

WHAT'S IN A NAME? No.4

**THE BOOK OF JUDGES** ———  
— the Saviours of Israel. (Part 2)

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THE BOOK OF THE JUDGES:  
THE SAVIOURS OF ISRAEL, Vol.2

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# THE BOOK OF THE JUDGES - THE SAVIOURS OF ISRAEL

## PART 2

### CHAPTER 4

JUDGES CHAPTER 4 brings before us the fourth weak thing that God used to deliver Israel: in fact it is a double instance. It is doubled so that we may be sure that God has done it, or the thing done has His sanction to it.

The fourth weak thing is a woman, or rather two women and a wooden tent peg. The women are Deborah and Jael: Deborah was an Israelite and the other, Jael, a Gentile.

Look how the situation was brought home to Barak at the outset. Judges 4 v. 9, "Notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera (the Commander in Chief of the Canaanite forces, therefore the sweetest plum to capture) into the hands of a woman."

This clash of arms represented a virtual testing of strength for the whole land, such comprehensive forces were marshalled against Israel with 900 chariots, unspoken power in those days.

We take our line of exposition as usual through the meaning of the names, which, in their own way, will open up to us the spiritual highlights of the various situations.

#### Judges 4 v. 1

"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead."

(A) Implying that while Ehud was alive he restrained them from idolatry (cf. ch. 2 v. 18, 19). One gets the idea, as we progress, that Israel are always ready to pursue evil, when shorn of the restraining hand of the various Judges. Reminding us of the reply to Peter by our Lord, after Peter had asked, "Shall I forgive my brother (John in mind) seven times?" Jesus: Seventytimes seven would hardly be enough, because unless we forgive our brother's trespass against ourselves (possibly seven times) we may never have our sins forgiven which reach seventy times seven (Matthew 19: 21-23). We see the implication in this statement in Judges 4: 1.

(B) Again we have corresponding proof of the dating of the acts of Shamgar. "When Ehud was dead". Ch. 3 v. 31 - "And after him (Ehud) was Shamgar." We have from Judges 5 v. 6, 7 that he worked in the days of Deborah, so it appears very much like another of Blunt's Coincidences in fact.

#### Judges 4 v. 2

"And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles." Quite a list of names in this verse: what do they teach us?

(1) Jabin king of Canaan. Immediately we can hear the cry of the critics, "Jabin was conquered by Joshua, more than a century earlier; surely the historian is wrong? And not only so, but Hazor his capital was destroyed with fire, lest there should be a fortress left in Joshua's rear." (Joshua 11: 10-12). While all this data is undoubtedly correct, the interpretation is faulty. Fausset reminds

us that "Jabin" was an hereditary title of the Canaanite dynasty, as "Pharaoh" in Egypt, and "Abimelech" among the Philistines of Sera, and "Hadad" in Syria and Edom. The lesson that rises starkly out of the situation is the fact that this punishment was born out of double unbelief, and disobedience on Israel's part.

(A) Because they allowed the Canaanite to remain in the land after God had straitly charged them that the Canaanite should be destroyed out of the land.

(B) They afterwards allowed the Canaanite to rebuild Hazor, and the dynasty of Jabin, during Israel's oppression by Moab and Ammon, regained the throne, and from Hazor as a centre of government, mightily oppressed Israel.

(C) The slackness of Israel in not appreciating this warlike confederacy of the Canaanite population, for Canaan is the general name for a large part of the inhabitants of the land. 900 Chariots could not have been built in a corner. Jabin's rule is widespread, and his opposition to Holy King true to his Canaanite name, Trafficer. What does his name mean? JABIN = 'Perceiving, discerning, observing, intelligent, knowing, analysis, understanding.' A clear description of the wisdom, very acute and discerning wisdom, of the world, or the thinking of the flesh. Significance of the word 'evil' which means to work and ferment, always restless, seeking opportunity to infiltrate our defences. It is typical that Jabin hails from the north quarters of Israel, the land that is turned away from the sun. The very word for north - 'hidden' - suggests the absence of light. Thus the darkness of nature away from God is the thought, a darkness which is the result of the fall. "God is light", and when man turns away from Him he is in darkness of his own mind and devices. These words are of vital importance because this matter under consideration at the moment is very basic, which we hope will become self-evident as we proceed. Jabin represents the power of human, therefore devilish, intellect, as contrasted with the Word of God. It is the power of infidelity in all its forms, not merely the bold blatant infidelity of the brother or sister, but any form of infidelity which has turned its back upon the Word of God.

- (1) You turn your back upon the light, and you are facing north.
- (2) You turn your back on the Scriptures, and you are facing the spiritual north.
- (3) You turn your back on God's revelation, and you are left to the feeble glimmer of your own understanding, and spiritually you become 'blind', and how extremely sad to arrive in this hopeless position.

However, the basis of the power attacking Israel in one context in Judges 4 is the power of human understanding controlling the mob of human expression. It is a dreadful and awful power. It spreads its influence everywhere, and wherever that influence reaches, wherever man breathes it in, it exalts him at the expense of God's Truth. We have witnessed this terrible 'mustard tree' growth, abnormal and malformed in the rise and fall of the Third Reich of Nazi Germany and its evil Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

- (2) The headquarters of this confederacy was Hazor; once razed to the ground by Joshua and absolutely destroyed, not lived in by Israel as were other towns. The danger of such a fortress was realised by Joshua, but, alas, not by his successors. Again, could this have been done in a corner? Israel failed to recognise the danger, or were not concerned by it.

Hazor = 'castle, fortification, habitation', encampment, verdant enclosure, in the land of Naphtali - Joshua 11:10 etc., from the idea of being in a circle, or surrounded by a wall. The 'enclosure' aspect we have already seen - that which excludes divine revelation, and is sufficient unto itself. How proudly is this enclosure vaunted today, in the Humanists, the Evolutionists, the scientists and the populace in general: it is the age-old aspect of exclusion being in demand, from Cain downwards. This is the

basis of all human intellect, indeed as the type allows, it is their stronghold, otherwise they would never attempt such effrontery against the God of Israel. We have then found -

(a) Jabin the head of the Kings of the North to illustrate the human intelligence. It has been said (Wordsworth) that the title was given to the kings of this dynasty because of their supposed 'intelligence' - a kind of divine intelligence. How wretchedly far from the truth.

(b) 'Enclosed Hazor' we would rather put in 'hidebound' in their own importance but proudly dominant in their opposition to divine things, which is but a container for a virtual volcano. Today we would name it a New Clear Stockpile, ready as Russia and China are, at the moment, to crush the world.

(c) What of Sisera - the Captain or Commander in Chief of these Canaanite hordes. What does his name reveal? Sisera = to crow; battle array; fermenting; boiling; springing to the onset; enraged. A pot boiling over. This Commander certainly contained within himself the great aggressiveness, passion, inner unrest, and lack of poise characterised by the dynasty of Jabin, the thinking of the flesh and the pride of life, the lust of the eye etc. (1 John 2:16). He is really the executive power of that which Jabin signifies, inherent in the life forces of the elemental life of the flesh, a fine description of the ego of man, without inhibitions.

Harosheth of the Gentiles was the city in which Sisera, captain of the hosts of Jabin, King of Canaan, dwelt (Judges 4:2). Harosheth has the meaning of engraving, a place of workers, place of craft, magic, enchantment, spiritual wickedness in high places, revealing the superstitions still dominant in the world today and harking back to the divination made by Nebuchadnezzar in animal livers, etc., used to prognosticate the outcome of battles, the direction to take, etc. (Ezekiel 21:21): also the Roman superstition of bird watching still with us today. Almost everyone knows the sign of one bird meaning death. The Vatican, once site of the Garden of Nero, was used for this purpose. Spiritually speaking we have arraigned against Israel the whole might of the aggression, passion and superstition of the Canaanites as far north as Harosheth, Galilee of the Gentiles around Naphtali. They are equipped with the most deadly weapons of warfare known in those days - 900 chariots of iron with swords in the centre of their wheels. And this number, speaking of the inner thoughts of Sisera and his host, leads us to the following conclusions: 9 - the number of finality and judgment, multiplied 100 times (10 x 10) the perfect or complete number of ordination, intensified. Basically we are to see here a complete rout or annihilation about to be performed (1) in purpose, by Sisera's overwhelming national strength and feat of arms, but (2) dramatically accomplished by a weak thing - a woman.

- (a) Deborah the prophetess and
- (b) Jael a housewife of Heber a Gentile.
- (c) Originally ordained by God to teach Israel a lesson in fidelity
- (d) but, because Sisera thought to satisfy his own lusts and spoil Israel (Judges 5:24-31)
- (e) then God ordained the overwhelming victory by Deborah and Barak.

These forces, arraigned as follows, are opposed to Deborah and Barak:

- (1) Nations, the Canaanites = the Traffickers.
- (2) Battle command headquarters, Hazor - the fortress walled in might of the Canaanite forces.
- (3) Dynasty - Jabin - intelligence, perception, discerning, observing, analytical understanding. Resurrected as Hazor from over 100 years dereliction.
- (4) Captain or Commander in Chief - Sisera - to present in battle array, to ferment, to boil furiously with great aggression.
- (5) Home base or dwelling place - Harosheth of the Gentiles around Galilee in north of

Israel. The place of enchantment, magic, engraving and working. All of the flesh with complete arrogance and aggression based on superstition and magic. For 20 years Jabin had mightily oppressed the children of Israel: few would regard it as a position of grace to Israel (5 x 4), but such are lessons that must be learned in God's school of affliction. What a different picture Deborah and Barak present.

(A) Deborah = 'a bee', 'wasp', a leader of the flock, eloquent. The same as the appell.

D'bhorah fem. a bee, Dut. 1. 55, from the root Dabhar, see Dabir - to speak, and applicable to the bee, both from the idea of its humming, as if of eloquence, and setting in order, which is so observable among a swarm of bees, and in their hive - vide Daboreh, Bagster etc. And which is so evident, apparently overlooked by the Hebrew authorities but so obvious from the text, that is, Deborah had the sting of a bee or wasp which made the indolent within the sphere of her authority arise quickly.

(B) Lapidoth her husband = 'torches', i. e. having eyes of fire (Daniel 10: 6), plural of appell. Lappiyd, a torch, a lamp (Judges 7: 16, Nahum 2: 5) from Laphadh, unused root 'to flame, to shine'. Some of the Rabbins thought that this passage should be translated in reference to Deborah 'a woman of Lapidoth'. Rabbi Solomon translates it 'women of splendours', i. e. an illustrious woman.

(C) Deborah was a prophetess like Miriam (Exodus 15: 20). See Gesenius 441 and Huldah (2 Kings 22: 14). Proof of this is in the message given to Barak before the battle commenced, that the victory would not be his, but to a woman (Judges 4: 7-9), namely Jael (Judges 4: 22).

(D) We can understand quite clearly the significance of her names now. A bee (eloquent, setting in order, stinging with discretion and effect) - Deborah: because she had 'Lapidoth' (eyes of fire), i. e. being a prophetess, eyes of the Holy Spirit, consequently they were (flaming eyes) shining with divine intelligence full of wisdom and spiritual discretion. Deborah was, as Rabbi Solomon advanced, 'a woman of splendours' (1) illustrious because of her God-given talents, (2) busy in character as a proverbial bee, full of concern for the portion of Israel that God had raised her up to deliver.

(E) We have then in confrontation primarily, the characterisation and lust of the flesh, arrogant in battle array (Sisera), the might of human intelligence (Jabin). All such men are fools in reality (it matters not whether it be Pharaoh, in Egypt, Sennacherib in Assyria, the Pope in Rome, Mao in China, Nasser in modern Egypt or Khosygin in Russia, or whatever age they might be found; such, in God's eyes, are fools) because their minds are darkened and they refuse to acknowledge God (Romans 1: 21-22).

In opposition to these 'powers' of worldly might we find Deborah (a despised woman by their standards) mighty in God through faith and works, filled with divine intelligence, having eyes of fire, searching eyes, probing with intensity in executing God's will for His people, enlightened by God's spirit. Fausset thinks that possibly Deborah, a bee, could be either personal or an official name, as applied to poets, seers and priestesses. "The Bee" was used as a symbol of a monarch in Egypt. We can say that Deborah was a honey bee to her friends, but a stinging bee to her enemies. She was, on this occasion, a stinging bee to her own people to call them to the colours in defence of Israel.

Where was Deborah's dwelling place? Judges 4: 5, "And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the people came up to her for judgment." Ramah means 'lofty place', and Bethel = the House of God, in the portion of Joseph's firstborn (by divine right, Genesis 48). The place of the 'two-fold increase' or 'very fruitful' as Ephraim implies. This territory became very 'fruitful' to God in later years. It was the birthplace of Samuel shortly after these times



(1 Samuel 1:20). Originally consecrated to idolatry (1 Samuel 22:6) it became, as many other heathen sites did, dedicated to Yahweh. This dedication is implied in our context with Deborah, the bee. The palm tree of Deborah indicates the burial place of a lifelong dedicated servant, that of Rebekah's nurse of this name (Genesis 35:8) who was buried under an oak tree here. The implication is clear.

- (1) Just as Rebekah's nurse gave her whole life up to the nurture of her mistress, Rebekah, in herself a type of the Bride of Christ (Genesis 24 - see Hall, Song of Solomon)
- (2) So Deborah dedicated her life to the care of the Ephraimites (the firstborn of Israel), once again a type of the Bride.
- (3) The local name given to the place testified to the love and respect shown to Rebekah's nurse: it was 'Allon Bachuth' - 'the oak of weeping'. There can be no doubt that Deborah the Judge would earn such love and esteem at her decease, and that both will be worthy jewels in the crown of the Lord at his coming.
- (4) Apparently this palm tree was a well known landmark - rather unusual in fact that a palm tree should be found here in the mountain country of Ephraim. One would think that palm trees are usually to be found nearer sea level.
- (5) However, this place was famous in Israel because it was the scene of righteous judgment. Deborah judged here: the word is in the plural, indicating either that (a) her judgment was of particular quality, or (b) that Deborah judged here permanently, and not merely delivering them from the enemy. Most probably the values of permanence and quality are intended to be understood here. Her court of justice was here, where she dispensed jurisprudence in civil law (Psalm 9:4; Judges 5:10).

The hosts of Jabin and Sisera were about to sample the onslaught of Deborah, the stinging bee, in no uncertain manner. Judges 4:6: "And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh Naphtali." Is it not remarkable that Deborah should call a wrestler to help her at this time? One wrestler may be handy in self defence or even attack, but against 900 chariots of iron? But this wrestler was in fact a 'holy or sanctified wrestler', for such is the name of Kedesh Naphtali. It was by any standards a startling decision, because Kedesh Naphtali, or Galilee (Joshua 19:37) was a City of Refuge: a Levitical city, where no arms or fighting equipment was allowed: an open city in fact. Barak was an entirely different character from the Judges before him who were warriors in their own right, namely Othniel and Ehud. Shammah possibly could be more approximated to him as of peaceful occupation. Presumably when roused, like most of us, Barak was a man of definite and quick action: his name is similar to Bezek in fact = lightning. Abinoam, the father of Barak, suggests the nature of the man - 'the father of pleasantness'.

We arrive at the picture of a peace-loving man dwelling in holy surroundings far removed from war, with a nature unrelated to that of Othniel and Ehud, given to resolving his problems with 'holy wrestlings', but when a decision was reached he would react like 'lightning' to it. Very much like Nathaniel, one would think, who wrestled with his problems 'under the fig tree' in the days of Jesus (John 1:46-51). See The Twelve, Hall, under this heading. This was the man Barak whom Deborah 'stung' into action in the confrontation with Jabin's hosts under Sisera. Very much like, it would seem, asking Gandhi to oppose Hitler and his hordes in our day.

The geographical allusions of the chapter may indicate the magnitude of the task confronting a would-be deliverer. The dwelling place of Deborah was 'between Ramah and Bethel' in the south of Ephraim about 50 miles from the actual scene of the decisive conflict; while, from the map it would seem that Barak lived 80 miles from the scene of

battle at the ancient torrent of Kishon (Judges 4:7). It was called Kishon from its 'windings' which flow from the foot of Mount Tabor and Mount Gilboa in a north-westerly direction through the plain of Esdraelon into the Mediterranean. Here the priests of Baal were afterwards slain by Elijah (1 Kings 18:40). Here, too, will the last great battle be fought, Armageddon (Revelation 16) when the gods of munitions (Jabin) and the wisdom of the world (Sisera) are annihilated by the Greater Barak (the Lord Jesus Christ) and greater Deborah (the Bride of Christ) in her deadly stinging capacity. Here, then, we are on not only historic, but prophetic grounds. It is thought that Deborah's choice reveals a greater unity amongst the tribes than is generally assumed at this time. (See Cundall, Judges). The plight of the northern tribes was clearly known to Deborah, and conversely, they were not only aware of her reputation but came to her in their predicament with their request for help. It is observed that the suggestion of such a basic unity and inter-knowledge is made more plausible by the choice of Barak as the military commander of the tribes, for, as we have seen, he was an inhabitant of Kedesh Naphtali, about 5 miles to the north west of Lake Huleh (so much in the news at the present time, October 1969) in an area particularly affected by the Canaanite oppression. At this time this Canaanite domination of the principal valleys and trade route does not seem to have prevented free movement of the Israelite tribes in the highlands to the north and south of the Esdraelon and Jezreel valleys. At the time of the crisis it would appear that Deborah was already established as a prophetess and a judge in the non-military sphere, as we have already suggested, and that in all probability her demonstrations in this field led the tribes to seek her assistance.

However, Barak is called to the colours by Deborah with these words (Judges 4:6): "Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, 'Go and draw towards Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun, and I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.'" Truly Deborah speaks as a prophetess first of all - "Hath not the Lord (Yahweh) commanded" - through herself as His medium to Barak. The object is not 'petticoat government', nor female domination on her part, but the expressed desire of Yahweh conveyed by herself to Barak.

'Go draw towards Mount Tabor' - 'Go and draw' = proceed in a long drawn out train (cp Judges 20:27 : Exodus 12:21), suggesting a very loose formation such as might be adopted by lightly armed soldiers, anxious to escape detection moving through hostile territory to a central meeting point; very much it would seem like the Maquis in France during Nazi occupation; or similar to the Chindits operating in Burma during the last war under Japanese oppression. While this element is undoubtedly found in the command, express care is underlined because of the Exodus 12:21 reference, where the command is 'draw out and take a lamb for the Passover'.

