אֲשֶׁר הָמִית בְּמוֹתוֹ רַבִּים מֵאֲשֶׁר הָמִית בְּחַיָּיו:
לֹא וַיֵּרְדוּ אָחָיו וְכָל-בֵּית אָבִיהוּ וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ וַיַּעֲלוּ
וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אוֹתוֹ בֵּין צֹרְעָה וּבֵין אֶשְׁתָּאֵל בְּקִבְר מָנוּחַ
אָבִיו וְהוּא שָׁפֵט אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: {פ}

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

³¹ The NRSV omits 'father's'.

שופטים פרק יז

א ויהי איש מהר־אפרים ושמו מיכיהו: ב ויאמר לאמו אלף ומאה הכסף אשר לקח־לך ואתי ואת אלית וגם אמרת באזני הנה־הכסף אתי אני לקחתיו ותאמר אמו ברוך בני ליהוה: ג וישב את־אלף ומאה הכסף לאמו ותאמר אמו הקדש הקדשתי את־הכסף ליהוה מיד־י לבני לעשות פסל ומסכה ועתה אשיבנו לך: ד וישב את־הכסף לאמו ותקח אמו מאתים כסף ותתנהו לצורך ויעשהו פסל ומסכה ויהי בבית מיכיהו: ה והאיש מיכה לו בית אלהים ויעש אפוד ותרפים וימלא את־יד אחד מבניו ויהי־לו לכהן: ו בימים ההם אין מלך בישראל איש הישר בעיניו יעשה: {פ}

JUDGES 17

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

JUDGES 17

- ¹ 'Micayehu' (מיכיהו) means 'Who is like Yahweh' and is elsewhere abbreviated to 'Micah' (as it is here in the NRSV & NETB).
- ² Vv. 2-3 herein follow the translation of the NRSV; the words 'but now I will return it to you' are transposed to the end of v. 3 in the MT and NJB - the words may have been accidentally omitted from a manuscript, written in the margin, and then later inserted in the wrong place in another manuscript. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
- ³ She cannot mean that she is now taking the money from her hand and giving it back to her son so he can make an image: vv. 4-6 indicate she took back the money and used a portion of it to hire a silversmith to make an idol for her son to use.
- ⁴ This is the only reasonably certain example of a cult statue of Yahweh, the oft-repeated prohibition in the Decalogue (Ex 20:4) notwithstanding. It is not condemned and nor are the ephod and cultic statues of v. 5, although these later become suspect to official Yahwism.
- ⁵ In appointing his son, Micah acts according to the ancient custom authorising the head of clans and families to exercise the functions of priest themselves and to appoint their own priests; 'teraphim' were household idols associated with inheritance rights to the property.
- ⁶ This verse is an editorial comment that describes the end of the Judges' period as disordered (21:25).

וַיְהִי־נֶעֱר מִבֵּית לַחֵם יְהוּדָה מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת יְהוּדָה
 וְהוּא לְוִי וְהוּא גֵר־שָׁם: ^ח וַיֵּלֶךְ הָאִישׁ מֵהָעִיר מִבֵּית
 לַחֵם יְהוּדָה לְגוֹר בְּאֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא וַיָּבֵא הַר־אֶפְרַיִם
 עַד־בַּיִת מִיכָה לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכּוֹ: ^ט וַיֹּאמְרוּ־לּוֹ מִיכָה
 מֵאֵיזֶן תָּבוֹא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לְוִי אָנֹכִי מִבֵּית לַחֵם
 יְהוּדָה וְאַנְכִי הֵלֵךְ לְגוֹר בְּאֲשֶׁר אִמְצָא: ^י וַיֹּאמֶר לּוֹ
 מִיכָה שְׁבֵה עִמָּדִי וְהָיָה־לִּי לְאָב וּלְכַהֵן וְאַנְכִי אֶתֶּן
 לְךָ עֶשְׂרֵת כֶּסֶף לַיָּמִים וְעֵרֶךְ בְּגָדִים וּמַחֲיִתָּךְ וַיֵּלֶךְ
 הַלְוִי: ^{יא} וַיֹּנְאֵל הַלְוִי לְשִׁבְתָּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיְהִי הַנֶּעֱר
 לּוֹ כְּאֶחָד מִבְּנָיו: ^{יב} וַיִּמְלֵא מִיכָה אֶת־יַד הַלְוִי וַיְהִי־
 לּוֹ הַנֶּעֱר לְכַהֵן וַיְהִי בְּבַיִת מִיכָה: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמֶר מִיכָה
 עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יִיטִיב יְהוָה לִי כִּי הָיָה־לִּי הַלְוִי
 לְכַהֵן: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק יח

א בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבַיָּמִים הָהֵם
שָׁבַט הַדָּנִי מִבְּקֶשׁ-לוֹ נַחֲלָה לָשֶׁבֶת כִּי לֹא-נִפְלָה
לוֹ עַד-הַיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּתוֹךְ-שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּנַחֲלָה: {פ}

ב וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ בְנֵי-דָן מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתָּם חַמֶּשֶׁה אַנְשִׁים
מִקְצוֹתָם אַנְשִׁים בְּנֵי-חֵיִל מִצְרַעָה וּמֵאֶשְׁתָּאֵל
לְרַגֵּל אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּלְחַקְרָהּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם לְכוּ
חַקְרוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ הַרְאֲפָרַיִם עַד-בַּיִת מִיכָה
וַיֵּלִינוּ שָׁם: ג הָמָּה עַם-בַּיִת מִיכָה וְהָמָּה הַפִּירוּ
אֶת-קוֹל הַנַּעַר הַלְוִי וַיִּסּוּרוּ שָׁם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ מִי-
הֵבִיאָךְ הֵלֵם וּמָה-אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה בְּזֶה וּמָה-לָּךְ פָּה:
ד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּזֵה וּכֹזֵה עוֹשֶׂה לִי מִיכָה וַיִּשְׁפְּרֵנִי
וְאַהֲיִלּוּ לְכַהֵן: ה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ שְׂאֵל-נָא בְּאֵלֵהִים
וְנִדְעָה הַתְּצַלַּח דְּרַכֵּנוּ אֲשֶׁר אֲנַחְנוּ הֹלְכִים עֲלֶיהָ:
ו וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַכַּהֵן לְכוּ לְשִׁלּוֹם נִכַּח יְהוָה דְּרַכְכֶם
אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכוּ-בָהּ: {פ}

JUDGES 18

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

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

⁶ The priest replied, "Go in peace; the journey you are making is under the eye of Yahweh."

JUDGES 18

¹ The Danites could not hold their territory and were expelled by the Amorites, according to 1:34-35.

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

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

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

⁵ Here, to 'consult Yahweh' refers to divination.

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

וַיֵּלְכוּ חֲמֵשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיָּבֹאוּ לִישָׁה וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת־
הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־בְּקִרְבָּהּ יוֹשְׁבֵת־לְבֶטַח כַּמְשָׁפֵט צְדָנִים
שֶׁקֵּט וּבִטָּח וְאִין־מַכְלִים דְּבַר בְּאֶרֶץ יוֹרֵשׁ עֶצֶר
וּרְחוּקִים הֵמָּה מִצְדִּינִים וְדַבֵּר אִין־לֵהֶם עִם־אָדָם:
^ח וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־אֲחֵיהֶם צָרְעָה וְאַשְׁתָּאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם
אֲחֵיהֶם מָה אַתֶּם: ^ט וַיֹּאמְרוּ קוּמָה וְנַעֲלָה עֲלֵיהֶם
כִּי רָאִינוּ אֶת־הָאֶרֶץ וְהִנֵּה טוֹבָה מְאֹד וְאַתֶּם
מַחְשִׁים אֶל־תַּעֲצֹלוּ לְלַכֵּת לְבֹא לְרִשֵׁת אֶת־
הָאֶרֶץ: ^י כִּבְאַלְכֶם תָּבֹאוּ אֶל־עַם בֵּטָח וְהָאֶרֶץ
רַחֲבַת יָדַיִם כִּי־נָתַנָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּיַדְכֶם מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
אִין־שָׁם מַחְסוֹר כָּל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ: ^{יא} וַיִּסְעוּ
מִשָּׁם מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת הַדָּנִי מִצָּרְעָה וּמֵאַשְׁתָּאֵל שֵׁש־
מֵאוֹת אִישׁ חֲגוֹר כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָה: ^{יב} וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ
בְּקִרְיַת יַעֲרִים בְּיהוּדָה עַל־כֵּן קָרְאוּ לַמְּקוֹם הַהוּא

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

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

8 The literal translation of ‘kinsfolk’ is ‘brothers’.

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

10 The literal translation of ‘wide’ is ‘broad of hands’, an idiom meaning ‘wide on both sides’.

11 Literally, “They journeyed from there, from the tribe of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men, equipped with weapons of war.”