The determination of the 10,000 was to be as careful and sanctified as the selection of the lamb; in fact, as they were drawn originally from Naphtali and Zebulun as were the followers of the Greater Barak - the Lord Jesus Himself - then a similar care fell upon the selection of the Twelve by the Lord Jesus. They were 'drawn out' to meet the occasion as was Moses - 'drawn out' of the Nile for the furtherance of the Gospel. With such care did Barak draw out the ten thousand out of Naphtali and Zebulun. The number 10,000 is very significant. No. 10 of ordinal perfection taken to its third power:  $10 \times 10 = 100$ ;  $100 \times 10 = 1,000$ ;  $1,000 \times 10 = 10,000$ . Here we see divine perfection and more than sufficient to meet Sisera. Even more significant is it when seen in the light of Jude 14: "The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to bring judgment upon the ungodly of this world" (paraphrase). Basically the word 'ungodly' does not

always have application to the 'outsiders' in general, although we have often heard so. In fact the application in Jude has reference to the Truth in his day, 'insomuch that there were the 'ungodly' amongst them, as the whole epistle reveals. The 'ungodly' in this respect highlights those who know how to be godly and have refused to practise it, as the Zondervan Bible advances in its summary of this book. "It may be inferred from the epistle that the readers were guilty in varying degrees, of rebellion against authority, irreverence, presumptuous speech, and a libertine spirit. Jude's tone is polemic, for he rebukes false teachers who deceive unstable believers and corrupt the Lord's Table." There are the ungodly in both the world and, we fear, within the Truth.

(1) The outsider

Can be classified as open opponents of God and His Bible. Their onslaught is severe but honest. We have discovered what this can mean in the terms of Jabin and Sisera. It is open conflict to the death. These Canaanite adversaries are always with us and not to be feared too much (although it is fatal to ignore them). The sword of the Spirit as seen in Deborah and Barak will always win, if wielded in the correct manner.

(2) The infiltration of the 'ungodly' as described by Jude is another matter, and one which affects us very much; and in many ways the 'ungodliness' is camouflaged by manner and motive and by the appearance of saintly character. Those who will find their part within the 10,000 of Enoch's prophecy, so near now it would seem in the purpose of God, will go forward in the name of the Greater Barak without fear, though in great sorrow, against their adversaries.

The way of Barak would be towards Mount Tabor which means, by translation, 'An heaped up (prominence)' or umbilicus, the navel, which, true to its name, dominates this part of Galilee, a mount very familiar to our Lord Jesus in the days of His sojourning. The height of this mountain revealed the high purpose of God surrounding it at the moment, in fact it represented the centre of His purpose - umbilicus or navel, at this time, and in fact that the deliverance would be effected by a woman, not Deborah, nor yet of Israel, but Gentile, Jael by name, pointing undoubtedly to a far more reaching and glorious deliverance promised from the foundation of the world: more later. However, this mountain was a convenient centre to which the Israelites could muster from the north and south. Moreover, from it, as a vantage ground, they could rush down upon the Canaanites. Again the methods used by the various guerillas against Nazi hordes have a base in these incidents. The ambush and attack (with, of course, one exception). God could draw Sisera and his armour toward Kishon so the rout could be complete (Judges 4:7): Naphtali and Zebulun "willingly offered themselves", following their leader Barak, but it was God who really drew them, as the disciples were later given to Jesus (John 17: 6, 8, 11 etc.). Sisera too was drawn by God to the very spot about to be fatal for his forces. Sisera and his generals thought that they were fulfilling their own counsel. But, as Micah 4:12-13 says, "They knew not the thought of the Lord, neither understood they His counsel." "For He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor." How fittingly does the prophet continue, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people." It has been said that this conflict typically reflects Armageddon concerning which we have already mentioned Revelation 16:14-16, 19:20, Psalm 83:9-10.

- A. God draws His people to their salvation (Judges 4:6, Joshua 6:44);
- B. The ungodly to their destruction (1 Kings 22:19-23).

Barak's 'ten thousand' would look very helpless and feeble against the Siseran multitude, similarly today. The hosts of Sisera and Jabin, as depicted within the enemies of Israel, are far greater and stronger than 'little Israel', but we have seen, as in the days of Deborah and Sisera, the victory does not always go to the strong or the mighty. The triumph of 'the few' in our days, as in those stirring days of Deborah and Barak, magnifies the glorious power of our God (2 Chronicles 14:11, Judges 7:2-7).

As we ponder the ensuing conflict between Israel's forces under Deborah and Barak, and Jabin's, and as we appreciate how the latter were drawn to their doom, we cannot help but think of the attraction Moscow had to both Napoleon and Hitler, would-be world rulers. As the fly is attracted to the lighted lamp, so were these men to the snow-covered wastes of Russia and to their ultimate doom. In these days of spiritual depression and drought, we can think with heightened appreciation of these things and 'watch' with intense interest the fortunes of little Israel and Golda Meir, the modern Deborah. Shall we not then 'watch' with intense anticipation in the days left to our waiting.

Judges 4:8: "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not, I will not go." Barak's faith was obviously sincere, but woefully weak. He is like the child that has not strength to stand alone. The answer of God comes to him with vivid clarity. He had leant upon a woman - Deborah - for the confirmation of his faith, though through the might of God he should conquer, yet the glory of completing the victory by slaying the leader of the enemy should not be his, but that of a woman - Jael (Judges 4:9,17).

Again we have the instance already noticed of a man like Moses (Exodus 4:1-14) and the tribe of Judah (Judges 1:1-3) not obeying God's command, which ought to have been sufficient for him (Judges 4:6-7), that is Barak. Yet Barak is ranked between Gideon and Samson in the list of examples of faith in Hebrews 11:32-34. Bullinger suggests in "The Great Cloud of Witnesses" that according to the structure of Hebrews 11 Barak and Samson are connected together because Barak was helped by two women (Deborah and Jael), whilst Samson on the other hand was betrayed by two women (his wife and Delilah). A very likely contrast for our readers to ponder and report to the writer on their findings, at the Debir address please. It is a blessing of God when our sisters can be relied upon like Deborah and Jael, and, in the New Testament, like Priscilla, who from Paul's classification would appear to have been the dominant spirit in the household (Romans 16:3-4); like Lydia the seller of Thyatiran purple of Philippi (Acts 16:14-16); and of course, the women who followed Jesus in like manner and hazarded their lives for their Lord at Golgotha (John 19:25 etc.) Why, we wonder, were not Mary and Martha there at that time? For suggestion see Judas (The Twelve, Debir Press).

Deborah was a remarkable woman, of rare spiritual perception (as already outlined) not only of faith, but of the humiliating condition of the people of Israel. She sees that it would be a shame to the leaders of Israel that God should instruct a post of public activity to a woman in their midst. She views in all her exercise of authority for God, the confusion of her people rendered effeminate by sin. Deborah rightly, and worthily, maintains, in circumstances which might have proved a great snare to her, the place assigned by God in His Word to woman - that is, to be (however magnified the office may be) "a helpmate" to man. As we have said, this incident gives us the brief history of two glorious women of faith, Deborah and Jael. Each maintains the character in keeping with the position assigned by God to woman. Would that our sisters today seek to follow this example and not 'chafe at the bit' to enter provinces that are not their own in the Truth. They ought not to be dominant where brethren are present and not try to

appropriate the role of 'Sister Recording Brother' which is of course offensive to all. When no brethren are in the Ecclesia then it is essential that these offices are covered by them: even then we think it is a matter of degrading the Truth by the absence of brethren. So we find that in Genesis 2:18 woman is made an helpmate for man, but in the Deborah-Barak sequence Barak is seen to be an helpmate for a woman; surely the wrong way round? Judges 9:10 gives the incidental proof of the march of Deborah and Barak along with the 10,000 of Zebulun and Naphtali, and moving into battle, after Judges 4:8 tells us that Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. Basically, she wanted with Barak to be a 'sanctified wrestler', no doubt spending the night in prayer and supplication before the ensuing conflict with the forces of darkness and wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:11-18). Judges 4:11 ventures the information that Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim which is by Kedesh, and we have pondered the possibility that it was this tribe that had carried the information of Barak's movements to Sisera. Judges 4:12 - "And they showed Sisera that Barak was gone up to Mount Tabor." We are strongly tempted to think so, particularly because of 4:17. The fleeing of Sisera for refuge to Jael the wife of Heber - with the notable words to complete the sentence "for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite." Our thoughts, however, are only inferential and may do despite to Heber. Possibly the parenthetical note concerning the whereabouts of this section of the Kenites is intended to introduce us to the later experiences of Sisera at Heber's tent. What do you think?

Judges 4:13 - However, this intelligence report gave rise to the muster of Sisera's forces along with the 900 chariots of iron and all the people that were with him from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon; "the whole plain of Esdraelon from the west to the east" - a show of force to terrorise. As we write at the moment, Nasser (1969) has threatened to make the Middle East a 'Lake of Fire', and Russia has arrogantly reviewed her armed forces. How little do they know of that conflict so near at hand, when the greater Barak will descend with crushing force to annihilate them. The Battle of Armageddon in all its awful fury.

Judges 4:14. The decision comes from Deborah, not Barak. "Up, this is the day. God will deliver Sisera into your hand." "God hath" - no doubt about it. "He hath spoken: it is done." The true time of faith: "This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it" was sung at a later date in Israel's history (Psalm 118:24) but it was never so true as at this time, before the battle commenced. The Lord had given Sisera and all his might into their hands. "Is not the Lord gone out before thee?" (cf. Isaiah 52:12, Micah 2:13). (See Song of Solomon on Song 4:3, under Pharez for extended detail).

"So Barak went down from Mount Tabor and ten thousand men after him." What a transformation had taken place in the diffident man. Now he leads the war upon Sisera. This is the man of faith of Hebrews 11. Barak leads the assault, doing exploits for his God. He rushed down from Mount Tabor the high ground, down upon the Canaanites, pushed southwards at the foot of the conical mountain on which Endor is situated (Fausset). So, it is said, Napoleon acted in his battle here, centuries later.

Judges 4:15. And the Lord (Yahweh) discomfited. Exodus 14:24, the same Hebrew word 'troubled', applied to God's confounding the foe with a crash by miraculous interposition through the phenomena of nature (Psalm 144:6, 2 Samuel 22:15, Judges 5:20). This word implies that God arrayed the powers of nature against Sisera. The victory came "not by human right, nor human power, but by My Spirit"

saith the Lord (paraphrase). The Song of Moses puts it very aptly, "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord of Hosts is His name" (Exodus 15:3). "Pharaoh's chariots and his hosts hath he cast into the sea" etc. Similar connotation to our period, only the Lord sent the mighty floods of Kishon that made a morass of mud, rendering the Canaanites helpless before the lightly armed men of Barak. Many of the chariots and their men were swept away by the flood and drowned; the rest put to the sword while their horses were floundering in the bog (Judges 5:21,22). These two incidents of the Red Sea and Kishon have many things in common.

- (1) Israel in each case were outnumbered, and, in the language of today, were 'outgunned' by the enemy.
- (2) God used His natural forces (divinely controlled, of course) to discomfort them.
- (3) In each case chariots were mentioned, and in both incidents the chariots were stuck in the mud and ensuing floods of waters that engulfed them.
- (4) Two women figured in the songs of triumph - Miriam and Deborah (Exodus 15 and Judges 5).

No doubt the student will find many more after diligent contextual comparison: our thoughts are only to direct attention to these.

Judges 4:16 - "But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto  
(a) Harosheth of the Gentiles," -

even back to the stronghold from whence they came. A complete and utter rout by the hand of the Lord upon His enemies and accomplished by the hand of  
(A) one weak woman (supposedly), and (B) one weak man (actually). They organised the destruction of the host of the Canaanites.

Judges 4:16 - "And all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there  
(b) was not a man left."

The destruction is absolute from the Lord, but the prophecy has yet to see its fulfilment; and it is here where we turn from the majority to the individual in particular; and the final incident which clinches the issue.

Judges 4:17 gives us the preamble, the first step in the downfall of Sisera. "Howbeit, Sisera fled away on his feet." Like a common soldier he is brought down, from proudly leading the first chariot of iron, with the intent of mowing down Israel, exhibiting all the arrogance and pride of a Hitler or a Goering, finding his chariot along with his squadrons hopelessly stuck in the mud of the torrents of Kishon, and is greatly afraid of the onrush of the waters of judgment. Sisera fled in great haste upon his feet, unattended (it would seem from the narrative), panic stricken, like Egypt of modern times (1967) as they fled in all directions in Sinai, to get away from the Israeli scourge.

The ironic situation has a wonderful parallel in the times of Elisha, and at the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 7:20). Joseph Hall, the 17th century student, put this incident in wonderful paraphrase, aptly illustrating the incident in Judges 4. Speaking of what the lepers found upon their arrival at the Syrian camp, he says: "What a scorn doth God put on these presumptuous Aramites! He will not presume to use any substantial stratagem against them; nothing but an empty sound shall scatter them, and send them home empty of substance, laden with shame, half dead with fear; the very horses that might have hastened their flight are left tied in their tents; their very garments are a burden; all is left behind save their bodies, and those breathless for speed." Doubtless these Syrians knew well to what miserable exigents the ~~inclosed~~ Israelites were brought by the siege, and now made full account to seek and ransack Samaria. Already they had divided and swallowed the prey, when suddenly God puts them into a ridiculous confusion, and sends them to seek safety

in their heels. No booty is now in price with them but their life, and happy is he that can run fastest. Thus the Almighty laughs at the designs of insolent men, and shuts up their counsels in shame." How true and aptly put by this old student of the Word. Very soon now we are to see a modern version of this terror from the Almighty. The Soviet hordes now closing in upon the beloved land will go scuttling back (or what is left of them): back they will flee in terror when the Greater Barak strikes. (Ezekiel 38-39 etc.)

From Judges 4:17 we learn that Sisera's panic flight had at the least some common sense behind it: his brain was still operative, howbeit his heart quaked and his knees knocked together most alarmingly: actually they were beating out a "devil's tattoo", leading him on to destruction. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin the King of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite."

We now arrive at the other woman who was so dominant in this deliverance by the Lord, Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite. Both worlds are represented as they are applied in Scripture: (A) Deborah the prophetess, a Hebrew; (B) Jael, a Gentile. Wordsworth has a fine section on this incident in his Commentary: he says: "Thus the Gentile Jael completed the work which the Hebrew Deborah had begun, and which the Hebrew Barak had carried on, at the instigation of the Hebrew Deborah; and the voice of Deborah, the Hebrew Melissa or Bee, in her sweet songs of prophecy, praises the Gentile Jael for her faith and courage and says, 'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent'."

This section has come in for considerable criticism among students down the ages, even to saying that "because the Song of Deborah is contained within Scripture it does not mean that all its sayings are sanctioned by the divine author of Holy Scripture, and that though the speeches of Job's friends are inserted in Holy Scripture, they were not altogether approved by Him whose Word the Scripture is." 1. In regard to the friends of Job this can be true, but it is arrant nonsense in the case of Deborah: we remember that she was introduced to us as a prophetess (Judges 4:4). 2. She is represented as having communication from God. 3. As being God's appointed minister and messenger, to Barak and to Israel (Judges 4:6,7); and 4. as foretelling the future (Judges 4:9-14): in a word, as divinely inspired. 5. Deborah's song (Judges 5) is recited by the Holy Spirit, as the utterance of one who spake by inspiration: consequently the judgment which is pronounced by Deborah appears to be no other than the judgment of God Himself. 6. From the judgment then of Deborah pronounced on Jael's act, who knew the circumstances of the case (which we do not), and who was divinely inspired (which we are not), we are reasonably led to infer that the act of Jael was not censurable, but commendable. 7. If this be so, then, it follows, as a necessary inference, that Jael must have received a special commission from God, to attempt and perform this feat, and this act, being done by a divine commission, without which it would have been sinful, was, like the act of Abraham preparing to offer up Isaac, an act of faith, obedience and courage. 8. This represents our viewpoint on the incident, as we follow rather more closely into the details. This must be our leading consideration. 9. We have already noticed the particularly womanly aspect of the deliverance - Deborah who 'called the tune' to Barak, and Jael who completed the deliverance: the womanly forces of Jew and Gentile combined in the victory over Sisera. 10. Now is the time to ask WHY? For what reason was this so? To which we may answer as follows:

A. Judges is a record of the extraordinary acts of God, with supernatural gushings forth of God's Holy Spirit in times of great national distress, when ordinary

means of grace were scarce and when God interfered by the extraordinary manifestation of His power for the deliverance of His people Israel. It is indeed a book of spiritual storms. We have already studied such men as Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar; and others, like Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, are to follow (if the Lord will). In the narrative before us we see the extension of God's power for the like purpose to a woman, and a Gentile woman, Jael.

B. Again, why this womanly emphasis? Because the enmity against Israel (in general) was directed against women (in particular). Sisera, apart from being the Captain of Jabin's host and heavily oppressing Israel during 20 years, designed to take captive for himself and his men, the virgins of Israel, to satisfy their licentious passions and to lead them into a life worse than death. We note the Spirit's record of the anticipation of Sisera's mother in Deborah's Song (Judges 5:28-30), exalting in triumph as she waited expectantly for her son's return from the raid. We notice that nothing is said about Sisera's wife here: such love thrives not in the harem of a prince: he is his mother's pride, the great hero who as yet has been invincible. She never doubted his victory. Who could withstand her son's attack with 900 chariots of iron, and particularly the onslaught of his expert ploy?

Judges 5:30 - "Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? To every man a damsel or two."

Rather ruthless thoughts from Sisera's mother, one would think. But God had anticipated these designs and quite different was the outcome. The divine rescue was at hand, and that by a despised woman. He raised up Jael, a Gentile woman, and a wife, to avert shame and misery from the virgins of Israel. (More as we study Deborah's Song, Judges 5).

We have learned that the act of Jael had been foreseen and

- A. foretold by Deborah, and was ascribed by her to the Lord. We remember that Deborah had said to Barak, "This journey shall not be to thine honour" (this had to be reserved to someone else). "The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judges 4:9).
  - B. The battle likewise is said to be the Lord's. (Judges 4:15).
  - C. Again, it was the Lord who discomfited Sisera (Judges 4:15).
  - D. Note that the Lord subdued Jabin and destroyed him (verse 24). Deborah concludes her divine song of victory with these emphatic words, "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord." Throughout every phase of the encounter, the lead and victory comes from the Lord. Can it be that Jael acted at some sudden impulse from God? This is the conviction of the writer: shall we see how it works out?
1. Suppose that Jael had permitted Sisera to remain in her tent until Heber had returned. Then the will of God would have been thwarted, and the prophecy would have failed. Consequently God would have been found to be a liar, which is unthinkable (Romans 3:4).
  2. Consider the situation in the light of the prevailing traditions of desert life (which incidentally are unchanged today in these conditions). If Heber had returned and found Sisera alive within the tent of Jael (actually the woman's tent as rightly stressed, and not Heber's as some critics allow), then both Jael and Sisera would have been put to death by Heber. Sisera had committed the 'unforgivable' in entering the woman's tent, albeit at the request of Jael, and despite the fact that peace reigned at that time between the house of Jabin and Heber.
  3. Had God put in the mind of Jael His purpose for the destruction of Sisera, the enemy and persecutor of women at this precise time, or did the sudden impulse only reach her when Sisera had entered the tent?
  4. In conformity with what has happened before with regard to the various deliverances



by God on behalf of his people, one would have thought that the means was miraculous. Is this so with regard to Jael? The Authorised Text would appear to place it entirely within the duplicity of Jael. We have reasons to doubt this translation.

We notice that in Judges 4:21 it is stated that Sisera fell fast asleep because he was weary, and at this time Jael smote the tent peg through his head. According to Wordsworth the rendering should run: "The nail went down into the ground; for he sank down, and fainted and died". Cp the same word as used in Psalm 76:6, "At Thy rebuke, O God, both the chariot and horse are fallen", literally "are cast into a death sleep." Definitely supernatural, it would appear in both cases. The fuller account in Deborah's Song ch.5, which is under review shortly (5:27), agrees with this idea. "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; where he bowed, there he fell down dead." The apparent reasoning behind it all, that the nail went down and sank into the ground as by a divine impulse and impact, for Sisera had fallen down astounded, as it is well rendered in the Septuagint Version: he was seized with a sudden panic, which left him bereft of all his powers: he sank as it were dizzy and reeling in a swoon of death at her feet, paralysed and prostrate by the visitation of God, who armed and enabled a woman to subdue and destroy the enemy of the Lord and of His people.

One wonders why it is stated in the history that there was peace between Sisera's master and Jael's husband. It could conceivably have to do with the statement that Sisera would be sold into the hand of a woman. That is, in order to justify Jael that when she received Sisera she did it in good faith, but that after he had lain down, the Spirit of God came upon her, just as it did on Ehud, after he had given Eglon a present: actually both presents to the enemies of God are death.

- a) Ehud the two-edged sword (Judges 3:15),
- b) Jael the wooden tent peg of the desert wanderer.

These presents were delivered under very humiliating circumstances. Ehud extended his present to Eglon in his own house and most private sanctum. Sisera received his: a general of 900 iron chariots, after fleeing on foot for his life, daring to ask for shelter in the most private sanctum of Heber; Jabin's friend, as we would say today, seeking to hide behind the skirts of a woman. God, who gives life, is not bound by our ideas: He takes it away when and how He pleases. He did not choose Barak with his ten thousand men, but a despised Gentile, a weak but willing woman, to execute His righteous purpose upon this evil man. And who amongst us can say "Nay", and question His ways? (Romans 9:20,21, the whole chapter is in point). This haughty captain, who at the very time was hoping to lead the women of Israel captive. God thus magnified His power. He made His name more glorious by the feebleness of the instrument which he used for the accomplishment of His will.

So the deed was done: what more can we say? Just a few more words on the text of this incident, and then a look into the typical setting.

#### Judges 4:17

The name Jael, according to Gesenius 256, signifies an ibex, or perhaps the chamois, from Yaal, to ascend. Cp Tabitha, or Dorcas (Acts 9:26). Just opposite to modern opinion, who would rather render 'the descender', according (as they think) to her duplicity on this occasion. Ascender is absolutely correct, as we shall discover from the divine angle, our immediate and only concern.

#### Judges 4:19

'Milk' or buttermilk, modernistically said to become intoxicating (cp 5:25) butter, rather curdled milk: however, we have been unable to ascertain the truth of this statement. It is advanced as included in the duplicity to deceive Sisera. We accept

Dr. Thomson's idea in "The Land and the Book", who states that buttermilk as in our times makes a refreshing drink (p.441).

Judges 4:21 A nail, the wooden pin or peg: Heb. 'yathed', from 'yathad', to fix, by which the tent was fixed into the ground. Exodus 27:19; 35:18; 38:20; cp Isaiah 22:23-25 - "a nail in a sure place"; also of the Ecclesia, "Lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes" (Isaiah 54:2; cp Gesenius 376).

Hammer - Heb. Makkabah, from 'nakab', to bore, to thrust; Gesenius 502, 564. Word from which Macabee, the Hammer, or Strenuous Warrior, as 'martel' in French is derived.

"Fastened it into the ground" - already dealt with this phrase, only to add 1 Samuel 17:49: (A) the stone slung by David is said to have sunk in the forehead of Goliath, i.e. to have been immersed into it by divine power: (B) in this very way the stake went into the ground, as impelled by supernatural force.

Judges 4:23 "So God subdued" - the work of Jael is represented by the narrator as the work of God, and Deborah, in unity with this thought, ends her song with the prayer, "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord." (Judges 5:31).

What then do we make of the typical picture?

(A) The limelight is stolen by the weaker vessel - woman, the fourth of the weak things of God to bring down the mighty.

(B) Deborah, the Bee, infused with divine intelligence, enthused with the 'torch' or splendour of God (Lapidoth) (Gesenius 441), is chosen by the Lord Yahweh to destroy the Haman intelligence power (Jabin), backed by the Fortress of Munition, and battalions (Hazor), finalised in Sisera (Furious Onslaught), directed against the People of God, and in particular the women of Israel, the intention being to carry them off to slavery and humiliation worse than death among his generals.

To her aid is called Barak (Lightening) the son of delight (Abinoam). The Son of Delight throughout Scripture is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ (Psalm 22:8; Matthew 3:13-17). It has been noted that Deborah called to her aid not a mighty warrior, but a sanctified wrestler (Kedesh Naphtali). Barak presents the Man of Peace dwelling in a City of Refuge where peace reigned untroubled by war. No arms of war were allowed within the city, the gates were open day and night. He was, however, a wrestler, and that a sanctified one: the only conflict which afflicted this city was that of a wrestling with oneself, and the conclusion found in the Greater Barak was precisely that which the Lord Jesus had found worked in Nathanael - he was "the Israelite indeed, in whom was no Jacob" (paraphrase John 1:47).

It was to such a person that the call for help came, and Barak was not indifferent, but again, as we saw earlier, the Lord Jesus is in this record subservient (for want of a better word) to Deborah, or the Jewish half of the weaker vessel, and although he would be included within the victory (and in fact made it possible in life), yet the victory would go, as Deborah foretold, to the woman. The whole assault and might of Sisera's aggression, 900 chariots of iron, was overwhelmed with the help of the Kishon (the serpent or the crooked one): it became clear in Paul's comments, "He slew him who had power over death, that is the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

This tremendous battle of one sided strength fitly portrays the work of the Lord Jesus, who slew the devil or the wicked one, in His death - a breathtaking achievement, but still subservient in this incident to the main theme.

(A) What can possibly overshadow this aspect of salvation?

- (B) The work of Jael will give us the answer.
- (C) Jael's name means 'chamois' - a goat - the ascender or climber; sure footed on heights or cliff, swift and fearless. When we realise that the goat represented sacrifice and the sin offering, we are getting near the mark.
- (D) It was the one who was found as sin for us, who bore or carried the sin of the world, who delivered us from the assault and fury of the flesh (Romans 7: 24, 25). At the same time the seed of the woman was wounded in the heel and became unable to walk for 3 days.
- (E) Looking at the problem from another way, it was Jael, not Jewish, but Gentile, who smote sin through the head, and by this action delivered in the grace of God her fellow women both of Israel and Gentiles, particularly in her dwelling near or at Kedesh Naphtali, the City of Refuge.

Basically it means that we have before us Jael along with Deborah fulfilling Genesis 3: 15, and the seed of sin (Sisera) is wounded mortally through the head, by a pin of wood, what has been described as a homely tent peg, essentially a woman's implement as the honour (?) of assembling the tents etc. belongs to the women even today in desert dwellers. So we get this rather complicated, howbeit beautiful typical picture of these incidents, the fourth weak thing being woman herself, who through her disobedience brought death (Genesis 3: 15-19), but through her seed life (1 Timothy 2: 15, saved through her childbearing, i. e. the Lord Jesus).

These dramatic events truly shadow forth the conquest of sin by the seed of the woman and it was by the means of a stake (stauros, Gk) that the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head and redeemed the world. According to divine prophecy as revealed in this incident we see Christ, the seed of the woman, has bruised the head of His adversary. This incident was not accomplished in the hall of a king, not even in the shelter of the meanest house of Israel, but in the tent of a desert dweller. Jesus was conceived without the help of man, in the womb of a weak woman, in that very country where Jael dwelt, in Nazareth of Galilee, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Tabor, and near Megiddo, Taanach and Kishon, the scene of this wondrous battle and victory. Man fell by a woman - Eve - and God restored man by the seed of the woman. By taking the flesh of a woman, Christ, the Son of God, became capable of dying on the stake, or tree (stauros, Gk), Jael destroyed Sisera by the wooden nail of the tent, and Satan (the adverse nature of man), was nailed to the cross or stake, and was destroyed by this act of utter obedience. Paul says that Christ abolished by his flesh the enmity, and has reconciled us to God by the stake, having slain the enmity thereby (Ephesians 2: 16). He spoiled principalities and powers and made show of them openly, triumphing over them by the stake or His cross (Colossians 2: 14, 15).

Remember the words to the Twelve: "I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10: 19): consequently, although the Holy Spirit does not operate in this way today, as anyone treading upon either will be quick to realise in the short period before insensibility occurs, the promise comes down to us from Paul, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16: 20).

It is plain to see then why Barak the sanctified wrestler is put in secondary role during these incidents. Most certainly the type of the Lord Jesus, who was THE Sanctified Wrestler from Galilee. Yet His work is seen encompassed within the all embracing purpose of The Woman in promise etc. The fulness of time (Galatians 4: 4, 5) that came to Mary so long ago, made this absolutely certain, whereof we joy exceedingly. Therefore we have the wonderful parallel between Jael and the Virgin

Mary. Deborah exults in her Magnificat of Jael, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be: blessed shall she be above women in the tent." Could we say of Mary with Gabriel, "Blessed art thou among women," and the Holy Spirit through Elizabeth, Luke 1:28-42. Mary herself adds, "All generations shall call me blessed" Luke 1:48. Notice with Jael it is above women in the tent, including Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, and all those who lived this nomadic life: all women pilgrims. This is how great the event is viewed by God Himself. Why? may we ask. Was it because although Sarah and the others named bore the line of the seed to many, yet apart from the intervention of Jael in her destruction of the enemy of woman, the line through these great women would never have reached Mary? This has a good deal to do with the reason why the statement is made. Mary is said to have been "among women", for the simple reason to show that the Lord Jesus had human flesh and was born of a normal Jewish (howbeit obedient woman), and that a virgin, or in Hebrew parlance a truly spiritual virgin (Heb. Almah).

The tent in which the Lord of all (Jesus) took our nature and tabernacled (Gk. esknowsen) amongst us (John 1:14) was obviously within His mother, from conception to parturition. Even this momentous event is used of pilgrimage and desert dwelling, taking us right back to the worthy acts of Jael. So with Bullinger we find no place with the maudling sentimentality which, instead of believing God, deems it its duty to apologise for him. It should be ours to rehearse the righteous acts of Yahweh and to say with Deborah (as we will in a few moments), "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Yahweh."

Our final thoughts on this absorbing situation are summed up in the statement by Ironside: "It shows how blessedly God comes in, even using the humblest instrument, whereon He can find faith, which in feebleness will trust Him, there He finds a chosen instrument for His work." Two women, Deborah and Jael: we have just realised that Deborah and Debir are practically the same word, and both can signify The Word. What a suitable instrument for the overthrow of human reason. If God's hand is the instrument, how much more power to the wielder. Wherever this Word of Life finds lodgment, there is sanctified power (Barak) and within this life there is much wrestling; yet a tent life of a true pilgrim such as Jael can become a city of refuge with Christ. If we live in a tent, then always we find in the wilderness journey an accompanying feature - the Altar. The sanctifying influence that surrounds it. The tent always seems to portray the idea of being outside the existing order of things in the world. Man everywhere seeks solidity and permanence - the very opposite to living in a tent. The altar is the other side of the order; with pilgrim tent and sanctified altar = we are strangers in the world, but drawn nigh to God in Christ, so we offer our pilgrim worship. Here we have NO continuing city, but seek one to come (Hebrews 11:13-16).

With Jael then we take our place, and follow the dictates of her name, the climber: we seek in our days the risen Christ and the things that are above, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God"; our affections must be set on things above, not on the earth; our life on earth is dead and is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:1-3). Our armour is that of the Spirit, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (our personal Sisera). For we wrestle not (reminiscent of Barak) but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places, etc. (Ephesians 6:11-17) (spiritual Canaanites Jabin and Co., which would mightily oppress us). The final result is certain, should we follow in faith the exploits of Deborah - the eloquent, but stinging bee - and Barak, the lightning (the sanctified wrestler), and gloriously triumph with Jael - the ascending one. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not

carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

Paul openly parades in sublime type (when one looks carefully into these things) the wonderful victory brought at this time, and concludes this short survey with the aptitude and faith of Jael, who sought (through the inspiration of God) to revenge the Canaanites' assault on the women of Israel. In another context, the terror of the devil (seeking with guile to dwell in her tent), she acted worthily. "Blessed be Jael above the women in the tent". We too must be spiritual Jael's, and thrust through our personal Siseras the peg of the stake of Christ, nailing our flesh to the cross as Jesus did.

Finally Paul says: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affection and lusts" (Galatians 5:24), and "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:10), by "whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 4:14). Let us with Jael and Paul put to death the strivings of Sisera (sin) within ourselves, then Jael's blessing may be ours, not pronounced by a prophetess but the Lord of all the prophets at the Great Day.

## JUDGES CHAPTER 5

### THE SONG OF DEBORAH

The following song is what has been described as a 'God Song', along with the Song of Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18), which commenced "I will sing to the Lord", and his last (Deuteronomy 32:1-43), "I will proclaim the Name of the Lord" is the key therein. Deborah's song is essentially (A) a Song of God (B) to God (C) for God. Warlike in temper and defiant in tone, and although the deep devotional and religious spirit pervades it, it has the same keynote as those of Moses.

"Bless ye the Lord" and "I will sing praise to the Lord"; the one thought uppermost in Deborah's mind is still the idea of supreme indebtedness to the covenant-keeping God of Israel for this great triumph. One sadly reflects on the Six-day War of Israel and the overwhelming victory the Lord brought: gone is the indebtedness to the Lord. Dayan gave the keynote, "We were ready". How far removed from this wonderful day in Judges, and yet set within a similar framework, for just as surely, the victory was gained by "The Captain of the Lord's Host", present yet unseen. Wordsworth holds the following worthy of repetition: "We have a Song of Victory in Exodus; we have a Song of Victory in Numbers; we have a Song of Victory in Deuteronomy; we have this Song of Victory in Judges; we have a Song of Victory in the first of Samuel; we have a Song of Victory in the second of Samuel" (he forgets the Song of Songs in the Canticles), "we have the Song of Zacharias, and the Magnificat the Song of the Blessed Virgin; and the Song of Simeon, in the Gospel; and all these are preludes to the New Song, the Song of Moses and of the Lamb, which the Saints of the Church glorified, from all nations, will sing, at the Crystal Sea, with the harp of God, when all the enemies of Christ and His church will have been subdued, and then victory will be consummated for ever (Revelation 14:1-3, 15:2-4)". He does not mention that all these Songs are included within "The Song of Loves" (Canticles) and that a knowledge of all these must be inculcated, to understand and sing the Song of Songs and Psalm 45 "The Ode for the Wedding Day" (see Song of Solomon, Debir Press).

It is interesting to note according to the Jewish Synagogue Calendar that this Song of Deborah is appropriately appointed to be read in the synagogues together with Exodus

13:17 - 17:16, containing the history of the Exodus and the passage of the Red Sea; and of the victory gained by the (1) arms of Joshua - the type of Jesus as Saviour, (2) and by the prayers of Moses supported by Aaron and Hur, prefiguring the work of Christ as Intercessor, (3) over the arms of Amalek, the enemy of Israel.

It has been pointed out that this Song consists of nine parts. Nine is the number of finality, and the ninth hour when Christ was crucified, and may we say that all things in God's plan are finalised in Christ's death and resurrection, wrought through obedience to the Father's will. This is the briefest layout of Deborah's Song:

1. A devout thanksgiving. Psalm 2:10, Deuteronomy 32:3.
2. A description of God's glorious coming to Sinai. Exodus 19:18.
3. Of Israel's apostacy, and of their consequent miseries.
4. Of their restoration and its blessedness.
5. A judicial record of the alacrity and courage of some tribes, and of the lukewarmness of others.
6. A description of God's wonders in the battle.
7. Of the courage of Jael.
8. Of the cruel anticipation of Sisera's mother.
9. A devout prayer to God for continuance of His mercies.

Judges 5:1 "Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day..."

Fausset has well said concerning this verse: "It is well to praise 'at once', whilst the heart is full of gratitude for the deliverance vouchsafed. Delay dulls heartiness. Eaten bread is soon forgotten." (2 Chronicles 20:26; Isaiah 38:9-22; Luke 1:64-79).

Our purpose because of brevity concerning this Song is to point out the particular aspects (as seen through God's eyes), and given to Deborah during the period of both (A) captivity and (B) deliverance at this time. However, there is a rather detailed connection with Psalm 68, which in the writer's opinion is very powerful and rewarding: if we lay them out side by side they should provide a basis for further study in this field, on a kind of "Blunt's coincidental theory".