12 The NRSV uses the Hebrew name, ‘Mahaneh-Dan’ (מַחֲנֵה־דָן), for ‘The Camp of Dan’.

מַחְנֵה־דָן עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַנְּהָ אַחֲרֵי קִרְיַת יַעֲרִים:
 י¹³ וַיַּעֲבְרוּ מִשָּׁם הַר־אֶפְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־בַּיִת מִיכָה:
 יד וַיַּעֲנוּ חֲמִשָּׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הַהֲלֹכִים לְרַגְלֵי אֶת־
 הָאָרֶץ לֵישׁ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־אֲחֵיהֶם הַיַּדְעֲתֶם כִּי יֵשׁ
 בַּבָּתִּים הָאֵלֶּה אֶפֻּד וְתִרְפִּים וּפְסֶל וּמִסְכָּה וְעִתָּה
 דָּעוּ מִה־תַּעֲשׂוּ: טו וַיִּסּוּרוּ שָׁמָּה וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בַּיִת־
 הַנְּעָר הַלְוִי בֵּית מִיכָה וַיִּשְׁאַל־לוֹ לְשֵׁלוֹם: טז וְשֵׁש־
 מֵאוֹת אִישׁ חֲגוּרִים כָּלִי מִלְחָמָתָם נֹצְבִים פָּתַח
 הַשַּׁעַר אֲשֶׁר מִבְּנֵי־דָן: יז וַיַּעֲלוּ חֲמִשָּׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים
 הַהֲלֹכִים לְרַגְלֵי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה לְקַחוּ אֶת־
 הַפְּסֶל וְאֶת־הָאֶפֻּד וְאֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וְאֶת־הַמִּסְכָּה
 וְהַכֹּהֵן נֹצֵב פָּתַח הַשַּׁעַר וְשֵׁש־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַחֲגוּר
 כָּלִי הַמְּלַחֲמָה: יח וְאֵלֶּה בָּאוּ בֵּית מִיכָה וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־
 פְּסֶל הָאֶפֻּד וְאֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וְאֶת־הַמִּסְכָּה וַיֹּאמֶר
 אֲלֵיהֶם הַכֹּהֵן מָה אַתֶּם עֹשִׂים: יט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
 הַחֲרֹשׁ שִׁים־יָדְךָ עַל־פִּיךָ וְלֹךְ עִמָּנוּ וְהִיָּה־לָנוּ לְאָב
 וּלְכֹהֵן הַטּוֹב | הַיּוֹתֵךְ כֹּהֵן לְבַיִת אִישׁ אֶחָד אֹו

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

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

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

¹⁵ The literal translation of ‘greeted him’ is ‘asked him concerning peace’.

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

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

¹⁸ NETB has ‘personal idols’ in place of ‘teraphim’, here following the MT (הַתְּרָפִים), NJB & NRSV.

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

הַיּוֹתֵדָה כֹּהֵן לְשֵׁבֶט וּלְמִשְׁפַּחַה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: כִּי וַיֵּיטֵב
לֵב הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הָאֶפֹּד וְאֶת־הַתְּרָפִים וְאֶת־
הַפְּסֶל וַיָּבֵא בְּקֶרֶב הָעָם: כא וַיִּפְּגּוּ וַיִּלְכוּ וַיִּשְׂיִמוּ
אֶת־הַטֶּף וְאֶת־הַמִּקְנֶה וְאֶת־הַכְּבוֹדָה לִפְנֵיהֶם:
כב הֵמָּה הִרְחִיקוּ מִבַּיִת מִיכָה וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר
בְּבָתִּים אֲשֶׁר עִם־בַּיִת מִיכָה נִזְעְקוּ וַיִּדְבְּקוּ אֶת־
בְּנֵי־דָן: כג וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי־דָן וַיִּסְבּוּ פָּנֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ
לְמִיכָה מַה־לָּךְ כִּי נִזְעַקְתָּ: כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי
אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי לְקַחְתֶּם וְאֶת־הַכֹּהֵן וְתִלְכוּ וּמַה־לִּי
עוֹד וּמַה־זֶּה תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי מַה־לָּךְ: כה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו
בְּנֵי־דָן אַל־תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלֵךְ עִמָּנוּ פֶּן־יִפְּגְעוּ בָּכֶם
אֲנָשִׁים מְרִי זָפֵשׁ וְאֶסְפַּתָּה נַפְשֵׁךְ וְנַפְשׁ בֵּיתְךָ:
כו וַיִּלְכוּ בְּנֵי־דָן לְדַרְכָּם וַיִּירָא מִיכָה כִּי־חִזְקִים הֵמָּה
מִמָּנוּ וַיִּפֶן וַיָּשֶׁב אֶל־בַּיִתוֹ: כז וְהֵמָּה לָקְחוּ אֶת
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה מִיכָה וְאֶת־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר הָיָה־לוֹ וַיָּבֵאוּ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ After 'stronger', NETB adds (for clarity) 'than he'.

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

עַל-לַיִשׁ עַל-עַם שָׁקַט וּבְטָח וַיִּכּוּ אוֹתָם לְפַי־חֶרֶב
וְאֶת-הָעִיר שָׂרְפוּ בָאֵשׁ: כִּי וְאִין מַצִּיל כִּי רְחוֹקָה-
הִיא מִצִּידוֹן וְדָבָר אֵין-לֵהֶם עִם-אָדָם וְהִיא בְּעַמֻּק
אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית-רְחוֹב וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת-הָעִיר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָהּ:
כִּי וַיִּקְרְאוּ שֵׁם-הָעִיר דָּן בְּשֵׁם דָּן אָבִיהֶם אֲשֶׁר
יּוֹלֵד לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאוֹלָם לַיִשׁ שֵׁם-הָעִיר לְרֵאשֹׁנָה:
לְ וַיִּקְיִמוּ לָהֶם בְּנֵי-דָן אֶת-הַפֶּסֶל וַיְהִי וַנִּתֵּן בֶּן-גֵּרְשֹׁם
בֶּן-מְנַשֶּׁה הוּא וּבָנָיו הָיוּ כֹהֲנִים לְשִׁבְט הַדָּנִי עַד-
יוֹם גְּלוֹת הָאָרֶץ: לֹא וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ לָהֶם אֶת-פֶּסֶל מִיֶּכָה
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כָּל-יְמֵי הַיּוֹת בֵּית-הָאֱלֹהִים
בְּשִׁלֹּה: {פ}