Judges 5		Psalm 68
v. 31	So let all thine enemies perish O Lord.	v. 1 Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.
v. 6, 7	In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, the highways were unoccupied and travellers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased.	v. 9 Thou, O Lord, didst send a plentiful rain whereby Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance when it was weary.
The cruel bondage of Jabin and Sisera		v. 14 When the Almighty scattereth kings. It was as when it snoweth (RV). Possibility of electric storm of first magnitude that bogged down chariots of Sisera.
v. 9	Was there a shield or spear seen among 40 thousand in Israel? (Disarmed under foreign rule; cp v. 9 with 1 Samuel 13:19-22).	v. 9 Inheritance confirmed by Deborah.
Israel absolutely helpless		
v. 4, 5	Yahweh, God of Israel etc. This ref. noble and beautiful in itself, to the awful phenomenon at Sinai, is	v. 11, 12 The Lord gave the word. Great was the company of those that published it. RV. the women that published

## Judges 5

## Psalm 68

	made more evident to the supernatural manifestation on the battlefield at Kishon, where Jabin's host was beaten and the vaunted Sisera fled for his life.		it, and great emphasis on Deborah, Jael, Mary, Eve. This is their triumph. Genesis 3:15.
	The Word given to Deborah by God.	v. 12	Kings of armies did flee apace.
v. 24-27	The triumph of Jael in contrast to the presumption and folly of mother of Sisera.	v. 12	"She that tarried at home divided the spoil" (even the hairy scalp of Sisera).
v. 20-22	They fought from heaven with the pransing of horses, the broken hooves (of the unshod horses).	v. 17	Divine might reversed the power to Israel's side. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels (the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof - 2 Kings 2:12).
v. 21	The river Kishon, that ancient river, swept them away. 900 chariots of iron.	v. 20	The Lord is the Captain. He led the forces of heaven against the feeble strength of Sisera.
v. 8	Not a shield seen among forty thousand in Israel.	v. 20	"Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."
v. 12, 13	The Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.	v. 35	The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God.
v. 26	Jael put her hand to the tent pin (RV) and her right hand to the workman's hammer. She smote Sisera, she smote through his head, and pierced his temples.	v. 21	But God shall smite through the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.
v. 12, 15, 18	Zebulun, Issachar, Benjamin, Naphtali. They jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field.	v. 26, 27	Little Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, Naphtali, are on the Lord's side. How true in the time of (1) David, (2) the Greater Barak - Jesus, (3) the Apostles, who hazarded or jeoparded their lives unto death. 1 Chron. 11:15-19; Acts 15:16; Phil. 2:29-30.
v. 15	As was Issachar, so was Barak (RV); into the valley they rushed forth at His feet: by the water courses, i.e. the Kishon torrent.		
v. 16, 18	Reuben, Dan, Asher refused the call to help. (1) Reuben, unstable as Jacob's seed (Gen. 49:1, 2). (2) Dan abode by his ships.	v. 18	Jesus brought gifts even for the rebellious, that the Lord might dwell with them. Yet the stigma remains.
		v. 6	Though Asher, Gilead, Dan may

## Judges 5

## Psalm 68

- Asher - easy going in his portion by the sea.
- v. 23 Curse ye Meroz because they came not to the help of the Lord. Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof. Why, and where was Meroz?  
Fausset: thought to have been Merasas, a ruin four miles N.W. of Beisan. The men commanded a pass which could have prevented the escape of Sisera's forces in that quarter.
- v. 14, 15 The angel of the Lord, by the mouth of Deborah, curses Meroz for omission of service where there was afforded a grand opportunity: faint-heartedness and neutrality where there can be no neutrality (Matt. 12: 30; 25: 30).  
Was this their end?
- v. 15 Deborah was with the princes of Issachar.
- v. 19 The kings came and fought. They took no gain of money. Those who came to make spoil of silver find themselves so placed as to submit themselves with pieces of silver.  
If they might escape there was only one way to escape death with silver (Ex. 30: 12-16; 38: 25).  
But these things belong to the Lord in our day (1 Peter 1: 18-19).
- v. 18, 19 It is the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits: even the God of our salvation.
- v. 30 The prayer to God is: Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls with the calves of the people, till everyone submit himself with pieces of silver.  
Scatter ~~thou~~ the people that delight in war. But for all ~~those~~ who delight in war there is but one answer - Isaiah 10: 12-19.
- may abide in their abundant portions and misconstrue at will the command to rally round the colours, they (the rebellious) dwell in a parched land (RV), although it would appear very much the opposite.
- v. 35 Lack of faith in Meroz because the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God. But cursed be Meroz. Meroz means 'built of cedars' or dwellers in cedar palaces. Living in the luxury of spiritual self pleasing, as contrasted with the lowliness of serving the Lord.

"So shall all God's enemies perish".

Judges 5: 31 "But let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

2 Samuel 23: 4 adds, "He shall be as the light of the morning (which dispels the darkness swiftly and surely) when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as



the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." This time is still in the very near future, (we hope). It is our prayer that along with Deborah, Barak, the mighties, and with David of old, this blessing of God may be found in us.

So far then, as a comparison between Judges 5 and Psalm 68, there has been a very rewarding result for a little digging. 2 Samuel 22 will bear further examination in the light of the former scriptures, but this is not our task at the moment. Has our point regarding Blunt's method of scripture exposition been upheld? We have noticed, very gratefully, how fully Deborah through the Spirit of God has placed before us the facts of this stirring incident in the history of the Judges. A final glimpse from Sisera's death chamber - a lowly Nomadic tent - to his palace far away. What a contrast! Here his mother, looking from an upper chamber, would be impatiently awaiting his return, with increasing foreboding. She says, Judges 5:28, "Why is his chariot so long in coming, why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" This was obviously said in anxiety. Judges 5:29: "Her wise ladies" (the wisest of her princesses). What irony! How the reality showed the folly of their wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:19; Isaiah 29:14). "She returned answer to herself" or RV, "She repeated the words to herself"; she tried to allay her own anxiety by the hopes expressed in Judges 5:30. The Hebrew reads: "But she was turning back her words to herself." She would not be quieted by the bright anticipations of her ladies. She kept repeating to herself her own anxious question: "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" Then, after this parenthesis, follow the words of her ladies, "Have they not sped?" (Heb. found booty). Judges 5:30. They doubted not that Sisera had been detained by the division of large booty. Bitter mocking of the poetess. Sisera was all the while lying a mangled corpse. "Have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel?" (Heb. 'A womb'). How debased must these princesses have become, to speak thus of the dishonour of their sex.

So ends our discourse concerning the immediate fulfilment of Deborah's Song. That there is further application none will deny except those who are deliberately blind. The application of Judges 5:4-5 extended through Psalm 68:17-19 - "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men" is found in Ephesians 4:8; has its later fulfilment in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and speaks of the gifts being sent by the Holy Spirit after His ascension for the purpose of unifying the Body of Christ (the believers) with the Head even Christ (Ephesians 4:13-15). This was after the great enemy of death had been overcome, which until this present has kept captive all men in its icy grip.

The low condition of the people at this time is highlighted and their wretched state underlined in Judges 5:6, where we read that in the days of Shamgar and Jael the highways could not be used, communications were virtually severed, and the people, for fear of the dreaded enemy, had to move about over lonely by-paths. But again, the Lord delivers the dwellers in the two parts of the land, the north and the south. Surely this is a trite picture of the results of spiritual bondage. How different from Psalm 23:3. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." The opposite situation of course. In God's path there never should be fear of the enemy. Here we have deserted highways. No commerce, no interchange of ideas or fellowship in truth. Instead of families of Israel going in with singing to the place where the Lord had put His name, solitude prevails, the noise of singing is stilled because of fear of the enemy, everyone hides from view of the invader, and one is forced to travel along crooked paths or ways (margin).  
Judges 5:7 Consequently the villages ceased: life was only possible within the high

walls of the city (cp. Psalm 73 already quoted). Israel had no weapons of war, with the result that the people were afraid to show themselves at the places of the drawing of water (Judges 5:6-11), in real terror of the archers who infested these places. Coincidental proof of Deborah of Benjamin being the author of this Song (Benjamin being noted for its archery). This weapon would most naturally come to mind were we to be stripped of our spiritual armoury and so be in such a precarious position today. The answer to us must be that we should be quite sure we choose 'no new gods', for then will war be at our gates (Judges 5:8).

Judges 5:15 Never let us be found as with Reuben, for he had great searchings of heart: great thoughts - but did nothing about it? Lot had followed a similar course. He vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked in Sodom (2 Peter 2:6-8, Genesis 19:9), but did precisely nothing about it. He remained powerless, 'that one fellow'. Let us never make the trumpet call into a shepherd's pipe, nor think (Judges 5:17) that we are too immersed in commerce, or sufficiently removed from the scene of God's action to respond to the call for help with Dan, or again with Reuben in Gilead, etc.: nor relax in the most benign of conditions of life and ease with Asher: once the sound comes, we must go to the Lord at the utmost speed.

Judges 5:18 Be ready to hazard our lives immediately we are called by God, our teaching is clear from these following quotes: (1) 1 Chronicles 11:15-19 - David's men: (2) Acts 15:26 - Christ's Apostles, Barnabas and Paul: (3) Philippians 2:25 - Epaphroditus, who hazarded his life for Paul. This is our line of duty at all times: may the God of Help be with us in our strivings, and of course recall to mind that the disciples who were men of Zebulun and Naphtali literally hazarded their lives after the Lord's resurrection, and in their resultant mission to all creation. Never must we be afraid of being found at the place of the drawing of water (John 4:1-14). No doubt the arrows (even words of the wicked) will be shot at us (Psalm 64:1-10) as they were with both Joseph and Jesus. This must not interfere with our obtaining of the Word of Life; nor must our ways be found in crooked paths because of these adversaries; rather the straight and open ways of fellowship we must strive to cultivate, and of course walk in the light of the ways of God (1 John 1:5-10). If this is so, all the assailing of the wisdom and arrogance of the world which we have seen in Jabin and Sisera, all the ammunition of treachery and deceit outlined in Harosheth will be overcome, because the stars in heaven will have fought for us. The worldly armour and overwhelming might of human flesh will be bogged down, destroyed by the torrent of the Spirit as found in Kishon, and we will march to the Kingdom along with Deborah, the Busy Bee of Benjamin, and see the lightning speed of Barak, the 'sanctified wrestler' of Kedesh Naphtali; and finally we shall climb with the surefootedness of Jael and glory in the supreme fact that the Seed of the woman has bruised the seed of the serpent in his hairy scalp (Genesis 3:15).

These are some of the lessons to be found in Judges chapters 4 and 5.

Judges 5:31 "And the land had rest 40 years". The Lord God had delivered Israel through His saviours Deborah, Barak and Jael: once more in the 40 years peace which was to follow, Israel would be under probation to see whether or not they had learned the lessons of this period under Jabin's domination. It would be a manifestation in which 8 x 5 would be very prominent: 8 = the work of the Lord Jesus made plain, and that under the 5 of grace, at one and the same time, however, 4 x 10 would be equally apparent - 4, Israel herself would be made to face 10, a complete stand for the Lord and His truth.

What would be the outcome?

Judges 5:10 We notice that Deborah appealed to all classes of the people in Israel, and exhorts them to meditate on and of (Siach - Ges. 788) God's mercies. Everyone should know and appreciate God's deliverance to the full.

- (A) Ye that ride on white asses, nobles and other wealthy persons, who ride forth on public and private affairs (cp. Judges 10:3-4; 12:13-14).
- (B) Those that sit quietly at home on carpets of tapestry or needlework (Ges. 449).
- (C) The poor, wayfaring man, who travels on foot.

Whether or not Deborah knew that all future generations would follow her advice is not certain: what we do know is that people in our day and generation "upon whom the ends of the world are come" remember with gratitude and praise the Lord for this earnest of the complete fulfilment of the victory of the Seed of the woman.

Judges 5:7 "Until that I Deborah arose". Deborah, as an inspired person, looks at herself from an external point of view, and undoubtedly speaks of herself objectively, considering all her acts as due, not to herself, but to the Spirit of God.

- (1) She does not praise herself, but blesses God who acted in her.
- (2) So did Moses, before her. (Numbers 12:3) and
- (3) so Samuel, after her (1 Samuel 12:11).

No. 3 of spiritual perfection with regard to spiritual deportment, in those who spoke the Word of God.

Judges 5:8 We noticed that among 40 thousand in Israel there was not a shield seen: as we mentioned before, the disarmament of Israel in these days of oppression by the surrounding nations was absolute.

40 as we have seen, means either the Grace of God seen in the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, 5 x 8, or, in regard to the salvation of Israel after the Spirit (Hebrews 2:9-11), the probation of trial and chastisement of Israel at this time. As these numbers are found in concert with 10, the number of ordinal completion, and taken to the 3rd power,  $40 \times 10 = 400 \times 10 = 4,000$ ,  $4,000 \times 10 = 40,000$ .

Then we have revealed -

- (1) not only the abject state of Israel at this time, powerless, defenceless; not a man being worthy to judge Israel in Deborah's place, but that she should be called in the stead of a man to stand forward; we have noted the place of Jesus, as the Seed of the woman
- (2) who wounded death itself in the head, being impaled on a wooden peg or stake.
- (3) The probation of certain tribes of Israel has been self evident: some were obedient, others were not, the chastisement at this time being very severe.

We have no doubt then why this 40,000 should be included within the Song of Deborah. "Blessed be God."

## INTERMISSION

### BARAK - GIDEON

In Deborah's victory song which we have examined, and in which we have exulted with Deborah, Barak and Jael, we have reached the apex of triumph, and sensed anew the exultant celebration of victory, unmarred by any sequent shadow, as far it reaches out over the ages of time, to the full victory for Israel and the earth, which will usher in the glories of the Millennium, even to its utmost bounds and the ultimate defeat of the millennial Gog and Magog, when God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). As we were taught under No. 3 in Scripture, the Deborah sequence was the third section of the Judges to undergo apostacy, bondage and deliverance, reminding us significantly not merely of the resurrection of the enemy Jabin, but also of the

Sanctuary of which No. 3 also speaks, along with its worship, and we remember that it was not until the Psalmist went into the sanctuary (Asaph being a Levite, Psalm 73), that he understood the end of the wicked.

Our recent studies have given us a marvellous glimpse in this divine technique, and we concluded the section with God and His Truth exalted, and flesh laid low. Deborah, the 'stinging bee' has vented the divine wrath upon them in conjunction with Barak, the 'sanctified wrestler', who came from Kedesh Naphtali, the City of Refuge. In keeping with No. 3 and the other ideas connected with, or rather surrounded with this number, no wrestler can come forth to victory unless his home be in the sanctuary, as we saw from Psalm 73.

Jael hazarded her life in the woman's tent, which had been violated by Sisera, the mighty general of the armoured hosts of Harosheth of the Gentile might. As her name teaches, she had climbed and had reached the summit of womanly achievement, slaying the ferocious enemy with a mallet and wooden tent peg, and so received the highest accolade among women along with Mary, whose Son will finally crush the dreaded enemy, death itself. "Greatest or blessed among women" (Judges 5: 24, Luke 1: 28), destroying through her medium the Devil and Satan - that Old Serpent (Revelation 20: 14, 15).

After this earnest look into the glorious heights of divine triumph, we must descend far away down to the depths of human life and despair, and as we come to the 4th cycle (Judges 6 - 10) of God's dealing with Israel, No. 4 comes before us yet once again, showing that this teaching has to do with Israel - 4 camps, sacrifice altar 4-square, etc., the world, testing, failure, etc. It is the world as contrasted with the sanctuary. We find all these principles at work in this section, both in the enemy, the deliverer and the sequel. They are all prominent here. Nor need we be surprised at this weakness being manifested after, as well as before, the deliverance. Nor must we think because there is failure, we have no profitable lessons here. On the contrary, the lessons are many and of the gravest importance. Just as in our personal histories we have learned much, or at least should have, so we shall have gathered lessons none the less important because they were humbling. Ever be it ours to profit by the examples and warnings that have been written for our admonition, "upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

Retracing our steps quickly, we learned that -

1. In Aram, or Babylon, was to be found the spirit of independence and effrontery to God, even from its foundations in Nimrod after the flood, which is indeed the beginning of all departure and apostacy (apart from Cain).
2. In Moab we saw all that profession in sin in the obese, inert mass that was Eglon, how he dwelt in Jericho, the City of Pleasure.
3. In the Philistines we had a glimpse at the religion of the flesh.
4. Jabin and Sisera in the onslaught of worldly power and reason against the things of God.
5. Now we must gather the lessons from the oppression of Midian. The lesson comes loud and clear. The power of any enemy is put into his hands by the unfaithfulness of God's people.

The 40 years peace after the defeat of Jabin had come to an end. How and why did it come to an end at this time? 40 is the number of trial and probation. How did Israel fare? We remember Moses and the two occasions on which he spent 40 days on Mount Sinai, the 40 years wilderness journey of Israel, the 40 days Elijah and Jesus spent without food, and the length of time which elapsed between the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. All times of testing, trying, proving, in each case.

How did Israel fare during this intermission of 40 years between Barak and Gideon?

- A. 40 years rest for Israel at this time meant a great deal.
- B. It gave the land time to recover from the invasion of its enemies.
- C. It also meant the rising up of another generation that knew not Joshua, nor the elders who had over-lived him.
- D. And, alas, 40 years was long enough to wipe out the memory of their fathers' sins and their fruits.
- E. A new nation of freed men had sprung up who forgot that their fathers had been, for 20 years, slaves.

The state of Israel seems hardly to have improved at all! Always there was little or no settled government. There was NO supreme ruler in the land. No doubt the elders settled minor disputes in the gates of the towns. People mostly did what was right in their own eyes. Religion dropped down to its lowest ebb. Very much like the Stock Market or Exchange of our own day. Indeed, the worship of the foul gods of Canaan has descended to our own enlightened days. Sodom's, and Noah's, conditions are self-evident within our own experiences. Midian, the enemy now confronting us, means 'strife', and this is the ruling motive of 1975.

"How long O Lord?"

Even in the best families the worship of Yahweh was mixed with the foul corruption of Astarte. As usual, with laxity in religious observance, inevitably laxity of conduct follows. When true religion, the mainspring of conduct, is broken, the works are sure to go wrong. Consequently we read that Israel did "the evil" once again before the Lord.

At this juncture it is interesting to note that Israel's punishment came from a new quarter. We hear no more attempts on the part of the old inhabitants to recover their power. They had been crushed forever at Kishon, by the forces of Deborah and Barak. A new enemy now appears. The tribes on the east of the Jordan, known as the Midianites, claimed, like the Ishmaelites, Abraham as their father, only through Abraham's second wife, Keturah. It is hardly necessary to point out that this is not the first time they appear in Bible history.

1. A party of them on a trading mission to Egypt long ago had bought Joseph from his brethren for 20 pieces of silver (Genesis 37: 28).
2. And when the Israelites were nearing the end of their forty years wanderings, the Lord commanded them to make war upon the Midianites to requite the evil they had done in Balaam on that occasion (Numbers 31: 3).
3. Israel was used to punish Moab, and now Moab was used to punish Israel. For seven years they oppressed Israel. It was a terrible time. The famine widespread in Bangladesh at the moment gives us some idea what it was like, the big difference being that the famine in those days was the result of terrorism on a gigantic scale, the land being fertile, and Midian descended upon it along with Moab and the children of the east. They overran the whole country as far as the town of Gaza in the south, over the fertile Esdraelon plain in the centre, spreading destruction wherever they went.

Many years afterwards the invasion was described in the book of Psalms. Their princes are mentioned as having invited one another to harass Israel in these words: "Let us take to ourselves the houses (or rather the homesteads) of God's possession" (Psalm 83: 12). This description also applied in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20), and truly they acted in this way. They came as grasshoppers for multitude. Like Like an army of locusts, terrible in destruction, they devoured the fruits of the earth.

The scriptural day of Midian was also of darkness; even at this stage, the locusts came in such multitudes that they blacked out the very sun. It was in such dire stress that the Lord heard the cry of His children and sent relief via (1) a prophet; (2) an angel; (3) and Gideon.

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JUDGES CHAPTERS 6 - 9  
GIDEON TO ABIMELECH

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"Time would fail me to tell of Gideon" (Hebrews 11:32 etc.). This is the appreciation of Paul concerning this list of the "worthies" of whom the world was not worthy (Hebrews 11:38), recited in the eulogy of faith outlined in this chapter. We have the former of these last two groups who "conquered through faith", while the second list concerns those "others", who are unnamed, who "suffered for God" (Hebrews 11:32-40).

We have commented upon the placings of Hebrews 11:32 earlier. Gideon is introduced to us when once again Israel is in deep distress. Three judges (extraordinary) had preceded him – Othniel, Ehud and Barak (associated with Deborah, of course), and now Israel, on account of apostasy, has been delivered once again into the hands of their enemy by the Lord, the enemy this time being Midian (Judges 6:7-10).

This period is infamous by reason of being one of the three occasions when the Lord threatened Israel for unfaithfulness, being known as "the evil".

1. At Bochim (Judges 2:4) (already reviewed).
2. At the Midianite invasion (before us at the present moment) (Judges 6:7-10).
3. At the Ammonite and Philistine oppression (Judges 10:10-14).

These threats all came to pass during Israel's ever deepening oppression by the enemy without, and in the mutual severance of the tribes within.

1. It is a family story of the period; of (a) Gideon, an extraordinary judge raised up by God to deliver Israel; and (b) Abimelech, self-raised to follow in his father's role, at the expense of the murder of his brothers (10:1) to this end, and who led Israel into deeper folly.
2. This time in Judges is once again noted for a family story, entirely different, and far removed from this stark drama – that of Ruth and Naomi. Judges 6:1-6 is the only period recorded in the days of the Judges when these events could take place. Ruth 1:1: "Now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land." The great famine, of widespread and far-reaching proportions, is the one at the time of Gideon. From this we take it that Elimelech and his family sojourned in the land of Moab during this period. It is remarkable that they should choose this place, as usually Moab and Midian, along with Ammon, were in league against Israel. Numbers 22:7, Midian allied with Moab in their hostility against Israel, and we find them willing agents of Balaam's iniquitous counsels (Numbers 25:6, 17, 18; 31:7, 8), and suffering a terrible chastisement from the Israelites in consequence. An abiding feud was the natural consequence, and this, added to their love of plunder, no doubt led to the present invasion in company with the Amalekites. See Judges 3:13 etc.

It is profitable to observe the contrast between the victory described in Numbers 31 and the defeat narrated in our chapter Judges 6:1-6. Why did Abimelech and Naomi flee into Moab to escape the bitter famine of those days? This is another story full of interest and spiritual matter — and for another time. But Moab is not introduced into the text on this occasion. We have before us the fruits of ingratitude; Israel had once again forsaken God and for seven long hard years of oppression and famine had learned their lesson yet once again, so they cried to God. Joseph Hall interjects: "The judgments of God, still the further they go, the sorer they are. The bondage of Israel was great, but it was freedom in comparison of the yoke of the Midianites. During the former tyranny, Deborah was permitted to judge Israel under a palm tree; under this, not so much as private habitations will be allowed to Israel. Then, the seat of judgment was in sight of the sun; now, their very dwellings must be in secret under the earth. They that rejected the protection of God, are glad to seek to the mountains for shelter; (or to flee Israel to go into Moab — A.H.); and as they have savagely abused themselves, so they are fain to creep into dens and caves of the rocks, like wild beasts for safeguard. God had sown spiritual seed amongst them, and they suffered their heathenish neighbours to pull it up by the roots; and now, no sooner can they sow their material seed, but Midianites and Amalekites are ready by force to destroy it. As they inwardly dealt with God, so God deals outwardly by them: their eyes may tell them what their 'apostacy' has done; yet that God, whose mercy is above the worst of our sin, sends first His prophet with a message of reproof, and then His Angel with a message of deliverance. The Israelites had smarted enough with their servitude, yet God sends them a smart rebuke. We come to the conclusion that it is a good sign when God chides us: His round reprehensions are ever gracious fore-runners of mercy — whereas His silent connivance at the wicked argues deep and secret displeasure; (1) the prophet made way for the Angel, (2) reproof for deliverance, (3) humiliation for comfort."

These rather quaint but sterling comments by Joseph Hall aptly sum up the conditions in Israel at that time. This period discloses modern methods of oppression and depravity. Israel laboured, Midian took all the fruit of their labour.

"The children of the East" (Judges 6:3) would normally represent today the nations of the Arab Crescent and no doubt they, too, would like to follow the policy of their ancestors against Israel. Judges 6:4 indicates the severity of their domination during these trying times: "left no sustenance" — neither grass, nor corn, nor ox, nor ass. These all died for want of food, or were seized by the Midianites in their systematic pillage of the land. Judges 6:5 explains that the enormous multitudes of their cattle and camels consumed the whole produce of the ground. Very much like Nazi methods during the last war. The idea of introducing the grasshoppers for a metaphor is to indicate how completely this was accomplished and for the all-consuming voracity of their oppressors at this time.

The question has been mooted, "Why did not Midian annihilate Israel completely in the process?" Perhaps the answer can be found in the modern idiom: "Why kill the dog that barks?" Israel laboured, Midian plundered: why then exterminate the slaves? While this situation continued, Midian and her allies were 'in clover'. But what a terrible plight for children of God to find themselves in. They had descended lower than the heathen. Though not so long as other oppressions, it was far more severe, and the seven year period was indicated by God as a complete one, fulfilling His designs upon His people. Israel became famished — the consequence even today of our unfaithfulness, from which we always suffer when we depart from God and seek the things of the world around us. It drags us down and takes away our strength; before long we lose the will to withstand, and the very sources of existence are lacking.

No doubt we can all say, "There except for the grace of God go I." Sometimes we are brought down to this level by God, until in our misery and dejection we call upon the Name of the Lord. The glimmer of their renewed faith received the answer from God.

Judges 6: 8-10 The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, reminding them out of what He had delivered them. "Out of Egypt", "Forth from the house of bondage", "Out of the hand of all that oppressed you", driving the heathen out of Canaan, "And I gave you their land".

Judges 6: 10 "I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell." Then came the stern rebuke: "But ye have not obeyed My voice."

We wonder who was the prophet. This makes another first in Scripture – a new period in their history. Before this time Moses had declared God's will during his lifetime, and the Urim and Thummim in the High Priest's breastplate had been the manner of instruction. The prophet's name is not given. We have in 1 Kings 13 two remarkable prophets spoken of without mention of their names. See too 1 Kings 20: 35 etc., 2 Kings 9: 4; this message is strikingly similar to that of the Angel in Judges 2: 1-3. See also 1 Samuel 10: 18 and Joshua 24: 17. The reference to Exodus 20: 2 is plain, and supposes the people to whom the prophet addresses these words to be familiar with the text, or at least with the facts recorded in that text. The name of the prophet in each case is withheld and we leave it so, the final incident of this kind being recorded in Revelation 22: 8-9. The information not being available, therefore not necessary for our salvation, what we have to believe is the fact of these occurrences established by divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

It was towards the close of the fourth cycle when Israel was groaning under the servitude of Midian, that Gideon is first mentioned - Judges 6: 11. The fact that a prophet had been sent to Israel points to their serious decline at this period; that it was deemed necessary in fact.

Elijah, Elisha and Jonah were sent to the northern tribes in an attempt (man-wise that is), to stem the slide of apostacy which finally led to their being taken away into Assyria by Shalmanezzer etc.

On this occasion the prophet is followed by an angel sent directly by God to Gideon the chosen saviour. It is rather remarkable that an angel is mentioned first in Revelation 22: 8, and then the prophet in verse 9. In this case both angel and prophet are the same individual.

- (A) Could this be so in Judges 6?
- (B) What significance do we find here?
- (C) Now whilst we have no evidence to name any particular angel,
- (D) could it be feasible and reasonably assumed that this was the angel that led Israel out of Egypt and afterwards became their special guardian and adviser? Exodus 23: 20-33.
- (E) May our readers ponder over the question, and send in any ideas to the Debir Press. They will be very welcome.
- (F) Could this possibly apply to Revelation 22?

Judges 6: 11 reveals to us the deliverer in a sorry plight. "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites", and the opening words to Gideon appear to come to him like a bolt from heaven.



Judges 6:12 "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

What a picture of a life lived under the fear of man. The hill top was the place for threshing wheat, where the winds separate between kernel and chaff, but as Gideon dared not thresh the wheat there, he had to work under cover, inside the winepress, in the valley. (The Hebrew word used here for 'thresh' means to 'knock out' with a stick. Only the poor knocked out the grain with a stick. Cp. gleaning with Ruth - Ruth 2). Hardly a good beginning, one would have thought, but typical of the ways of God during these turbulent days. The lesson of famine having gone home, the Lord will now produce His 5th 'weak thing' with which He will save his people. At this time we learn (A) Gideon was in one sense weaker than his people, (B) without confidence before the enemy, for "he threshed by the winepress, to hide it from the enemy", (C) without resources among his relatives, for his family was the poorest in Manasseh (or so he said), (D) without power in himself, for he was the least or youngest in his father's house. Not a very good description for a coming leader, but God will make him so.

Gideon realised his utter weakness and said, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?" When it is a question of the work of God in this world, we then find a great first principle. It is (A) that God does not ask in any case what men can offer Him. The instruments He takes up to glorify Himself by, are those that are weak and that are conscious of their weakness, as our beloved Paul himself (1 Corinthians 1:27-29, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). (B) We find a second 'first' principle of the greatest importance in this consideration: this work required that all be of God. Gideon was already a believer before the angel of God sat under the oak. Whatever he had yet to learn, he believed the word of God, which had been transmitted to him by his forefathers.

Judges 6:13 "And Gideon said to him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." It would appear, then, that the mother of Gideon, unnamed and unsung, working behind the scenes, had taught her children the story from Egypt (at the least). One could not be too certain with regard to his father Joash, from Judges 6:25; in fact the evidence is opposite. Once again a mother in Israel had instructed her son in the ways of the Lord, faithful even in these degenerate days of evil and apostacy, and it was to this person, one with knowledge of the Most High from his early days, that the manifestation is given. The principle outlined is in 2 Timothy 3 etc. in the upbringing of Timothy by Eunice and Lois, mother and grandmother to him. Evidently Gideon had been taught Deuteronomy 31:17. "Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) is also in focus here). God at this time will use 'weakness' to confound the mighty, but (if there is such a thing) He will use the weakness of faith.

What do we learn from the teaching of the names in this section of Judges?

Judges 6:11

(A) The manifestation was given in Ophrah that pertained to Joash the Abi-Ezrite.

This Ophrah was in Manasseh and not in Benjamin (Joshua 13:23). In Judges 8:27 Ophrah is called the city of Gideon (when the narrative was given), Joash probably being then dead. Ophrah was Gideon's place of birth, residence and burial (Judges 6:11-24, 8:32): also the seat of his idolatrous ephod (Judges 8:27).

(B) Ophrah means 'dust', and people who apostasise from God will dwell in dust, speaking of the shame of the people of God in such a condition. Is it not remarkable that God should seek a deliverer (saviour) for His people in such a place? The people had descended into such a plight, then from this lowly distressing state He will bring His great salvation, through a man, not only weak and lowly, but despicable in a worldly sense, as one who is afraid of the enemy (Judges 6:11), but, as we have seen in his own estimation as well, a man who saw no qualifications in himself, in his family or tribe, for the office of saviour to his people: "My family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least (or youngest, lit.) in my father's house" (Fausset). Once again God has by-passed the eldest or the strength of Joash because Joash the son of Abiezer, was an idolator (Judges 6:25); a definite refutation of the names Joash bore -

(A) Joash means (1) whom Yahweh has bestowed; (2) given of Yahweh; (3) whom Yah supports; (4) Yahweh heals; (5) fire of Yahweh.

(B) Abiezer means (1) father of help; (2) succouring father; (3) in Numbers 26:30 he is called Jeezer, which means He will help, He will succeed. It would appear that Abiezer provided the help in Gideon's character (with the help of God of course), and the spiritual understanding by-passed Joash with all its wealth of detail. All the details of the angel's mission with Gideon, are to be seen within the meaning of Joash. So we are shown that even when a man is an idolator, the purpose of God is not retarded in the very least. Gideon = a feller of trees or idols, will accomplish the will of God, even at the expense of his father's idols, and Joash stands by speechless and powerless to prevent it: in fact, Judges 6:30-31 records his defence of Gideon's attitude with some very common sense words. Judges 6:31: "Will ye plead for Baal? Will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death (RV) before morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself because one hath (RV) broken down his altar." On this occasion, Gideon, because he had fulfilled his name - a cutter down or feller of either tree or Asherah (6:30 RV) had his name changed to Jerubbaal which means (6:32) "Let Baal plead", because he had thrown down his altar.

So then the teaching of the names gives credibility: whether Joash realised the true import of his names we know not: prophetically they came true in the mission of Gideon against the altars and groves, and Joash the son of Abiezer (father of help) 'supported' Gideon in the work of the Lord: we hope that his apostacy became 'healed of the Lord' when he realised that Gideon had been 'given of the Lord' for the purpose of saving Israel, and in this manner the names given to him by Abiezer, by-passed in his earlier years, finally led him to truth in his later experiences.

We must not forget "Manasseh" in our short glossary of names in this incident. Manasseh means 'forgetting' and the 'strife' of Midian, by name and character within us, see Romans 7, can only be defeated by the faith of one who can, by the mercy of God "forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those that are before" (Philippians 3:13).

It is in these items in the centre portion of Gideon's career, that the purpose of God is disclosed. It is one who despairs of any other help, realizing his own weakness, who will turn to the Father for succour, in whom alone our help is found. But we are getting ahead of our theme; let us return to his call and preparation for service in Judges 6.

It was while Gideon was in the act of threshing his wheat, not in an exposed situation that the wind might blow away the chaff, but as Gideon dared not thresh the

wheat there, he had to work under cover inside the winepress, not on the hill, but in the valley, in a very enclosed place. There the angel of Yahweh appeared to him and spoke to him.

We thus reach the essential point which brings Gideon into the 11th chapter of Hebrews. If Gideon believed God, he must have 'heard' from God; for faith cometh 'by hearing'. And if he heard, Yahweh must have spoken (Hebrews 11). This becomes, therefore, the starting point of Gideon's faith and of our consideration of it.

- (1) Twelve times Yahweh spoke to Gideon.
- (2) Twelve times he heard Yahweh's words.
- (3) Twelve, because the whole subject had to do with government and rule.
- (4) The idea of Yahweh's end being to bring His people out of the rule of the Midianites, and back once again under His own rule and government.
- (5) But the instrument must first be prepared for the work it has to do. The servant must be fitted for the service he has to perform.
- (6) Hence we notice that the Lord, and the first seven statements used, were connected with this object; and what was said had to do entirely with Gideon's personal qualification for the position he was to occupy.
- (7) Seven is the number of spiritual perfection, and therefore this stands first. Obviously there must first be spiritual power from on high, before there can be effective service.
- (8) In Acts 6:3, when wise men were wanted to carry out a business work, requiring wise business capacities, the Twelve said, "Look you out seven men full of the Holy Spirit (Gk. *pneuma hagios*) and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Business men are wanted, who could pay as well as pray, but they wanted spiritual men as well. Not one without the other, but the two together.
- (9) Even so here. For the work that was to be done in freeing Israel from the yoke of Midian a mighty man of valour was needed. That, according to the definition of God, Gideon was already, but he must needs be made a 'humble man of God'. To this end it would appear God made the winepress of Joash to be to Gideon, what He made the backside of the desert to be to Moses. All ~~must~~ be accomplished by the word of God or Yahweh.
- (10) To this end the Lord speaks 7 times to Gideon. It has been noticed that Jesus did to the woman of Samaria, centuries later, to bring her first to herself and then to Himself (John 4:7 etc.)