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

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

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

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

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

שופטים פרק יט

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

JUDGES 19

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

JUDGES 19

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

חֲתָנוּ וַיֵּשֶׁב וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם: ^ח וַיִּשְׁכַּם בַּבֹּקֶר בַּיּוֹם
הַחֲמִישִׁי לָלֶכֶת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אָבִי הַנְּעִרָה סְעֵד־נָא
לְבַבְךָ וְהַתְמַהְמְהוּ עַד־נִטּוֹת הַיּוֹם וַיֹּאכְלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם:
^ט וַיִּקַּם הָאִישׁ לָלֶכֶת הוּא וּפִילִגְשׁוֹ וַנְּעָרוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
חֲתָנוּ אָבִי הַנְּעִרָה הִנֵּה נָא רָפָה הַיּוֹם לַעְרוֹזֵב לִינוּ-
נָא הִנֵּה חֲנוֹת הַיּוֹם לִין פֹּה וַיִּיטֵב לְבַבְךָ
וְהַשְׁכַּמְתָּם מִחֵר לְדַרְכְּכֶם וְהִלַּכְתָּ לְאַהֲלֶךָ: ^י וְלֹא־
אָבָה הָאִישׁ לָלוֹן וַיִּקַּם וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּבֵא עַד־נֶחֱכַח יְבוּס
הִיא יְרוּשָׁלַם וְעַמּוֹ צֶמֶד חֲמוֹרִים חֲבוּשִׁים וּפִילִגְשׁוֹ
עִמּוֹ: ^{יא} הֵם עַם־יְבוּס וְהַיּוֹם רַד מְאֹד וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּעָר
אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו לְכֹה־נָא וְנִסּוּרָה אֶל־עִיר־הַיְבוּסִי הַזֹּאת
וְנִלֵּן בָּהּ: ^{יב} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲדֹנָיו לֹא נִסּוּר אֶל־עִיר
נְכָרִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה וְעַבְרָנוּ עַד־
גְּבֵעָה: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמֶר לַנְּעָרוֹ לֵךְ וְנִקְרְבָה בְּאַחַד
הַמְּקוֹמוֹת וְלִנּוּ בַגְּבֵעָה אוֹ בְרָמָה: ^{יד} וַיַּעֲבְרוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ
וַתָּבֵא לָהֶם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ אֶצֶל הַגְּבֵעָה אֲשֶׁר לְבִנְיָמִן:

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

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

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

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

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

¹² 'Gibeah' (גְּבֵעָה) is identified with Tell El-Ful, 6 Km north of Jerusalem; it became Saul's royal residence (1S 15:34).

¹³ 'Ramah' (רָמָה) is identified with er-Ram, 8 Km north of Jerusalem.

¹⁴ The literal translation of 'in Benjamin' is 'which belongs to Benjamin'.

^{טו} וַיִּסְרוּ שָׁם לָבוֹא לָלוֹן בְּגִבְעָה וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּרַחֲבוֹ
הָעִיר וְאִין אִישׁ מְאַסֵּף-אוֹתָם הַבַּיִתָּה לָלוֹן:
^{טז} וַהֲנֵה אִישׁ זָקֵן בָּא מִן-מַעֲשָׂהוּ מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה
בְּעֶרֶב וְהָאִישׁ מֵהָר אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא-גָר בְּגִבְעָה
וְאֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם בְּנֵי יְמִינֵי: ^{יז} וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא אֶת-
הָאִישׁ הָאֶרֶח בְּרַחֲב הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ הַזֶּקֶן
אָנָּה תֵלֵךְ וּמֵאִין תָּבוֹא: ^{יח} וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו עֲבָרִים
אֲנַחְנוּ מִבֵּית-לָחֶם יְהוּדָה עַד-יְרֻכָתִי הַר-אֶפְרַיִם
מִשָּׁם אֲנֹכִי וְאֵלֶיךָ עַד-בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וְאֶת-בֵּית
יְהוָה אֲנִי הֹלֵךְ וְאִין אִישׁ מְאַסֵּף אוֹתִי הַבַּיִתָּה:
^{יט} וְגַם-תִּבְּן גַּם-מִסְפּוֹא יֵשׁ לַחֲמוּרֵינוּ וְגַם לָחֶם
וַיֵּן יִשְׁלִי וְלֹא-מִתְּךָ וְלִנְעַר עַם-עַבְדֶּיךָ אִין
מִחֲסוֹר כָּל-דָּבָר: ^כ וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ הַזֶּקֶן שְׁלוֹם לָךְ
רַק כָּל-מִחְסוֹרְךָ עָלַי רַק בְּרַחֲבוֹ אֶל-תִּלָּן:
^{כא} וַיְבִיֵאֵהוּ לְבֵיתוֹ וַיְבֹל וַיִּבֵּל לַחֲמוּרִים וַיִּרְחֲצוּ
רַגְלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ:

¹⁵ so, they turned that way to spend the night in Gibeah. He went in and sat down in the town square, but no one took them to spend the night.

¹⁶ Then, at nightfall, an old man came their way; he was returning from his work in the fields. He was a man from the highlands of Ephraim, living in Gibeah, the men of the place being Benjaminites. ¹⁷ Raising his eyes, he saw the traveller sitting in the town square; the old man asked him, "Where have you come from? Where are you going?" ¹⁸ He said, "We are on our way from Bethlehem in Judah to a place deep in the highlands of Ephraim. That is where I am from. I have been to Bethlehem in Judah and now I am going home. No one has offered to take me in, ¹⁹ We your servants have straw and fodder for our donkeys, with bread and wine for me and the woman and the young man along with us. We need nothing more" ²⁰ The old man answered, "Peace to you! Let me see to all your needs; you cannot spend the night in the town square." ²¹ So, he took him into his house and gave the donkeys provender; they washed their feet, then ate and drank.

¹⁵ At Gibeah in Benjamin, the only person prepared to take the Levite in is another Ephraimite (v. 16) and he is willing to fulfil the duties of hospitality to the point of heroism (v. 24). The Benjaminites of the town fall gravely short in this respect (v. 15) and their behaviour is monstrous.

¹⁶ Literally translated, this verse opens, "And look, an old man was coming from his work, from the field in the evening."

¹⁷ The literal translation of 'the traveller' is 'the man, the traveller'.

¹⁸ The phrase 'going home' is an emendation following the LXX (εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου), in line with v. 29; the MT has 'going to the house of Yahweh'.

¹⁹ The NJB has 'provender' in place of 'fodder'.

²⁰ In place of 'peace', here following the MT, NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'welcome'.

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

כב הָמָהּ מִיִּטְיָבִים אֶת־לִבָּם וְהִנֵּה אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר
אֲנָשֵׁי בְנֵי־בְלִיעַל נָסְבוּ אֶת־הַבַּיִת מִתְדַפְּקִים עַל־
הַדֶּלֶת וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת הַזֶּקֶן לֵאמֹר
הוֹצֵא אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־בָּא אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ וְנִדְעֶנּוּ:
כג וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם הָאִישׁ בַּעַל הַבַּיִת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם
אֶל־אֲחֵי אֶל־תִּרְעוּ נָא אַחֲרַי אֲשֶׁר־בָּא הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה
אֶל־בֵּיתִי אֶל־תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַנְּבִלָה הַזֹּאת: כד הִנֵּה
בְּתִי הַבְּתוּלָה וּפְלִגְשָׁהּוּ אוֹצִיאָהּ־נָא אוֹתָם וְעֲנוּ
אוֹתָם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְלֹאִישׁ הַזֶּה לֹא
תַעֲשׂוּ דְבַר הַנְּבִלָה הַזֹּאת: כה וְלֹא־אָבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים
לְשִׁמְעַ לֹו וַיַּחֲזֹק הָאִישׁ בְּפִלְגָּשׁוֹ וַיֵּצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם
הַחוּץ וַיִּדְעוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּתְעַלְלוּ־בָּהּ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה עַד־
הַבֶּקֶר וַיִּשְׁלַחוּהָ בַעֲלוֹת כַּעֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר: כו וַתָּבֹא
הָאִשָּׁה לַפְּנֹת הַבֶּקֶר וַתִּפֹּל וַתֵּחַ בֵּית־הָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר־אֲדוֹנֶיהָ שָׁם עַד־הָאֹר: כז וַיִּקַּם אֲדוֹנֶיהָ בַּבֶּקֶר
וַיִּפְתַּח דַּלְתוֹת הַבַּיִת וַיֵּצֵא לְלַכַּת לְדַרְכּוֹ וְהִנֵּה

22 As they were making their hearts merry, suddenly, some men from the town, who were scoundrels, came crowding together round the house; they battered on the door and said to the old man, the master of the house, "Send out the man who has come into your house, so that we can have sex with him." 23 Then the master of the house went out to them and said, "No, my brothers, I implore you, do not commit this crime. This man has become my guest; do not commit such an infamy. 24 Here is my daughter, she is a virgin, and his concubine; I will give her to you. Possess her, do what you please to her, but do not commit such an infamy against this man." 25 The men would not listen to him, so the Levite took his concubine and brought her out to them. They had intercourse with her and outraged her all night until morning; when dawn was breaking, they let her go. 26 At daybreak, the girl came and fell on the threshold of her master's host and stayed there until it was full day. 27 In the morning, her master got up and opened the door of the house; when he went out to go on his way, he saw the woman who

22 To forestall his own rape by the men of Gibeah, the Levite offers them his concubine.

23 The term translated as 'infamy' is applied to grave transgressions of the divine Law, above all moral transgressions, which, in reaction to the licentiousness of Canaanite cults, are regarded as peculiarly reprehensible. Here, whatever crime was intended, it was compounded by the breach of the sacred laws of hospitality.