Seven times Yahweh speaks to Gideon, and it is our glory and privilege to watch the process, and progress, and perfection (as No.3 requires) of the completion of this divine work. We are impressed by the way that these words bring out the fact that the work was to be done in freeing Israel from the yoke of Midian. "A mighty man of valour" was needed, and that, unknown to himself but recorded in God's book, Gideon was already. But it was vitally necessary that Gideon should be made a humble "man of God", as we have said. It would seem that this point was the first to be tackled by God, and it has been noted in these words - "God must first do His work with Gideon before Gideon could do his work for God", and to accomplish this, God makes the winepress of Joash to be to Gideon what He made the backside of the desert to be to Moses. What a wonderful thought and how aptly put. All must be accomplished by the word of the Lord, and the loving grace of the Father is to be discerned in the sevenfold message to Gideon. Later Jesus himself uses the same formula in regard to the woman of Samaria, (A) to bring her first to herself, to realise her position morally and spiritually, and (B) then to Himself. (John 4).

Back to Gideon and the task before us.

Judges 6:12 begins the sequence.

"Yahweh is with thee", inviting enquiry from Gideon. Notice the first statement by Jesus to the woman of Samaria. This certainly aroused enquiry in her, and she asked "How?" Gideon, as we have seen, asks "Why" and "Where?" In both cases the heart has been exercised. This is essential upon all who approach the Lord and plead that they may serve Him. "How long?" asked Isaiah (6:11). We have once more a threefold chain.

- (1) Gideon said "Why?" and "Where?" in Judges 6:13, as he viewed the results of the obvious displeasure of the Lord on his nation and in his own particular standing - threshing wheat under cover of the winepress.
- (2) Isaiah 6:11. Isaiah exclaims "How long?" after he had volunteered for the Lord's work (v.8). "Then said I, here am I, send me", but when the nature of the task was explained to him and he realised the nature of the mission, he said "Lord, how long?"
- (3) John 4:9. The woman of Samaria said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" This in answer to the plea of Jesus "Give me to drink". It was the word of Jesus which touched the heart of this woman and through her enquiry she found the living water (John 4:14) after first finding herself (John 4:16-19). Her decision was "I perceive that thou art a prophet", and the result (John 4:28), she left her waterpot and went her way into the city. "Come, see a man which told me all things that I ever did: is not this the Christ?" Absolute conviction. This is the way in which the Lord works on His children: each experience is designed to bring forth conviction.

These methods are not always understood by man, even those of the household of faith (John 4:27). We may be sure that the harvest from Samaria had quite a lot to do with this sister, despised Gentile at that time as she was.

We are enquiring into the way by which the Lord called and prepared Gideon to be a mighty man of valour at this time, and we have seen emphasised the first thing that the Lord did was to secure Gideon's heart in His purpose. This had been done and the rest follows on smoothly.

Judges 6:14-15 discloses the second sequence.

"And the Lord looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee?" And he said unto Him, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Here we see Gideon's 'might', understood in the consciousness of his personal weakness, very much like Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; recalling to mind Moses (Exodus 3:11) and Saul (1 Samuel 9:21). Because of these conditions Gideon was forced to believe God's Word, and "Thou shalt save Israel" gave him his commission from God; accordingly Gideon 'heard', and on this his faith was grounded. It would appear that the confession of his impotence was in itself an understatement on the surface. Gideon may have been least in his father's house, i.e. the youngest: we can understand this point, therefore, of no account from a Hebrew point of view, but it would appear that his family were of some standing in Manasseh; there was no immediate pressure on his family. He could find an ephah of flour (= 34-35 lb), and a kid of the goats. He had at the least 2 oxen still left to labour, one being presently sacrificed to the Lord (Judges 6:25). Gideon's father also was a man of some position in his city. He had an altar to Baal, and a grove or grove image (Asherah) for public worship (Judges 6:26). The destruction of these was a sufficiently public act to excite the indignation of all the men of the city. But Joash was able to silence them when they demanded the surrender of his son. We

think then that the premise of no immediate pressure upon them at this time, and Gideon might have hidden himself from 'the affliction of Joseph' if he had been so minded, is proved fairly well.

One other point remains to be noticed in this first incident concerning the Lord and Gideon, His mighty man. Though Gideon was thus designated, he was not fit to save Israel without a special gift from God. We have as yet to enquire into the way in which that gift came. The reply of Gideon to the angel we have just studied. Notice once again the answer of the Lord: the Lord looked upon him and said, "Go in this thy might", obviously to be understood in the sense of the might which came by the look of the Lord. He looked upon him, meaning He turned His face to Gideon and let him see its light. In such a beautiful way is the giving of God's grace described, and the almost blinding light of this theophany can be seen in the light of two other places where the same thought appears.

- (1) Genesis 32 – Peniel and Penuel, where we read, "I have seen God face to face (Peniel) and God is turned to me (Penuel)". Further study is indicated by the words "Jacob halted", particularly in the Minor Prophets, but is not in our immediate focus at the present time. As Jacob overcame his brother, so Gideon overcame the Midianites by the strength that came from the face of the Lord. The name is changed to Israel, but the nature of the man is unaltered. If the Lord had to turn to see Jacob, then Jacob or Israel was not directly in the way. Only Jesus, the Word, is face to face with the God of Israel. *Prosopon* (Gk.) = nose to nose. God never has to turn to see or find Jesus: he was always face to face with the Father.
- (2) New Testament counterpart. We find a similar thing when the Lord Jesus turned and looked upon Peter. He never denied His Lord after that. The result: Peter himself turned too. What did Jesus say to him? "When thou art converted (or turned round), strengthen thy brethren. Once again we have strength or might attributed to the turning of the Lord, in grace and mercy upon His children.
- (3) Jacob and Gideon reacted when seeing the angel of the Lord (the angel, as we believe, who had followed the fortunes of Israel from their inception as the people of God).
- (4) The angel found Jacob at Bethel, as both he and Hosea record (Genesis 28:13; Hosea 12:1-6).
- (5) With Gideon the theophany continues, and as in the experience of Jacob (Genesis 28:10-22) an altar is set up to the Lord who would send peace to a dejected downcast people in Gideon's day (Judges 6:24).
- (6) How can this phenomenon apply to ourselves? Rather, does it apply to our days?

Very much so, we hope: in fact our greatest hope is to be like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2). Is this not so in our lives today? Those who live close together (particularly in the Truth) know something of this friendship, and look continually into each other's lives in keeping with the command of the Master. As I have done to you, do also to your brethren. By doing so, we may in this life savour anew day by day, the Face of the Lord. In the words of Paul (2 Corinthians 3:18), beholding as in a glass, His glory. The clearer the glass (or bronze in Paul's day) the better the reflection, in our minds and outlook, and the more we should grow like Him day by day. The great difference between our image now and the one we hope to have in 1 John 3:2, is that the reflection is gauged mainly by effort on our part rather than performance, whilst the final one is the object of the amazing grace of God (Ephesians 2:5-8).

Thus it is that we are able to run with patience or endurance (Gk.) the race that is set before us, and along with the worthies whom we are studying at the moment, keep looking unto Jesus, seeing Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27). May the days that remain to our lot be spent in looking at the 'face' from which all evil shall flee at His appearing, although it still is in this life 'a visage marred more than any man' (Isaiah 52 and 53). This represented the glory of John 12:23-26, and must be the concept of the image revealed to us in the days of our flesh. The present writer has outlined the Face of Christ more fully in What's in a Name No.1 : Numbers 33, under the station Punon (pp. 76-78), to which notes we invite our readers to turn.

To return to Gideon. We have seen how the Judges are called 'saviours' from the likeness of their work to the work of the great Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, and how did Gideon (thinking of him in particular) become a saviour? How else could it have been except by the look of the Lord? He was a mighty man of valour (despite appearances), as we have outlined. He was a mighty man of valour when first the Lord spoke to him, but it was not until the Lord looked upon him that He bade him go in this might and save. Thus Gideon was made a saviour by the look of the Lord, and command of course. Paul comments on the rapidity of time concerning these extraordinary events connected with Gideon: "Time fails me to tell of Gideon" (Hebrews 11). The eightfold track of modern audio systems is quite unable to unfold all these wonders, nor does my pen let me ponder and wonder at the manifold works of God. Reluctantly we must pass, or else in our finite minds there will be 'time no longer'. Oh! for the days of the Son of Man to come, when timeless study of this Word will be possible, and all the worthies will be here for us to listen to and learn from with immortal minds. Time no longer will be for us a glorious reality.

However, turning back to Judges 6:16, we are shown how gracious the Lord was to Gideon. We read, "And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee". "The Lord" and "I will be" complement each other. Yahweh has doubled His Name, meaning, to Gideon and all Israel, and to those in our generation upon whom "the ends of the ages have come", God hath said it (Genesis 41:25-30); God had established it, and would shortly bring it to pass. How truly wonderful is the grace of God, and more so for an old disciple who has seen it work in his life. Gideon had this gracious theophany once again from God to quiet his anxieties and to urge him on to further exploits for his God. To quote a brief comment by Joseph Hall on this occasion we read from his Contemplations on Holy Scripture p.112 regarding Gideon:

Whereby shall I...? Humility is both a sign of following glory and a way to it. Bragging and a height of spirit will not carry it with God. None hath ever been raised by Him, but those that have formerly rejected themselves. None have been confounded by Him that have been abased in themselves. Therefore it is that he adds: "I will therefore be with thee", as if he had answered, "Hadst thou not been so poor in thyself I would not have wrought with thee." How should God be magnified in His mercies if we were not unworthy? How should He be strong, if not in our weakness?

So with one supreme thought, Hall has sketched the whole purpose of not only the saviours of Israel, but of the whole length and breadth of the work of God on this planet. Only with self-deprecation on our part can God work, and only through utter weakness and incapability of man can God demonstrate His greatness and overwhelming power to all men; in the hope that by their perception of His ways

and in comparison with their own microscopic finite understanding and strength, He might save some who, realising their own inadequacy, come to Him in complete trust and faith that they might live.

J. Hall continues:

All this while Gideon knew not it was an angel that spake with him: he saw a man stand before him like a traveller, with a staff in his hand. The unusualness of those revelations in those corrupted times, Gideon might think of anything rather than an angel. No marvel if so strange a promise from an unknown messenger found not a perfect assent. Fain would he believe, but fain would he have good warrant for his faith. In matters of faith we cannot go upon too sure grounds. As Moses, therefore, being sent upon the same errand, desired a sign whereby Israel might know that God had sent him, so Gideon desires a sign from this bearer to know that this news is of God. Yet the very hope of so happy news, not yet ratified, stirs up in Gideon both joy and thankfulness.

After all (as we have emphasised before) the injury of the Midianites he was not so poor, but he could bestow a kid and cakes upon the reporter of such tidings. Those which are rightly affected with the glad news of our spiritual deliverance, study to show their living respects to the messengers.

Most of these thoughts are over 400 years old (1562). They are as true today as they were then, just as the context we are studying at the moment in Judah is nearly 4,000 years old, and we could go farther back in time, as they were in the days of Noah, Enoch - even to Adam and Eve. The truths of God and His ways never vary. The earth might turn away from its unvaried orbit, but the sun remains constant and the laws also - either we freeze to death or are caught up in a blazing holocaust (James 1:17). This is true in a spiritual aspect also.

Judges 6:17 Gideon continues, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me." (Newberry's Bible shows the emphasis of this particular part of the sentence is to be found in the word 'thou', and equally determines the reverence of Gideon to the person who has accosted him at this time. "Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee." "And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.") Thus the angel stayed for the preparing of Gideon's feast. Such pleasure doth God take in the thankful endeavours of His servants, that he patiently waits upon the leisure of our performance. Gideon intended a dinner: the angel turned it into a sacrifice.

Judges 6:19 And Gideon went in, and made ready the kid of the goats (Newberry) and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour (34-35 lb our weight): the flesh he put in a basket and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it unto him under the oak, and presented it. To the amazement of Gideon, instead of eating the feast, which in the state of things, and in the leisurely manner of the East, must have taken quite a while, the angel accepted it as a sacrifice. Apparently this is why the cakes were unleavened (cp. Israel leaving Egypt - Exodus 12:34). Naturally speaking of course, they were a representation of the sacrifice to come of Jesus, the Greater Gideon, and what He would offer for the redemption of His people. Then the dedication of the kid of the goats as in Exodus 12, and the unleavened bread, representing the sinless walk of Jesus and the character of God shown through Christ's sufferings (even the meal offering cakes were pierced under the Law). But what does the broth represent? More in a little while. Suffice it to say that it would mean all the juices and fat of the goat, and because the broth was poured out on the rock by precise command of

the angel, then we have in essence the dedication of the Angel, therefore God, because the Angel was His representative, typically and prophetically pointing forward to the Greater Gideon, who will do just this for His friends, and by the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush.

Judges 6:20 And the angel of God said unto him, take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this ROCK (Heb. emphasis once again), and pour out the broth. That God is the Rock of the Old Testament is beyond question (Psalm 89:26; Deuteronomy 32:4), backward in typical time to the Rock on Moriah whereon Isaac should have been offered: the Rock upon which the temples of God were placed, over which it is believed that the altar (burnt) was placed after the ground level had been raised some 400 feet at least from the Valley of the Kidron. All this truth and more also: for instance, in Matthew 16:18, and incidentally inherent in John 1:42, to the amazement of Gideon (Judges 6:20). The impact must have been tremendous, but wonderingly he obeyed (Judges 6:21-22). Then the angel put forth the end of his staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. It was only then that Gideon perceived, or understood, that it was an angel of the Lord.

We notice that the angel touched the feast with his staff and consumed it with fire; he did not strike the rock. Had the theophany been given to supplement the wilderness experiences with the rock that brought forth water to supply 2½ million Israelites, plus the strangers that tagged along, and water for the animals too? The God of whom the Rock spake was quite able to give succour, water thirsty multitudes, and consume offerings. We remember Israel were terrified at Sinai with these visible outpourings of the might of God. Most probably all these things were there, and are recorded for, our education in theophany. It has been said that the rock was not struck because the striking of two hard objects can bring flash fire or sparks, but the whole offering along with the broth was consumed, and the conclusion is similar to Carmel in Elijah's time when barrels of water were poured on the wood and sacrifice, so as to make it impossible to be set alight accidentally. This holy fire appeared after the offering had been poured out before the Lord. As the fire of old had to do with the offerings on the altar (Leviticus 9:24), so the Holy Spirit of burning comes as God's answer and sign to a life consecrated unto Him. No doubt God adapted His methods to the natural infirmities of His children, and so adds the seal of the Spirit (fire) to the promise of His word.

Joseph Hall comments once more:

And now while Gideon saw and wondered at the spiritual act, he lost sight of the agent. He, that came without entreating, would not have departed without taking leave, but that he might increase Gideon's wonder, and that his wonder might increase his faith. His salutation, therefore, was not so strange as his farewell. Moses touched the Rock with his staff, and brought forth water, and yet a man, and yet continued with the Israelites. This messenger touches the stone with his staff, and brings forth fire, and presently vanishes, that he may approve himself a Spirit. And now, Gideon, when he gathered up himself, must needs think.

He that can raise fire out of a stone, can raise power and courage out of my dead breast. He that by this fire hath consumed the broth and flesh, can by the feeble flame of my fortitude consume Midian. Gideon did not so much doubt as before, as now he feared. We, that at one time in the Garden of Eden, lived and conversed, and walked with angels, and we hope that shall once live with and be like the angels, in the estate of our impotency, think we cannot see an



angel and live. Gideon was acknowledged for mighty in valour, yet he trembles at the sight of an angel. Peter, that durst draw his sword upon Malchus, and all the train of Judas, yet fears when he thought he had seen a Spirit. Our natural courage cannot bear us out against spiritual objects. This angel was homely and familiar, appearing as a man a traveller that required food and shelter. Some have entertained angels unawares certainly fits Gideon on this occasion, yet even valiant Gideon quakes to have seen him. How awful and glorious is Spirit Nature against whom we stand. Even such men as Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, all were put in amaze, and even John in Revelation fell at the foot of the person who addressed him.

So the angel that departed for the wonder yet returns for the comfort of Gideon, to which we will turn immediately. Because it is not usual for God to leave His children in amaze, but He brings them out in the same mercy which led them in, and will magnify His grace in the one, no less than His power in the other.

Judges 6 Before we commence the narrative once again, we must put right an omission from the text, to the effect that the angel when speaking to Gideon used the word "thee", but Gideon in his reply used the word "us". This showed his sympathy with and for the people, and revealed the searchings of heart - product of faith - which recognised that the mighty God who had done such great things for them in the past was He who had delivered them into the hands of the enemy. Though a mighty man from God's concept, as usual with all the great leaders of Israel, Gideon acknowledged that the nation's sins were his own. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon in his early days, down to Ezekiel and Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, all felt that the national sins were their own, whether or not they had committed them personally. As in Gideon's day so now, reading the Scriptures instructs an exercised heart respecting sin and its bitter consequences, and respecting God and His ability to save, which precisely states our position and aim in life, and our reverence of Holy Writ. "Who shall save me from this body of sin"(alluding to Roman method of inflicting slow death, by securing a dead corpse to a living being; slow, lingering, awful to contemplate, this is what sin can do to us: actually it is a picture of sin nature itself). Who then shall save us from this body of death? Paul said (Romans 7: 25), "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The point appears to be obvious and clear. No matter how we struggle to gain the mastery of self, in this life we are unable to cast off these shackles of sin. Never let us forget this. We are all unworthy servants and not worthy of the least of God's benefits. Salvation belongs to the Lord and Him alone. We can help by our appreciation of His salvation, and this is what delights the Lord. "To this man will I look. He that is of a contrite heart and that trembles at my word" (Isaiah 57: 15). This is what Gideon was and did: this is what you and I must strive to do, run like him who runs a race: no one ever wins it: so long as we finish the course, the prize, through God's help, will be ours.

Having examined Gideon's position, along with Israel in his day; Paul's in the first century; and our own in the 20th century; we find nothing has changed. How could it? God is the same, yesterday and in the great tomorrow, now so near at hand.

Judges 6: 22-24 And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God: for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Yahweh Shalom; unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

The manifestation of the angel caused first fear, and then peace, as Jesus who is Yahweh Shalom, (A) made peace; (B) is our peace; (C) and gives peace, Ephesians

2:14-15; John 14:27.

We have commented already on the consternation the manifestation of the spiritual makes on the natural. Gideon is certainly affected by it, in the right way: fearful at the first, as we have advanced, as he realized with terror the nature of the heavenly visitor (6:22). It was widely believed in Israel (and that in truth), that no man could see God face to face and live (Genesis 16:13; 32:30; Exodus 20:19; 33:20; Judges 13:22; Isaiah 6:5). With an angel, as we know, the situation is different; because he is a messenger from God, to make known His will to Israel. The whole aspect lies within the scope of divine manifestation. The gracious words came from the angel - "Peace be unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die."

Judges 6:24 brought a swift result in action from Gideon, and gives us action not only from Yahweh in giving the manifestation to him, but the concerted action from man to God, upon the receipt of such a gracious revelation from God: always in the same order.

- (1) Fear of being confronted with the divine nature. How shall we fare before the Holy Presence, if such men as Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel are "in amaze", speechless and confounded?
- (2) Then peace, upon acceptance by the heavenly visitor, knowing that henceforth we are assured of peace from every angle (Hebrew is 'peaces', plural): peace on every side, impenetrable to evil and human fear and weakness, when Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14; Philippians 4:7), will be greater than our estimation and experience - Shalom indeed.

This knowledge brought forth adoring reaction from Gideon. Judges 6:24 - "Then Gideon built an altar there unto Yahweh, and called it Yahweh Shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites." If Samuel was the author of Judges, then it must have stood for wellnigh 400 years, as a testimony to the mercy and grace of the Lord God. Let us also remember this manifestation was given to Gideon whilst his people were yet in apostacy, as was his father, as we shall see presently.

First of all we wish to append a list of the Titles of Yahweh similar to Yahweh Shalom, such as Yireh, Nissi, etc. The divine titles attached to Yahweh are as follows. They are 10 in number, which is the number of ordinal perfection, each one fitting the context perfectly, and is the answer to the context.

No.1 : Genesis 22:14 : Yahweh will see or provide : Yahweh Yireh.

The whole programme of divine history of redemption is sketched within this chapter. The quotations are as follows:

#### Title No.1

- (1) Yireh - Genesis 22:4. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place of appointed sacrifice 'afar off'. This was by divine appointment, therefore certain of fulfilment.
- (2) Genesis 22:8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide (Yireh) Himself a lamb (or, with the definite article, RV, in Hebrew, The Lamb for a burnt offering. One particular Lamb had been appointed: The Lamb thought to be God's pet name for The Son in whom he would delight: the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way in which the Father and Son were in unity (22:8). So they went both of them together. "The Father and I are one" Jesus said in John 10:30. It is shown in this chapter and the incidents surrounding this title.

(3) Genesis 22:12-13. Abraham's faithfulness is rewarded. "And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withholden thy son, thine only son, from me." The type had gone far enough: Isaac, though obedient and the father willing, must not die. This is in strict keeping with divine procedure: only one human sacrifice would be acceptable to Himself, that of Jesus, the only begotten Son: the Lamb of God: others could only point to it as Isaac did here, and a ram, the offering of dedication, should be accepted on his behalf. Genesis 22:13 - And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked (Heb. Yireh, once more), and behold a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering, in the stead, or, more correctly, on behalf of his son. And the result:

(4) Genesis 22:14 - And Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh Yireh (RV. m. He will see and provide). This was his faith based on the action of God in the future, when the Lord Jesus will be provided to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and "as it is to this day" (time of Moses who wrote Genesis etc., indeed for all time, going forward to the great day so near at hand).

(5) Genesis 22:14 - as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Heb. Yireh). It was seen by Jewry and the Romans in AD. 33, when "the Lamb of God was taken by wicked hands and slain." May we be privileged to 'see' the finale. Isaiah 2:2-3 - when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it". How can anything flow upwards from the little hills to the mountains? Humanly speaking impossible of course. There must be some power of superhuman attraction in quality and performance. There is. John 3:13-16. The only begotten Son has been lifted up and hung in derision and ignominy on the tree of Golgotha. John 3:10 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life..."

What then is the power that will "draw all men" to Zion? John 12:32 gives us the only answer. "And I", said Jesus, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me" - the antitypical Isaac.

Such is a brief consideration of Yahweh Yireh. We too, in our day, through the medium of the Holy Word, have seen:

How God had seen the need from 'before the foundation of the world', and how great must that need have been. Abraham realized a little when the knife was raised. We have heard it argued, well Abraham had been well prepared, and knew that in Isaac should God's purpose be fulfilled: if he had slain him, God would have raised him up so that the purpose could proceed. No doubt Abraham did. But would we like to kill our only son, even with this knowledge? Would I, would you? This is only rhetorical reasoning. But should we like to do just this, with all the vast structure of God's word behind us? We have had the privilege of increased knowledge, and having seen the purpose worked out, as we have said, the Master was by wicked hands taken and slain, lifted up from the earth as a felon. We have witnessed in nearly every conceivable way his resurrection. Look at our lives, and see if this is not so. We now await with bated breath and longing desire, the time to come, as Hebrews 9:26 puts it, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him (note the allusion to Yireh in Genesis 22), shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." May we find our lot in Revelation 21:9-10: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the

spirit to a great and high mountain (Moriah?) and showed me that great city, the Holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Moriah is the Holy Mountain of the Lord, from the days of Shem - Melchizedek? And the quotation just offered will consummate the proceedings. Sinai had to do with the Exodus of Israel, but Moriah has always been the Holy Mount of God. Sinai is referred to by Paul (Galatians 4:24-31), but Jerusalem or Moriah is where it all began, and here is where it will all end (that is, the work of redemption). Jerusalem the habitation of Peace, or Moriah, where God had 'seen' the need for redemption and provided for it; then its completion will have reached its fulfilment, for Yahweh Shammah will be in glorious evidence - The Lord is there. The King will be the Greater Solomon - peaceable - and the Bride the Shulamite - feminine of peace (see the Song of Songs by the present writer for further treatment of this subject). So in union the Spiritual Trinity, (1) the Father, (2) the Son, and (3) the Daughter. This is the only Trinity taught in the Scriptures.

### Title No. 2

Exodus 15:23-26. Yahweh Ropheca is found in the context connected with disease and the Lord my Healer, or the Lord my Physician. The diseases were they of Egyptian origin, therefore fleshly, and the result the Bitter Waters of Sin, only made sweet by the casting of a tree into the waters, when roughly 2½ million people and flocks are involved, after three days in the wilderness without water; temperature 100° plus; the position would be desperate and when they came to water it was unfit to drink. We can imagine the chaos caused, the tempers frayed, the bickering, and the angry murmurings against Moses. Commensurate with the cleansing of the waters were laws to be kept. "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." The Stygian darkness of Egypt is all around us, and one would be a great optimist to claim that the commands and statutes are held high in general. We have reached the day when the Old Testament is frowned upon. The only cure is to be found in the character of Christ as held up on the tree, as we saw in Yahweh Yireh. Our Lord kept all the commands and statutes to the end and is the only medicine for this weary world. John 5:24,37; 8:28 etc. "Which of you convinceth (or convicteth) me of sin? John 10:31; 8:46 etc.

2 Kings 2:19-22 gives us the truth in our days and meets the Exodus position wonderfully. The Waters of Jericho (the City of Pleasure), the world in which we live and are surrounded: pleasure bitter to death: the hope of healing alone the cruse of salt, or earthenware saucer (Jesus in our flesh), but full of the salt of the Covenant; the tangy taste of the Word of God. This alone can help, and could help in Gideon's day. Again the Word of God, spoken and lived way beyond our powers, but not beyond our efforts; progress? who can tell? Maybe we shall not be able to recover the world from its ills, but we can show those in our immediate surroundings what Yahweh Ropheca means.

We must pass on, or our progress will be stayed and we shall be lost or blinded by the black darkness of Egypt. We can never stand still in the Lord.

### Title No. 3

Yahweh Nissi - The Lord my Banner. Once again, we have developed this title in Numbers 33 - What's in a Word? No. 1, under Rephidim - Exodus 33:14 pp.10-12. The Name there is seen to have reference to our fight with Amalek (Esau's grandson), relatives, of course.

- (1) We have prayer by Moses in the Mount (Sinai range);
- (2) Endeavour by Joshua in the plain, a very great lesson for us. Prayer, endeavour and the mercies of God will help us to conquer in most battles, if Jesus is the object of our petitions (Luke 1:69-71).

The Lord our Banner. The Christ formula must be ours.

The Lord is our Shield and Confidence.

This is the message as Israel approached Sinai itself: it is our message - the Christ Banner as we approach Jerusalem, the City of our God. The personal assurance for us is found in Exodus 17:16 (margin): The hand upon the throne of the Lord. Not the hands of Moses lifted up in supplication: not the seat upon the hill: not the rod upheld by Moses; but that which was invisible, the throne in the heavens; the sceptre of power wielded by God; that hand that held a rod to bruise, to rule with unlimited power. Psalm 110 sees it in its true setting - Jesus Himself again (Psalm 45:6-7; 5, 2, 9). All things are given into his hands - Hebrews 1:8; John 3:36; Psalm 89:14; 45:10; 44:2-6; 21:18.

Therefore, in Moses seated upon the mountain with the rod of power in his hand, uplifted (1) in oath, (2) in prayer, we have a vision of the glorious Son of Man, with the rod of dominion and power, the right hand on the throne of the Father, into whose hands the Father hath committed all power and authority.

Amalek at this time attacked the weakest part of Israel; sin in the flesh always does because it is part of the flesh. Nissi our Banner is very important to us as God declared war on Amalek throughout all generations. Romans 7 is a very good commentary for our days.

Please refer to Numbers 33 for further commentary and note the continued application of Rephidim in Hebrew, (1) weakening and (2) the strengthening of the hands. We have tried to show how these could help Israel, Gideon and the Truth in our day.

#### Title No. 4

Yahweh Mekadeshcem. Exodus 31:13 : The Lord that doth sanctify thee.  
Leviticus 20:8; 21:8; 22:9-16-32; Ezekiel 20:12.

It is noticeable that these four titles were given before Gideon's day, and as he was familiar with all the miracles which the Lord had done for Israel, how had these theophanies affected him? Judges 6:13 etc. Israel had been set apart for God, sanctified as a people for His use. What the Angel or prophet said to Gideon was a wholesale condemnation of their ways. Sometimes even today we can forget when the Ecclesia is used as a social circle, instead of a sanctified people set apart for God's use. Not that we should isolate ourselves, but we ought to keep in mind the Proverb: "Remove thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he weary of thee", Proverbs 25:17. Applied no doubt to Israel after the flesh in the first place, and as Peter points out, has a similar application to Israel after the spirit, "For thou art an Holy People unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth." (1 Peter 2:9-10; Deut. 14:2).

What did Gideon know of the Yahweh titles? We have seen (1) Yahweh Yireh; Yah will see and provide, etc. That the certainty of all emergencies had been seen and the sacrifice provided: all things worked according to the Divine will; therefore absolute certainty of the Divine programme, including his own and all other human accidents and emergencies had been notified and catalogued in the Divine Mind before the foundation of the world. In No. 2, Yahweh Ropheca, Yahweh that healeth thee, his own sins along with our own could be covered by the Divine Grace and granted immunity

from a corrupt nation in Gideon's day, and our own personal misdeeds in our day.

Gideon could have learned of the deadly battle against Amalek flesh, which was a continuous process. Midian greatly afflicted them and Amalek, another natural relative, would have to be faced and defeated through prayer and conscious effort to refrain from sin. We have the added privilege of having an advocate, the 4th divine title, Yahweh Mekadeshcem - 'Yahweh doth sanctify you' was the last one for his experience until the Theophany to himself. It was a lesson the whole nation had cast aside, and gone a-whoring after other gods, filthy, dungy gods. In our days the issue has become a vital one, the morals of the world around are indeed as bad as their idols, and permissive ways, drugs, sex and the like. We keep repeating to ourselves "Yahweh doth and hath separated us to Himself." The only remaining query is, have we truly separated ourselves to Him?

Judges 6:23      And Yahweh said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not, thou shalt not die.

What was the immediate action of Gideon?

Judges 6:24      Then Gideon built an altar there unto Yahweh and called it Yahweh Shalom.

We have already mentioned the fact that this altar still remained up to 300-400 years afterwards. The Lord said 'Peace' or 'Shalom' to Gideon and in grateful knowledge of the favour bestowed upon him Gideon enshrined it on history for all time in the peace altar he erected. It would appear that the altar was not initially for sacrifice in the first sense, but as a record of the divine appearance, and of that offering which had been changed into a sacrifice. The altar which Gideon named Shalom was an indication to him because of the divine words of comfort, amidst his fears, and was an additional assurance that the Lord now entertained thoughts of peace to Israel, and would deliver His people from their oppressors as He promised by the hand of Gideon (Jeremiah 29:11) and no doubt be a reminder of the promise given to him by Yahweh in his more confused and frustrating moments when God had said, "Surely I will be with thee, thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man" (i. e. as with a single blow, cp. Numbers 14:16, Moses etc.) Gideon, overwhelmed with the solemn fact of the theophany, and dreading the consequences, yet in the midst of all the tumult that raged about him, in spite of the dread conflicts that were soon to take place, there was one place where all was perfect peace, one person with whom there was no conflict - the Lord Himself.

We too have a haven from all the bruises and toils of this violent age in which we live. Jesus said in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Yes, peace - MY peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth . . . There is no peace to the earth, there is no quiet; the nations are casting up mire and dirt in their restless raging. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29). Only our restless nature. If we want peace, we must first quieten ourselves. With Gideon we have found the God of peace and can find our true rest with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. If Gideon can be hid thus in the secret of God's Presence from the pride of man and the strife of tongues: after all, worship, as Gideon now realised, is the true remedy for worldliness. Both cannot live together, although worldly fashion and religious habit have been trying since Adam's day to fashion a garment from fig leaves and fur. God will have none of it. Modern modes favour the fig leaf in size anyway, and are to be thoroughly discounted if we fear God. First if peace was to be given to Israel, then peace must be found in Gideon, and Gideon had before him in the altar he had just erected a memorial of Yahweh manifesting Himself there as Peace to Israel through Gideon (Jeremiah 29:11).

The family of words connected with Shalom – Peace, Health, Shulamite, Shunammite etc., we have dealt with in the Song of Solomon (Debir Press) under Shulamite, Jerusalem, Solomon, etc., and for further reference we invite our readers to consult there, should they desire to look into the different word links.

Could we recapitulate a little before we pass on? What did Gideon learn and what have we learned with regard to the Yahweh titles?

Along with Yahweh Shalom the names revealed were five in number, plainly revealing that Grace crowned all the work of God and the plan of redemption would be cemented in the work and love of the Son himself (Hebrews 2, whole chapter). Conception of the whole plan in Yireh, and provision made. Divine health promised upon forsaking Egyptian darkness and ignorance.

'Nissi' gave us the constant fight against the flesh; God's memorial to all generations until God is all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

'Mekadeshcem' – The sanctification which must clothe our lives if we wish to follow the Master, and finally Shalom - the peace of God that passeth understanding.

May we bring in the other five to complete the picture? No.6, Yahweh Sabaoth, Yahweh of Hosts. The God of armies or the Lord of Hosts, the warlike connotation of Yahweh whose forces are as He, all powerful, almighty, against whom none can stand, the sad part being that in the immediate context of 1st Samuel 4:11, the Holy Ark was taken, sufficient in itself to show that Yahweh would only be the Lord of Hosts when His people were on the side of right, doing His will, otherwise the power would be used against them in the opposite way. The day of (Zechariah's) Lord of Hosts, who will fight as He did in the day of battle (14:3); then shall it come to pass, that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-22), when "every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts." See Gems from Bible Jewel Box No.1, Feast of Tabernacles.

No.7 Yahweh Rohi - The Lord my Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)

A Psalm which comes through perfect trust in the Lord, a wonderful Psalm in which at the least eight Yahweh Titles are found in beautiful cluster.

Perhaps we may end this digression in a little review. The number of Perfection (7), covenantal, and in keeping with the eight titles (rest in the Millennium and finally evermore with the Lord.

No.8 Yahweh Heleyon - the Lord Most High (Psalm 7:17)

David, for all his troubles and pains of conscience, can say "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the Name of the Lord Most High." Higher than the earth and the Heaven of Heavens, so is our Lord the Most High, and what are we when we look at His greatness and majesty? Dust and ashes in His sight, yet it has pleased the Lord to call us, and related to Him as sons and daughters (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Once again we have the figure of relationship between ourselves and the great God, who is a consuming fire; let us fear and tremble. Other references please consult Strong's Englishman's Heb. Con., but ready to hand we have Psalm 47:2; 97:9, etc.

No. 9 Yahweh Tsidkenu - The Lord our Righteousness

When all the previous conditions relating to the other titles have been fulfilled, then this name stands out like a city that is set on a hill.

Jeremiah 23:6 - The Name of Jesus in the Millennium, when "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is the name whereby He shall be called, 'The Lord our Righteousness'".

Jeremiah 33:15 - we find the perfect foil, the apex of names, the feminine of The Lord our Righteousness: she shall be called, or the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. No. 9 - the number of finality; making way for the number of ordained completion -

No. 10 Yahweh Shammah - The Lord is there - Ezekiel 48:35

This is the title by which Yahweh designates Himself as the dweller in the Millennial City of Jerusalem. Looking forward to the cloudless day which will follow the perfection of the millennium, when all human flesh will be past. In the past the tabernacle and the temple were His dwelling places between the cherubim, but when God is all in all He will move into the wider sphere of the city, with no human flesh to be consumed at His look. All will be hew. In the millennium there will be the temple and the city; but in New Jerusalem in the fullest sense there is no temple nor night, but the Lord Himself (Revelation 21:22-27).

So the Yahweh titles reach their glorious consummation.

Actually there are 14 of these titles. We leave this task to our readers who might care to search the pages of Holy Writ themselves, and find the jewels personally. Great pleasure shall they have who search the Word, and find the treasures thereof.

Finally, in this digressive chapter, let us take a look at the clustered names of the Lord, as they are found in Psalm 23.

As we have discovered, Yahweh Rohi means The Lord my Shepherd. The many-sidedness of His Shepherd Office is illustrated in the use of the word rendered 'shepherd'. In the margin of Genesis 4:2 it is translated 'feeder', and 'keeper' in the text; 'companion' in Proverbs 28:7; 'friend' in Judges 14:20; 'pastor' in Jeremiah 17:16; 'herdsman' in Genesis 13:7; and 'shepherd' in our Psalm as we have just reminded ourselves. As our Shepherd the Lord is the Feeder to provide the Keeper to protect the Companion for fellowship, the Friend for help, the Pastor for comfort, the Herdsman to gather and the Shepherd to lead. This is only a little demonstration of what to expect when we delve into the wonders of the Divine Revelation concerning Himself.