24 The NJB omits 'and his concubine'.

25 The *Kethib/Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.

26 The term here translated 'master' is plural; the plural indicates degree here and emphasises the Levite's absolute sovereignty over the woman.

27 The text implies that the woman died as a result of her night of horror.

הָאִשָּׁה פִּילְגָשׁוֹ נִפְלְתָה פָּתַח הַבַּיִת וַיְדִיחָהּ עַל-הַסֶּף:
כַּח וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ קוּמִי וְנִלְכָה וְאִין עֲנֵה וַיִּקְחָהּ עַל-
הַחֲמֹר וַיִּקַּם הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ לְמִקְמוֹ: כֹּט וַיָּבֵא אֶל-
בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלֹת וַיַּחֲזֹק בְּפִילְגָשׁוֹ וַיִּנְתְּחָהּ
לְעֶצְמֶיהָ לְשָׁנִים עָשָׂר נִתְחָחַם וַיִּשְׁלַחַהּ בְּכָל גְּבוּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ל' וְהָיָה כָל-הָרְאָה וְאָמַר לֹא-נִהְיִיתָה וְלֹא-
נִרְאִיתָה כְּזֹאת לְמִיּוֹם עֲלוֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שְׂיִמּוּ-לְכֶם עָלֶיהָ עֲצוּ
וַדְּבֹרוּ: {פ}

had been his concubine lying at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. ²⁸ He said to her, “Stand up: we must go.” There was no answer. Then he put her on his donkey, rose up, and began the journey home. ²⁹ When he arrived at his house, he picked up a knife, took hold of his concubine and, limb by limb, cut her into twelve pieces; then, he sent her all through the land of Israel. ³⁰ And all who saw it declared, “Never has such a thing been done or been seen since the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt. Ponder on this, discuss it; then give your verdict”

²⁸ Literally translated, this verse ends, “...and the man took her on the donkey and arose and went to his place.”

²⁹ This grim appeal for vengeance is addressed to all Israel (see 20:1–2, 10); in 1S 11:7, Saul calls up the tribes of Israel in strikingly similar fashion. This might be taken to stress the solidarity of the tribes when faced with a gross breach of the religious law; their common reaction, however, would appear to be unique, and it is more likely that the scope of the original story has been extended from a more limited encounter between Ephraim and Benjamin. Hence, it should probably be regarded as one further episode in Ephraim’s struggle for tribal supremacy (see #8:1 and 12:1).

³⁰ At the beginning of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (Codex Alexandrinus – *καὶ ἐνετείλατο τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, οἷς ἐξαπέστειλεν, λέγων Τάδε ἐρεῖτε πρὸς πάντα ἄνδρα Ἰσραηλ Εἰ γέγονεν κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἀναβάσεως υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης*) adds, “And he instructed his messengers as follows, “Thus you shall say to all the Israelites, “Has any man seen such a thing from the day the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, until this very day?””

JUDGES 20

שופטים פרק כ

א וַיֵּצְאוּ כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתִּקְהַל הָעֵדָה כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד לְמִדְּן וְעַד־בְּאֵר שָׁבַע וְאַרְץ הַגְּלָעָד אֶל־יְהוָה הַמְצַפָּה: ב וַיָּתִיצְבוּ פְּנֹת כָּל־הָעָם כָּל שְׁבֻטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקֶהֱל עִם הָאֱלֹהִים אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אַלְפֵי אִישׁ רִגְלֵי שְׁלֹף־חֶרֶב: {פ}

1 So, all the sons of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba and the land of Gilead, and the community assembled as one man before Yahweh at Mizpah. 2 The leaders of all the people and all the tribes of Israel were present at this assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers bearing arms.

ג וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי בְנִימִן כִּי־עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמְצַפָּה וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דַּבְּרוּ אֵיכָה נְהִיתָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת: ד וַיַּעַן הָאִישׁ הַלְוִי אִישׁ הָאִשָּׁה הַנִּרְצָחָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְּבַעְתָּה אֲשֶׁר לְבְנִימִן בְּאֵתִי אֲנִי וּפִילְגֶשֶׁתִּי לְלוֹן: ה וַיִּקְמוּ עָלַי בַּעֲלֵי הַגְּבַעָה וַיִּסְבּוּ עָלַי אֶת־הַבַּיִת לַיְלָה אוֹתִי דָמוֹ לְהָרֵג וְאֶת־פִּילְגֶשֶׁתִּי עָנּוּ וַתָּמָת: ו וְאֶחָז בְּפִילְגֶשֶׁתִּי וְאֶנְתַּחֲתָהּ וְאֶשְׁלַחָהּ בְּכָל־שְׂדֵה נַחֲלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי עָשׂוּ זִמָּה וּנְבִלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ז הִנֵּה כָּלְכֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָבּוּ לָכֶם דָּבָר וְעֲצֵה

3 (Now, the Benjaminites heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the sons of Israel said, "Tell us how this crime was committed." 4 The Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, spoke up, "I came with my concubine to Gibeah in Benjamin, to spend the night. 5 The men of Gibeah rose against me in the night and surrounded the house; they wanted to kill me, and they raped my concubine to death. 6 Then I took my concubine, cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the territory that Israel inherited because they have committed an infamy in Israel. 7 So now, you Israelites, all of you, give your

JUDGES 20

- 1 'From Dan to Beersheba' is a stereotyped formula, used outside the Pentateuch, to indicate the northern and southern extremities of the territory occupied by Israel (see 1S 3:20, 2S 3:10, 1K 5:5).
- 2 The figure of 400,000, like those in the description of the battles (see vv. 15, 21), is obviously exaggerated.
- 3 The NJB does not parenthesise the 1st sentence but ends it with an ellipsis.
- 4 The literal translation of 'the Levite' is 'the man, the Levite'.
- 5 After 'house', the NJB adds 'where I was staying'.
- 6 The literal translation of 'infamy' is 'wicked and disgraceful (thing)'.
- 7 For this verse, the NJB reads, "You have all met together here, men of Israel. Discuss the matter and make your decision here and now."

הַלֵּם: ^ח וַיִּקָּם כָּל־הָעָם כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד לֵאמֹר לֹא נֵלֶךְ אִישׁ לְאַהֲלוֹ וְלֹא נָסוּר אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ: ^ט וַעֲתָה זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה לְגִבְעָה עָלֶיהָ בְּגֹרֶל: ^י וְלִקְחָנוּ עֲשָׂרָה אַנְשִׁים לְמֵאָה לְכָל שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֵאָה לְאַלְפֵי וְאַלְפֵי לְרִבְבָּה לְקַחַת צֹדֵה לָעַם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְבוֹאֵם לְגִבְעַת בְּנֵימָן כְּכֹל־הַנִּבְלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: ^{יא} וַיֵּאָסֶף כָּל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָעִיר כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד חֲבֵרִים: {פ}

^{יב} וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אַנְשִׁים בְּכָל־שְׁבֹטֵי בְנֵימָן לֵאמֹר מָה הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר נְהִיתָה בְּכֶם: ^{יג} וַעֲתָה תָנוּ אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי־בְלִיעַל אֲשֶׁר בַּגְּבֻעָה וּנְמִיתֵם וּנְבַעְרָה רָעָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא אָבוּ [בְּנֵי] בְנֵימָן לִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל אַחֵיהֶם בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל: ^{יד} וַיֵּאָסְפוּ בְנֵי־בְנֵימָן מִן־הָעָרִים הַגְּבֻעָתָה לְצֵאת

advice and counsel here.” ⁸ All the people stood up as one man and said, “Not one of us will go to his tent, not one of us will return to his house. ⁹ This is what we shall do to Gibeah: we shall draw lots ¹⁰ and select ten men from a hundred from each tribe of Israel, and a hundred from a thousand, and a thousand from ten thousand. They will collect food for the army, for those who will go and punish Gibeah in Benjamin for the infamy they have committed in Israel.” ¹¹ So, all the men of Israel mustered against that town, united as one man.

¹² The tribes of Israel sent messengers out through the whole tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has been committed among you? ¹³ Come, therefore, give up these men, these scoundrels from Gibeah, so that we may put them to death and banish this wickedness from the midst of Israel.” However, the Benjaminites would not listen to their brother Israelites. ¹⁴ The Benjaminites left their towns

⁸ The literal translation of ‘return’ is ‘turn aside’.

⁹ In place of ‘we shall draw lots’, here following the NJB, the NRSV has ‘we will go up against it by lot’; the MT has ‘against her by lot’: probably, the verb ‘we will go up’ (נַעֲלָה) has been accidentally omitted before ‘against her’ (עָלֶיהָ).

¹⁰ The NRSV uses ‘repay’ in place of ‘punish’; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

¹¹ NETB has ‘as allies’ in place of ‘united as one man’, here following the MT & NJB.

¹² For ‘tribe’, the MT reads the plural but surely the singular, which is supported by the LXX (φυλή) and Vg (tribum) is preferable here.

¹³ The word, בְּנֵי, is here included in brackets, following the MAM text; the Mechon Mamre text has it in parentheses (normally used for Ketiv/Qere variants) and precedes it with five spaces. However, as both this and the alternate word are pointed, it is not clear here what the highlighting represents. The UXL text has a footnote to the effect that a word used differs from the conventional one used for the Qere.

¹⁴ The account of the battle of Gibeah is similar both in incident and in style to the account of the capture of Ai (Jos 7–8). Rather than allow an editorial influence of Joshua on Judges, it is better to hold that the fictitious account of the latter has been modelled on this historic victory.

לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ^{טו} וַיִּתְּפְקְדוּ בְנֵי בְנֵי־מִן
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא מֵהָעָרִים עֹשִׂים וְשֹׂשָׁה אֶלֶף אִישׁ
 שְׁלֹף חֶרֶב לְבַד מִיִּשְׁבֵי הַגְּבֵעָה הַתְּפַקְדוּ שִׁבְעַ
 מֵאוֹת אִישׁ בַּחֹר: ^{טז} מִכָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה שִׁבְעַ מֵאוֹת
 אִישׁ בַּחֹר אֶטֶר יַד־יְמִינֹו כָּל־זֶה קָלַע בְּאַבְן אֶל־
 הַשְּׂעֵרָה וְלֹא יַחֲטֵא: {פ}

^{יז} וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַתְּפַקְדוּ לְבַד מִבְּנֵי־מִן אַרְבַּע
 מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף אִישׁ שְׁלֹף חֶרֶב כָּל־זֶה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה:
^{יח} וַיִּקְמוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ בֵּית־אֵל וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי יַעֲלֶה־לָנוּ בַתְּחִלָּה לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־
 בְּנֵי בְנֵי־מִן וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יְהוּדָה בַתְּחִלָּה: ^{יט} וַיִּקְוּמוּ
 בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּבֹּקֶר וַיַּחֲנוּ עַל־הַגְּבֵעָה: ^כ וַיֵּצֵא אִישׁ
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי־מִן וַיַּעֲרֹכוּ אִתָּם אִישׁ־
 יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְחָמָה אֶל־הַגְּבֵעָה: ^{כא} וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי־בְנֵי־מִן
 מִן־הַגְּבֵעָה וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׁנַיִם
 וְעֶשְׂרִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ אֶרְצָה: ^{כב} וַיִּתְּחַזַּק הָעָם אִישׁ

and mustered at Gibeah to fight the Israelites. ¹⁵ The Benjaminites from these various towns had counted their numbers that day: twenty-five thousand men who could handle the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah. ¹⁶ In this great army were seven hundred first-rate men who could fight with their left hand; every one of these could sling a stone at a hair and would not miss it.

¹⁷ The men of Israel also took a count. Without Benjamin, there were four hundred thousand of them who could handle the sword; all experienced fighters. ¹⁸ They set off and went up to Bethel to consult God. The Israelites put the question, "Which of us should go out first to attack the Benjaminites?" Yahweh answered, "Judah shall go first." ¹⁹ Then, in the morning, the Israelites marched out and pitched their camp facing Gibeah. ²⁰ Then, advancing to engage Benjamin, the Israelites drew up their line in front of the town; ²¹ but the Benjaminites sallied out from Gibeah and that day killed twenty-two thousand Israelites, who they left on the field. ²² The Israelites went and wept

¹⁵ The MT appends to this verse, 'seven hundred picked men', a doublet of v. 16.

¹⁶ On the significance of left-handed soldiers, see #3:15.

¹⁷ For this verse, the NRSV reads, "And the Israelites, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand armed men, all of them warriors."

¹⁸ 'Bethel', once known as 'Luz', had associations with both Abraham (Gn 12:8, 13:3) and Jacob (Gn 28:10-22); it is 22 Km north of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ In place of 'pitched their camp facing Gibeah', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'encamped against Gibeah'.

²⁰ For this verse, the NRSV reads, "The Israelites went out to battle against Benjamin; and the Israelites drew up the battle line against them at Gibeah."

²¹ The NRSV lacks the phrase 'who they left on the field', here following the NJB.

²² In both the NJB and the NRSV, vv. 22 & 23 are transposed for the sake of the sense.

יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְפוּ לַעֲרֹךְ מִלְחָמָה בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־עָרְכוּ
שָׁם בַּיּוֹם הַרְּאִשׁוֹן: כִּג וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּבְכוּ
לְפָנֵי־יְהוָה עַד־הָעֶרֶב וַיִּשְׂאֲלוּ בִיהוּה לֵאמֹר
הֲאוֹסִיף לָגֶשֶׁת לַמִּלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי בְנִימָן אַחִי
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה עָלוּ אֵלָיו: {פ}

כד וַיִּקְרְבוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בְּנֵי בְנִימָן בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי:
כה וַיֵּצֵא בְנִימָן לְקִרְאָתָם מִן־הַגְּבֵעָה בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי
וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בְּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד שְׁמֹנֶת עָשָׂר אֶלֶף אִישׁ
אֶרֶצָה כָּל־אֵלֶּה שְׁלֹפֵי חָרֶב: כו וַיַּעֲלוּ כָל־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ בֵּית־אֵל וַיִּבְכוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם
לְפָנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּצְוּמוּ בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא עַד־הָעֶרֶב וַיַּעֲלוּ
עֹלוֹת וְשַׁלְמִים לְפָנֵי יְהוָה: כז וַיִּשְׂאֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
בִּיהוּה וְשָׁם אַרְוֹן בְּרִית הָאֱלֹהִים בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם:
כח וּפִינְחָס בֶּן־אֱלֶעָזָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן עִמָּד | לְפָנָיו בַּיָּמִים
הָהֵם לֵאמֹר הֲאוֹסִף עוֹד לָצֵאת לַמִּלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי־
בְנִימָן אַחִי אִם־אֶחָדָל וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה עָלוּ כִּי מָחָר

before Yahweh until evening; then they consulted Yahweh; they asked, "Shall we join battle again with the sons of our brother Benjamin?" Yahweh answered, "March against him."²³ Then the army of the people of Israel took heart afresh; and again, they drew up their line for battle, in the same place as the day before.

²⁴ This second day the Israelites advanced on the Benjaminites; ²⁵ but again this second day Benjamin sallied out from Gibeah against them and killed eighteen thousand Israelites, who they left on the field; they could all handle the sword. ²⁶ Then all the Israelites and the whole people went up to Bethel; they wept and sat in Yahweh's presence; they fasted all day until the evening and offered holocausts and peace offerings before Yahweh; ²⁷ then the Israelites consulted Yahweh. The Ark of the Covenant of God was there in those days, ²⁸ and Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron was the priest who ministered at it at that time. They said, "Ought we to go again and fight the sons of our brother Benjamin, or should we stop?" Yahweh answered, "March; for,

²³ An alternative reading for 'took heart' is 'encouraged one another'.

²⁴ The literal translation of 'advanced on' is 'drew near to'.

²⁵ The NJB ends this verse with, "...they were all experienced fighters who could handle the sword."

²⁶ In place of 'peace offerings', the NJB has 'communion sacrifices' and the NRSV has 'sacrifices of well-being'.

²⁷ In place of 'consulted Yahweh', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'inquired of the LORD'.

²⁸ The first two attempts had also been made on Yahweh's orders (vv. 18, 23) but God promises victory only at the third consultation. In the parallel story (Jos 7), the initial failure is attributed to a violation of the curse of destruction. However, no reason is given here.

אֲתַנְנוּ בַיּוֹם: כִּי וַיִּשֶׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲרָבִים אֶל־הַגְּבֵעָה
סָבִיב: {פ}

ל וַיַּעֲלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בְּנֵי בְנִימֵן בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
וַיַּעֲרֹכוּ אֶל־הַגְּבֵעָה כַּפְּעַם בַּפְּעַם: לֹא וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי־
בְנִימֵן לְקִרְאֵת הָעָם הַנִּתְקוּ מִן־הָעִיר וַיִּחַלְּוּ לְהַכּוֹת
מִהָעָם חֲלָלִים כַּפְּעַם | בַּפְּעַם בְּמַסְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר אַחַת
עָלָה בֵּית־אֵל וְאַחַת גְּבַעְתָּה בַשְּׂדֵה כְּשֹׁלְשִׁים אִישׁ
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל: לִב וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי בְנִימֵן נִגְפִים הֵם לִפְנֵינוּ
כְּבָרָאשְׁנָה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמְרוּ נִנּוּסָה וְנִתְקַנּוּהוּ
מִן־הָעִיר אֶל־הַמַּסְלוֹת: לִי וְכָל | אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל קָמוּ
מִמְּקוֹמוֹ וַיַּעֲרֹכוּ בְּבַעַל תָּמָר וְאַרְבַּי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִגִּיחַ
מִמְּקוֹמוֹ מִמַּעֲרָה גָּבַע: לִי וַיִּבְאוּ מִנְּגַד לַגְּבֵעָה
עֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ בַּחֹר מִכָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַמַּלְחָמָה
כְּבָדָה וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי־נִגְעַת עָלֵיהֶם הָרַעָה: {פ}

לִי וַיִּגַּף יְהוָה | אֶת־בְּנִימֵן לִפְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁחִיתוּ בְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּבְנִימֵן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עֲשָׂרִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אֲלָף

tomorrow, I shall deliver him into your power.”²⁹ Then Israel stationed men in ambush round Gibeah.

³⁰ On the third day, the Israelites marched against the Benjaminites and, as before, they set their line facing Gibeah. ³¹ The Benjaminites sallied against the people and were drawn away from the town. As before, they began by killing those people who were on the roads (one runs up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah): in open country, about thirty men of Israel. ³² The Benjaminites thought, “They are routed, as before;” but the Israelites said, “Let us retreat and draw them away from the town along the roads. ³³ The main body of the Israelites drew back its battle line to Baal-Tamar, while the Israelites in ambush rushed forward from their position on the Plain of Geba.” ³⁴ Then ten thousand picked men, chosen from the whole of Israel, appeared before Gibeah. The battle was fierce. The Benjaminites did not suspect the disaster hanging over them.

³⁵ Yahweh defeated Benjamin before Israel and the Israelites killed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin that day, all of

²⁹ The remainder of this chapter consists of the traditions of Mizpah and Bethel clumsily combined: hence the incoherence of the text.

³⁰ The NJB has ‘the town’ in place of ‘Gibeah’, here following the MT, NRSV & NETB.

³¹ The skirmish took place between Bethel, where the Israelites had their base, and Gibeah, where the Benjaminites had theirs.

³² For ‘draw them away’ the MT has ‘draw him away’ – possibly the use of a collective singular pronoun.

³³ The NRSV and NJB, following the LXX (ἀπὸ δυσμῶν τῆς Γαββα), have ‘to the west of Gibeah’ in place of ‘on the Plain of Geba’.

³⁴ Literally translated, this verse ends, “...and they did not know that touching against them was disaster.”

³⁵ In place of ‘all of them armed’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘all men who could handle the sword’.

ומֵאָה אִישׁ כָּל־אֵלֶּה שָׁלַח־חֶרֶב: לוֹ וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־
 בְּנֵימָן כִּי נִגְפוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל מָקוֹם לְבְנֵימָן כִּי
 בָּטְחוּ אֶל־הָאֲרֵב אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמוּ אֶל־הַגְּבֵעָה:
 לוֹ וְהָאֲרֵב הִחִישׁוּ וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ אֶל־הַגְּבֵעָה וַיִּמְשְׁדוּ
 הָאֲרֵב וַיֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הָעִיר לְפִי־חֶרֶב: לח וְהַמּוֹעֵד
 הָיָה לְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם־הָאֲרֵב הָרַב לְהַעֲלוֹתָם
 מִשָּׂאת הָעֵשֶׁן מִן־הָעִיר: לט וַיִּהְפֹּךְ אִישׁ־יִשְׂרָאֵל
 בַּמִּלְחָמָה וּבְנֵימָן הִחֵל לְהַכּוֹת חֲלָלִים בְּאִישׁ־
 יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּשִׁלְשִׁים אִישׁ כִּי אָמְרוּ אָדָּם נִגְזַף הוּא
 לְפָנֵינוּ בַּמִּלְחָמָה הִרְאֵשְׁנָה: מ וְהַמִּשָּׂאת הִחֲלָה
 לַעֲלוֹת מִן־הָעִיר עֲמוּד עֵשֶׁן וַיִּפֹּן בְּנֵימָן אַחֲרָיו
 וַהֲגֵה עֲלֶיהָ כְּלִיל־הָעִיר הַשְּׂמִימָה: מא וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
 הִפֹּךְ וַיִּבְהֵל אִישׁ בְּנֵימָן כִּי רָאָה כִּי־נִגְעָה עָלָיו
 הָרֶעָה: מב וַיִּפְּנוּ לְפָנֵי אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־דֶּרֶךְ
 הַמִּדְבָּר וְהַמִּלְחָמָה הִדְּבִיקָתָהּ וְאֲשֶׁר מֵהָעָרִים

them armed. ³⁶ The Benjaminites, seeing themselves defeated ... The men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the ambush they had set against Gibeah. ³⁷ The men in ambush rushed quickly upon Gibeah and put the whole town to the sword. ³⁸ For the Israelite army and the troops in ambush had agreed that they should raise a smoke signal from the town, ³⁹ whereupon the Israelites in the thick of the battle would turn about. Now Benjamin had begun by killing men of the Israelite army, about thirty of them; so, they were thinking, "Plainly we have routed them now as we did before." ⁴⁰ Then the signal, a column of smoke, began to rise from the town, and the Benjaminites looking back saw the whole town going up in flames to the sky. ⁴¹ Then the Israelites turned about, and the Benjaminites were dismayed, for they saw that disaster was imminent. ⁴² They broke before the Israelite onslaught and made for the desert, but the fighters pressed them hard, while the others coming out of the town surprised them and

³⁶ The 1st sentence is concluded in v. 45; however, the intermediate vv. 36–44 do not come from a single source.

³⁷ The verb here translated as 'rushed' normally means 'lead' or 'draw'.

³⁸ The smoke signal seems to have served two purposes here: it alerted the remaining Israelites that the town had been taken but it also dismayed the Benjaminites.

³⁹ In place of 'turn about', NETB has 'counterattack'.

⁴⁰ Literally translated, this verse ends, "...Benjamin turned after him and, look, the whole city went up toward the sky."

⁴¹ The literal translation of 'disaster was imminent' is 'disaster touched against them'.

⁴² 'Took and slaughtered them from the rear' is a conjectural translation following the NJB; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The Benjaminites were caught between the main body of troops and the ambush contingent; see, for the same operation, Jos 8:21–22.

מִשְׁחִיתִים אוֹתוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ: ^{מג} כָּתְרוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־מִן
הַרְדִּיפָהוּ מִנוּחָה הַדְּרִיכָהוּ עַד נֹכַח הַגְּבֵעָה
מִמִּזְרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ: ^{מד} וַיִּפְּלוּ מִבְּנֵי־מִן שְׁמֹנֶה־עָשָׂר אֲלֶף
אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה אַנְשֵׁי־חֵיִל: ^{מה} וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיִּנְסוּ
הַמַּדְבָּרָה אֶל־סֵלַע הַרְמוֹן וַיַּעֲלֶלְהוּ בַמַּסְלוֹת
חֲמֵשֶׁת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ וַיִּדְבְּקוּ אַחֲרָיו עַד־גְּדֵעַם וַיָּכוּ
מִמֶּנּוּ אֲלָפִים אִישׁ: ^{מו} וַיְהִי כָל־הַנְּפִלִים מִבְּנֵי־מִן
עָשָׂרִים וַחֲמֵשֶׁה אֲלֶף אִישׁ שָׁלַף חָרַב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה אַנְשֵׁי־חֵיִל: ^{מי} וַיִּפְּנוּ וַיִּנְסוּ הַמַּדְבָּרָה
אֶל־סֵלַע הַרְמוֹן שָׁשׁ מְאוֹת אִישׁ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בְּסֵלַע רְמוֹן
אַרְבַּעַה חֳדָשִׁים: ^{מח} וְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁבוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי
בְּנֵי־מִן וַיַּכּוּם לְפִי־חָרַב מֵעִיר מְתָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד
כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא גַם כָּל־הָעָרִים הַנִּמְצָאוֹת שָׁלְחוּ
בְּאֵשׁ: {פ}

took and slaughtered them from the rear. ⁴³ They hemmed the Benjaminites in, pursued them relentlessly and crushed them opposite Geba on the east. ⁴⁴ Eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell, all of them brave men. ⁴⁵ The survivors turned and ran, and fled into the desert and towards the Rock of Rimmon. On the highroads, the Israelites caught five thousand men. Then they pursued the Benjaminites to Gidom and killed two thousand of them. ⁴⁶ The total number of sword-wielding Benjaminites who fell that day was twenty-five thousand men – all of them brave men. ⁴⁷ Six hundred men, however, turned tail and escaped into the desert, to the Rock of Rimmon, and there they stayed for four months. ⁴⁸ The men of Israel went back to the Benjaminites, and put them to the sword: the town, the people, the cattle, and all that came their way; and they set on fire all the towns that they came to in Benjamin.

⁴³ The NRSV reads: "Cutting down the Benjaminites, they pursued them from Nohah and trod them down as far as a place east of Gibeah."

⁴⁴ In place of 'brave men', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'courageous fighters' and NETB has 'capable warriors'.

⁴⁵ 'Gidom' (גִּדְעָם) is an unknown place (the NJB has 'Gideon'); the primitive text had, perhaps, 'Geba' or 'Gabaon'.

⁴⁶ The number given here (25,000) is an approximate figure; v. 35 gives a more precise number (25,100) and, according to v. 15, the Benjaminites numbered 26,700 (26,000 + 700). The figures in vv. 35 (rounded in vv. 44–46) and 47 add up to 25,700. What happened to the other 1,000 men? The most reasonable explanation is that they were killed during the first two days of fighting, but some reject this proposal, arguing that the narrator is too precise and concerned about details to omit such a fact.

⁴⁷ NETB has 'cliff of Rimmon' in place of 'Rock of Rimmon', here following the NJB & NRSV.

⁴⁸ The translation, 'the town, the people', is based on the reading מְעִיר מְתָם ('from a town of men' i.e. an inhabited city), rather than the reading מְעִיר מְתָם ('from a town of soundness') found in the Leningrad Codex of the MT.

שופטים פרק כא

א וַאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נִשְׁבַּע בַּמִּצְפָּה לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ
לֹא־יִתֵּן בָּתּוֹ לְבְנֵימִן לְאִשָּׁה: ב וַיָּבֹא הָעָם בֵּית־אֵל
וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם עַד־הָעֶרֶב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׂאוּ קוֹלָם
וַיִּבְכוּ בְּכִי גָדוֹל: ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָמָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
הֵיטָה זֹאת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַפְקֵד הַיּוֹם מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שִׁבְט
אֶחָד: ד וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ הָעָם וַיְבַנּוּ־שָׁם
מִזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלוֹת וּשְׁלָמִים: {פ}

ה וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה בַקֵּהל
מִכָּל־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי הִשְׁבוּעָה הַגְּדוֹלָה
הֵיטָה לְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָלָה אֶל־יְהוָה הַמִּצְפָּה לֵאמֹר
מֹזֵת יוֹמַת: ו וַיִּנְחַמוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־בְּנֵימִן אַחֵיו
וַיֹּאמְרוּ נִגְדַע הַיּוֹם שִׁבְט אֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: ז מַה־
נַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְנוֹתָרִים לְנָשִׁים וְאַנְחָנוּ נִשְׁבַּעְנוּ

JUDGES 21

1 The men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "Not one of us will give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin." 2 The people went to Bethel and stayed there until evening, sitting before God with groans and bitter weeping. 3 They said, "Yahweh, God of Israel, why must this be Israel's lot, to lose one of its tribes today?" 4 The next day, the people got up early and built an altar there; they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings.

5 Then the Israelites said, "Who of all the tribes of Israel has not assembled in Yahweh's presence?" For they had sworn a solemn oath, threatening death to anyone who would not come into Yahweh's presence at Mizpah. 6 Now the Israelites were sorry for Benjamin their brother; they said, "Today, one tribe has been cut off from Israel. 7 What shall we do to provide wives for those who are left, since we have sworn

JUDGES 21

- 1 This chapter juxtaposes two traditions, linked together by the concluding words of v. 14.
- 2 Literally translated, this verse ends, "...and they lifted up their voice(s) and wept with great weeping." Both the cognate accusative בְּכִי ('weeping') and the attributive adjective גָּדוֹל ('great') emphasise their degree of sorrow.
- 3 Inter-tribal conflicts do not weaken the sense of solidarity binding the people of Israel together, and the post-exilic editor emphasises this by frequently speaking of the 'community'.
- 4 In place of 'burnt sacrifices and peace offerings', here following NETB, the NJB has 'holocausts and communions sacrifices'.
- 5 The oath here solves the problem resulting from the oath of v. 1.
- 6 In place of 'were sorry for', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'felt compassion on'.
- 7 Literally translated, this verse opens, "What should we do for them, for the remaining ones, concerning wives?"

ביהוה לבלתי תתלהם מבנותינו לנשים:
 ויאמרו מי אחד משבטי ישראל אשר לא-עלה
 אליהוה המצפה והנה לא בא-איש אל-המחנה
 מיביש גלעד אל-הקהל: ויתפקד העם והנה
 אין-שם איש מיושבי יבש גלעד: וישלחו-שם
 העדה שנים-עשר אלף איש מבני החיל ויצו
 אותם לאמר לכו והפיתם את-יושבי יבש גלעד
 לפי-חרב והנשים והטף: וזה הדבר אשר תעשו:
 כל-זכר וכל-אשה ידעת משכב-זכר תחרימו:
 וימצאו מיושבי יבש גלעד ארבע מאות נערה
 בתולה אשר לא-ידעה איש למשכב זכר ויבאו
 אותם אל-המחנה שלה אשר בארץ כנען: {פ}
 וישלחו כל-העדה וידברו אל-בני בנימן אשר
 בסלע רמון ויקראו להם שלום: וישב בנימן
 בעת ההיא ויתנו להם הנשים אשר חיו מנשי

by Yahweh not to give them any of our own daughters as wives?" ⁸ Then they said, "Which of all the tribes of Israel has not come into Yahweh's presence at Mizpah?" It turned out that no one from Jabesh-Gilead had come to the camp for the assembly; ⁹ for, the people had been counted over, and not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead was there. ¹⁰ Then the community sent twelve thousand of their bravest soldiers there and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike with the sword all the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, the women and children too. ¹¹ This is what you are to do. You are to put all the males and all the women who have slept with a male under the ban. ¹² Among the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, they found four hundred young virgins who had never slept with a man, and brought them to the camp (at Shiloh, in the land of Canaan). ¹³ Then the whole community sent word to the Benjaminites who were at the Rock of Rimmon, offering peace. ¹⁴ Benjamin returned and they gave them those women from Jabesh-Gilead they had left alive; but

⁸ The last sentence, literally translated, reads, "Look, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly."

⁹ 'Jabesh-Gilead' (יבש גלעד), a town in the northern Transjordanian region, has been identified with Tell Abu Haraz and Tell El-Meqberch.

¹⁰ The literal translation of 'bravest soldiers' (here following the NRSV) is 'men, sons of strength'.

¹¹ At the end of this verse, the NJB, following the LXX (Codex Vaticanus – τὰς δὲ παρθέτους περιποιήσεσθε. καὶ ἐποίησαν οὕτως) adds, "but the lives of the virgins you are to spare." This they did."

¹² Four hundred virgins are spared and given to Benjamin as wives (v. 14). 'Shiloh' is identified with the modern Seilun, 14 km north of Bethel.

¹³ Literally translated, this verse reads, "And all the assembly sent and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were at the Rock of Rimmon and they proclaimed to them peace."

¹⁴ At the end of this verse, the NJB adds 'for all'.

יָבֵשׁ גִּלְעָד וְלֹא־מִצָּאוּ לָהֶם כֶּן׃ טוֹ וְהָעָם נָחַם
 לְבִנְיָמִן כִּי־עָשָׂה יְהוָה פְּרָץ בְּשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל׃
 טז וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי הָעֵדָה מֵה־נַּעֲשֶׂה לְנוֹתְרִים לְנָשִׁים
 כִּי־נִשְׁמְדָה מִבְּנֵימָן אִשָּׁה׃ יז וַיֹּאמְרוּ יִרְשֶׁת פְּלִיטָה
 לְבִנְיָמִן וְלֹא־יִמָּחָה שִׁבְט מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל׃ יח וַאֲנַחְנוּ לֹא
 נוֹכַל לְתַת־לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִבְּנוֹתֵינוּ כִּי־נִשְׁבַּעוּ בְנֵי־
 יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אָרוּר אֲרוּר נָתַן אִשָּׁה לְבִנְיָמִן׃ {ס}

יט וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּה חַג־יְהוָה בְּשִׁלוֹ מִיָּמִים | יְמִימָה
 אֲשֶׁר מִצְּפוֹנָה לְבַיַּת־אֵל מִזְרַחָה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ לְמִסְלָה
 הָעֵלָה מִבַּיַּת־אֵל שְׁכֵמָה וּמִנְגַב לְלִבְנָה׃ כ וַיֵּצְאוּ
 וַיִּצְווּ אֶת־בְּנֵי בִנְיָמִן לֵאמֹר לְכוּ וְאַרְבַּתֶּם בְּכַרְמֵים׃
 כא וּרְאִיתֶם וְהָיָה אִם־יֵצְאוּ בָנוֹת־שִׁילוֹ לְחֹל
 בַּמַּחְלוֹת וַיִּצְאֲתֶם מִן־הַכַּרְמִים וַחֲטַפְתֶּם לָכֶם אִישׁ
 אֲשֶׁתּוֹ מִבָּנוֹת שִׁילוֹ וְהִלַּכְתֶּם אֶרֶץ בִּנְיָמִן׃ כב וְהָיָה
 כִּי־יָבֹאוּ אֲבוֹתֶם אוֹ אַחֵיהֶם לְרוֹב לְרִיב | אֵלֵינוּ
 וַאֲמַרְנוּ אֵלֵיהֶם חָנוּנוּ אוֹתָם כִּי לֹא לִקְחָנוּ אִישׁ

there were not enough. ¹⁵ The people grieved for Benjamin because Yahweh had made a breach in the tribes of Israel; ¹⁶ and the elders of the community said, “What shall we do for wives for the survivors, since there are no women left in Benjamin?” ¹⁷ They said, “The remnant of Benjamin must be preserved so that a tribe is not blotted out from Israel? ¹⁸ We cannot give them our own daughters as wives.” For, the Israelites had sworn, “Cursed be any man who gives a wife to Benjamin!”

¹⁹ So, they said, “Look, there is Yahweh’s annual feast at Shiloh.” (This is north of Bethel, east of the road that runs from Bethel up to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.) ²⁰ So, they said to the Benjaminites, “Place yourselves in ambush in the vineyards. ²¹ Keep watch there, and when the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, you too come out of the vineyards: seize a wife, each one of you, from the daughters of Shiloh and make for the land of Benjamin. ²² If their fathers or brothers come to complain to us, we shall say to them, “Forgive them because each one of them has taken a wife for himself, as men do in war. For, if

¹⁵ In place of ‘grieved for’, here following the WEBBE, the NRSV has ‘had compassion on’.

¹⁶ NETB has ‘leaders’ in place of ‘elders’, here following the NJB & NRSV.

¹⁷ For stylistic reasons, NETB omits the opening ‘they went on’.

¹⁸ Literally translated, this verse opens, “But we are not able to give to them wives from our daughters.”

¹⁹ This verse refers to a Canaanite festival (see 9:27), later identified with the Harvest Festival (Ex 23:16) or the Feast of Shelters (Dt 16:13).

²⁰ The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

²¹ In place of ‘in the dances’, here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has ‘in groups together’.

²² In place of ‘to us’, the NJB has ‘to you’, following the LXX (πρὸς ὑμᾶς). The Kethib/Qere difference here would benefit from an explanation.

אִשְׁתּוֹ בַּמְלָחָמָה כִּי לֹא אַתֶּם נָתַתֶּם לָהֶם כְּעַת
תֵּאשְׁמוּ: {ס}

you had given them brides, you would have broken your oath, and so would have sinned.””

כַּג וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי בְנִימִן וַיִּשְׂאוּ נָשִׁים לְמִסְפָּרָם מִן־
הַמַּחֲלָלוֹת אֲשֶׁר גָּזְלוּ וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּשׁוּבוּ אֶל־נַחֲלָתָם
וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת־הָעָרִים וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָהֶם: כִּד וַיִּתְּהַלְכוּ מִשָּׁם
בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵת הַהִיא אִישׁ לְשִׁבְטוֹ וּלְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ
וַיֵּצְאוּ מִשָּׁם אִישׁ לְנַחֲלָתוֹ: {פ}

²³ The Benjaminites did this and, from the dancers they had captured, they chose as many wives as there were men; then they set off, returned to their inheritance, rebuilt their towns, and settled in them. ²⁴ Then the Israelites went away, each to re-join his own tribe and clan, and returned from Shiloh each to his own inheritance.

כִּה בַיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר
בַּעֲיִנָּיו יַעֲשֶׂה:
{ש}

²⁵ In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased.

²³ Literally translated, the central part of this verse reads, “and they took wives according to their number from the dancing girls whom they abducted.”

²⁴ The NRSV has ‘territories’ in place of ‘inheritance’, here following the MT & NJB.

²⁵ The narrative in 19:1–21:25 is introduced and concluded by the same comment as at 17:6 and 18:1. Here, it may be an editorial insertion, or a comment by the priests of the official sanctuary at Bethel, who take a point of view similar to the priests of the royal sanctuary at Dan in the previous story (see #17:1).