But to pass on, Psalm 23, the clustered titles of the Lord: 7 titles in one Psalm, 8 by implication. We have just considered Yahweh Rohi - The Lord my Shepherd. (1) I shall not want because Yahweh Yireh has seen the need and provided (2). He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters, "waters of rest" = Yahweh Shalom (3). He restoreth my soul, Yahweh Ropeka (4). He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake, Yahweh Tsidkenu (5). Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me, Yahweh Shammah (6). Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies. If we look carefully into the text we shall find No. 8 lurking here - Yahweh Nissi, while we are feasting He is fighting for us (Exodus 17 etc.) Thou anointest my head with oil - Yahweh Mekadeshcem - The Lord my sanctification (7). My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.



Thus was David's hope put plainly in the context of the Yahweh titles. May they find a resting place in us by His Grace and mercy.

Shall we now return to the context of what happened to Gideon upon this theophany.

Judges 6: 25 Gideon's first assignment.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it." And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock in the ordered place (or manner) and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." These words were dynamite to Gideon: what an assignment!

First of all, God lost no time in establishing His purpose. The same night. Was Gideon threshing by night as well as in secret? We often have wondered. Immediately upon this theophany Gideon is given a task to do: he is to exalt Yahweh in his own home, for 'charity begins at home', just as 'judgment must begin at the house of God' (1 Peter 4: 17). How can a man free his country who is living amidst bondage? After Gideon's personal relation with God had been established, we might say after he had won his victory in private, he is first to establish those relations in his own home circles. Does he worship and obey God for himself? Then that obedience must be claimed for the entire circle of his responsibilities. Is he to lift up the altar to the Lord for all Israel, and those who are nearest and dearest to him bow to Baal? They may be jealous enough for God's altar for all Israel, and yet have never set it up in their own homes. Apply this very simply to the family altar, as it is called very appropriately.

1. How can one enjoy the privileges of the public altar, who disregards this home altar? It is known even in our day.
2. Are we too timid to read the word of God and pray with our family and friends?
3. Or are we unwilling to lecture in our home area?
4. Do we always give thanks before partaking of our food?
5. at home or in public?
6. If we fail in these things of everyday life, how can we criticise Gideon?

At least, Gideon carried out the command, even though it was at night and in secret it would appear, although the tearing down of the altar would not be very silent we would imagine, and it would be no easy task to break down the Baal idol, nor would it be easy to erect God's altar on the ruins of Baal's. Again, many a one who may have boldly confessed Christ in public, has shrunk from so doing in the home. These are tests that we can apply to ourselves both in the world at work and in the social sphere. Do we ignore the call to sanctification and separateness? But this is the test. It must be done or there will be no further progress. Under the prevailing circumstances it does not seem strange that Gideon shrinks from doing this publicly. Again, it does not seem to show remarkable courage in a mighty man on this occasion. It would appear, though, that it was the self same night that he received his mission that Gideon acted and performed the deed. The premises of the suggestion seem to answer the query. Like the Lord, and the angelic visitor, Gideon reacted swiftly to the task set before him. We are apt to think of Nicodemus who went to Jesus by night for fear of the Jews (John 3: 1, 2). Gideon's hard task was undertaken under cover of the night.

(1) One point should be considered seriously at this juncture. Whether courageously or not, the work was carried out before the following dawn. (2) After all, Jesus rose while it was dark, because upon the arrival of the women at the tomb at, or before, the first light, Jesus had risen and was gone. (3) Not only was the altar broken down together with the wood of the Asherah or grove, which always accompanied Baal (Baal

representing the male element, and Astarte and the groves, the female deity), but, as we have read (Judges 6: 25 - 27), an altar to the Lord had to be built upon the top of the rock, and the wood of the grove used as fire upon which the second bullock of seven years was to be offered. Seven years was reckoned to be of full age for a bullock, and had representation as some authorities allow: accordingly it has been suggested that the seven years represented the seven years of terrible famine Israel had just passed through - a reminder of their lapse in the things of God. Seven is also used as a covenantal number and shows how the Lord had accepted the action of Gideon, on behalf of His people, and was now ready to forgive their folly. The altar to God had to be built in the fortress or stronghold (Hebrew word Mahoz), probably an inaccessible crag, such as was used in those days, as archaeological remains testify. The ordered place (verse 26) meant the placing of stones in order as a pavement. So the deed was done, and no doubt it would take many hours. Could Gideon do it alone? It would take too long, because by morning light Baal must be seen to have been dethroned and Yahweh exalted. It is noticeable that Gideon used ten servants belonging, not to his father, but of his own house. Again we note an inference of fear in Gideon.

Judges 6: 27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did so as the Lord had said unto him, and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.

Very much in the manner of Nicodemus, but in each case the mission was accomplished.

The word for bullock is the one used for sacrifice. Hosea 14: 3 - "So will we render as bullocks our lips (i. e. our praises) as our sacrifice." Fausset contends, "The repetition 'that thy father hath' with the 'altar of Baal', as here 'thy father's' with 'bullock' implies that the beast had been destined for sacrifice to Baal, even (not and, as margin), for there was but ONE bullock. If there had been two, Gideon would have been directed what to do with each, but God directs him only to the one, so the seven year old bullock is to be the typical atonement now that Israel penitently turns to God." Before Gideon, Israel's representative, can be employed to set Israel free, we have already suggested he must first cleanse his father's house of Baal idolatry, and as we have seen, consecrate himself entirely unto Yahweh by a burnt offering. So Jacob before him removed all idols from his household as the first preliminary to being at peace with God (Genesis 35: 2-5). We should imagine that Jacob searched his household more thoroughly this time, particularly after the Laban incident in Genesis 31: 34-35. One never knows; one wonders whether or not this incident prompted Job later when he offered for his children, lest they had sinned against God (Job 1: 5).

'Bullock' is particularly apt here, because this animal represented the god of fertility in the Canaanite Pantheon 'El'. Their supreme deity is often referred to as 'bull'. Concerning Manasseh there is another reason why this particular god should have place in their worship. Manasseh and Ephraim were the children of Joseph by Asenath, the daughter of the priest of On (Genesis 41: 45). We found to our surprise that Joseph was worshipped in Egypt under the symbol of the ox or young bull calf, and down the ages came to be worshipped by Israel, at least by those tribes of which he was forbear. (Consult 'Israel at Sinai - Numbers 33, by Debir Press. Also Bush on Genesis - cp also Deut. 33: 17. Also that Joseph gave commandment regarding his bones - Genesis 50: 23-26). Later, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who belonged to Ephraim (1 Kings 12: 26-32) established calf worship. One has to be very careful and examine the context very thoroughly, concerning these gods of Canaan, before making a decision. We wonder, had this particular evil descended down to Gideon's

household and day? His father was the custodian of the Baal altar? Whether this was so or not, at least Gideon had kept himself apart from it, primarily with the teaching he had received from his mother. So the wood of the Asherah pillar, just cut down as the wood for the burnt offering to Yahweh. 'Arak' is used for laying the wood in order for sacrifice (Genesis 22:9; 1 Kings 18:33) and 'setting' the shewbread on the table (Leviticus 24:6), and take the second bullock and offer a burnt sacrifice, as we have already outlined (literally the word means 'make to ascend a holocaust'). Its name 'Olah' implies that the whole ascended in the smoke and flame towards heaven, symbolising unreserved ardent self-dedication to Yahweh (Romans 12:1). Gideon was no priest (although later on he makes himself an ephod!), and the place was not the legal one for sacrifice. We can almost hear the comments on this point - "Well, everyone did what was right in his own eyes at this time." That may be so generally, but not in this place. God gave the command and God's will legalises what otherwise would have been illegal. So Elijah on Carmel (1 Kings 18:36), rather like the Asherah pillar which Gideon had cut down: what had been consecrated to idolatry is turned into the service of Yahweh (Luke 11:22, Romans 6).

Gideon, we noticed, took 10 men of his servants. Montanus submits the recognised number constituting a church, and required for performing public sacred duties, who were obviously obedient to him, possibly had been instructed in the true worship of Israel, as were Abraham's men in Genesis 14:14. Abraham took 318 men trained not so much for war as in the Word of Life from 'hanoch', to spit out, very much akin to their Master in the things of the covenant. Did this apply to Gideon, do we think? And do we try to make sure that those who help us get to know the God of Israel? The thought involves much soul searching for every master of his household in the Truth. It would appear that Gideon, no doubt unaware, had prepared his household for such an occasion. The Father's will had seen it before the foundation of the ages: as we have stressed, there are no emergencies with God, who knows the end from the beginning. A man's household is not prepared for such a mission in a few minutes. The danger loomed ominously towards Gideon (Judges 6:27), "and so it was, because he feared his father's household" (we remember that Gideon was the least, or the youngest in the household of Joash) "and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night."

As Joseph Hall said: "While Baal's altar and grove stood in the hill of Ophrah, Israel should in vain hope to prevail. It is most just with God, that judgment should continue with the sin, and no less mercy if it may remove after it. Wouldest thou fain be rid of any judgment? Inquire what false altars and groves are in thy heart: down with them first. First Baal's altar be ruined, ere God's be built: the true God will have no society with idols, neither will allow us. I do not hear Him say, 'That altar and grove which were abused to Baal, consecrate now to me', but, as one whose holy jealousy will abide no worship till there be no idolatry, He first commands down the monuments of superstition and then enjoins his own service; yet the wood of Baal's grove must be used to burn a sacrifice unto God. When it is cut down, God's detestation and their danger ceased. The good creatures of God that may have been profaned to idolatry may, in a change of their use, be employed to the Holy Service of their Maker." So we find from these comments the master is best seen in the servants who do their master's bidding, no matter what be the outcome. Gideon's servants amongst the idolatrous retinue of Joash, are religious like their master: we have hazarded the reason why). Yet, as it turns out, the mis-devotion of Joash and the Ophrahites was not obstinate. But how were Gideon and his servants to know this? Judges 6:27 revealed the mind of Gideon towards the household of Joash and also the men of Ophrah.

So the mighty mission began. Gideon and his ten men began the heavy task of

demolishing the altar of Baal and the Asherah grove. The work couldn't have been silent, nor could it have been unseen, as the blazing in the idol grove would show up lurid in the darkness of the oriental night and would show to all and sundry that the demolition of the altar and idol grove was going on. The altar to the Lord would be quickly though carefully built; the bullock slaughtered and dressed, the different portions laid in order on the wreckage of the idol's furniture, and burned. Seven terrible years had passed under the yoke of Midian, so the offering reminded the nefarious workers. God is Master of the night, besides of the day, and much of this work was accomplished in one night, using Gideon as the instrument of vengeance.

So the work was done. How did Gideon and his men spend what was left of the night - if any? Calmly knowing that they had accomplished for God a worthwhile mission, or with trepidation and fear awaiting the coming dawn and the anger of the crowd? The day dawned and we can imagine the stir that was caused not only in Ophrah, but also in the house of Joash. The morning sun showed the gap upon the hill where the symbols had stood of Baal and Astarte, and soon, like an angry swarm of bees, the people were buzzing round the scattered stones of the old altar and the new altar with its evidence of sacrifice on it - quite possibly the fire would be still burning. Where was he who ventured such indignity to Baal?

Judges 6: 28, 29 And when they arose - or rather the men of the city arose early in the morning (no doubt to worship Baal), behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said to one another, who hath done this? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this.

How did anyone know? The deed was done at the dead of night, when all were asleep. The whole situation savours very much to my thinking of the two occasions when Saul was at the mercy of David, in the cave and in the valley (1 Samuel 24 and 26). When David cut off part of Saul's robe, did he keep intact the blue riband on it? And did a similar deep sleep from God cover Ophrah? That no one saw or heard it is obvious, or else the alarm would soon have been raised and the purpose frustrated (from a human angle) because Gideon, as we have read, was afraid of both the men of the city and his father's household. Gideon means 'cutter down', and we have seen where he commenced this work - at home, in his own town. Gideon has 'cut down', with no eye but God's upon him. The one who can do that can do more. This is indeed the beginning of the deliverance from Midian. So how did they know? Had Gideon boldly announced what he had done by the might of the Lord? Or had the servants of Gideon let the secret out? It has been well said "a secret known to 10 men is no secret". It has been seen that the inquirers of the Ophrahites soon implicated Gideon. It would appear that Joash was the custodian who served the whole community. Gideon carried out his orders to the letter, but not in the broad light of day because he feared the violence of the community, which showed a most unhealthy reverence to Baal. This prompt reaction shows that his fears were well founded. However, the deed has been done: confrontation between Gideon and Baal, or between Yahweh and Baal, is now locked.

The Ophrahites were horrified to know that Gideon had not only destroyed Baal, but also desecrated his altar, and the demand was for him to come out and die, or for execution (Genesis 38: 24). It has been thought that the 'men of the city' were probably a remnant of the Canaanites as distinguished from the Abiezrite clan of his father. As we have said, the confrontation is now critical - one or the other must fall: they cannot stand together. The men of the city were accordingly the foremost zealots for Baal (Judges 6: 28, 29). Such a Canaanite remnant was in Shechem (Judges 9: 28) - a vivid reminder that 'neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean, but the

Canaanites would dwell in that land' (Judges 1:27). Here we have a typical example of Manasseh's folly, and we have seen how they became 'a thorn in their side.'

It would appear that though Joash was the custodian of the idol and the corresponding grove, he was able, either through common sense or through the action of Gideon, to abandon idolatry, and either turn, or return, to the true worship. This turn of mind is reflected in his answer to the men of Ophrah (Judges 6:31). "And Joash said unto all that stood against him (notice the hostility which the Baalites showed at this time), Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning" (allusion to the rising of the sun worship, meaning, 'well this is Baal's sphere'), and the following challenge comes immediately: "If he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his idol." As it was later, when Elijah challenged Baal, "Let Baal avenge himself"; there was no answer here. Why? Because as Paul said later (1 Corinthians 8), "We know that an idol is nothing in the world." Complete silence, so far as Baal's vengeance was concerned. No doubt you could have heard a pin drop after the rowdy mob had been quietened by Joash. Think of the raving scenes on Carmel, as the priests ran and leaped and capered about their offering, cutting themselves with knives, calling upon, beseeching Baal to justify himself; and we can hear the ironic jeering of Elijah, "Cry louder, louder, LOUDER". From sunrise to mid-day was considered by the Baalites to have been under the power of Baal or the Sun God. Consequently we listen to the words of Elijah in 1 Kings 18:27,29; "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." The answer was SILENCE, as we know, and what Elijah expected, and we are sure Gideon did also. Here we have one example of a resolute onset in a noted person, which may do more good than a thousand seconds in the proceeding of an action.

Gideon was prepared to stand alone for his God. As J. Hall said: "He hath no religion, that can suffer an indignity offered to his God." Surely this cannot be sufficiently emphasised in our day when we are surrounded (I almost wrote smothered; but this cannot be the right word) by the strife of Midian darkness and turmoil, irreligion at its worst and the daily blasphemy of our Lord and His word grows every day. We who belong to the Lord have to stand up for the cause, no matter how many may be against us, or what may be our bodily condition. Let us make the people see that we are the Lord's men and women. Of course we must start at home, where Gideon did, and we pray the Father will see, hear and bring deliverance for His Name. Lectures may not be attended, and the Bible Class deteriorating, but we have one platform upon which everyone sees and must recognise; that is, our performance of the Christ character in their midst. May the blessing of the Father be with us. It is at such times as these that the Name of the Lord can be wondrously manifested; and the theophany of the words "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" makes way for the true Immanuel revelation, the Lord is with us (Isaiah 7). In all this wondrous teaching we are constantly and acutely aware that every God-usurping thing around us or within us must be overturned and dethroned. "Our weapons are not according to the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4,5 RV). What happened was to the glory of God. So Baal was quiet, not a sound of his vindication of himself (also herself, we remind ourselves that Baal is both male, the idol itself, and the grove of the Asherah the female aspect). It has been thought that 'give Baal till tomorrow' was meant in verse 31. Whatever is meant, tomorrow was far more deadly for Baal, as it is with us - "tomorrow never comes."

Judges 6:32

"Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him because he hath thrown down his altar.

Jerubbaal means (1) Let Baal plead or take up the cudgels for himself, 1 Samuel 12:11 ; (2) Jerub-besheth, let the shameful thing plead. This interjection presumably by Joash should be taken in an impersonal sense, so reads the Heb. "He was called (by the people) Jerubbaal", i. e. the one with whom Baal should plead. We learn upon a little research that the Jews in ridicule of idolatry changed Baal into Besheth (shame) or Besheth, and used Jerubbesheth for Jerubbaal (2 Samuel 11:21). Compare Eshbaal (1 Chronicles 9:39) with Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 2:8).

Has anyone been trembling and hesitating to take some plain step of faith? Let him learn from Gideon and take courage. When we follow the plain path of faith, most of the consequences we dread fail to materialise. Gideon dreaded the opposition of his father because he (Gideon) was a true son of Israel, the youngest in his father's house. Now the result which he dreaded failed to materialise. Gideon could scarcely have thought that death might smite him (because he had been sent by God) and so possibly his father's enmity was the worst thing he really dreaded. Quite different from today, when parents are called by their first name, and general respect for the "senior citizens" has vanished. In the orthodox Jewish home, respect is still the rule, as it is also amongst the Arab nations. So ought we to respect our elders and remember our manners: it can but be pleasing to God, whose command was "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12).

What have we learned so far from God's dealing with Gideon?

- (1) Where he began – at home. "Take thy father's bullock and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath". Jesus said, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19). Witness begins at home. And Andrew went and told his brother Peter (John 1:35-41).
- (2) At once. No time was lost. Gideon taking 10 men as helpers and witnesses. Is it not clear for us? Before long the 'Call' will come, personally to each one of us. "The Master is come and calleth for thee". There will be then no delay on our part, that is, unless we have been unfaithful knowingly as Lot in Sodom. We shall not want to linger in the cities about to be destroyed. (Genesis 18:16; 19:15-23).
- (3) What Gideon did. His work was twofold. A pulling down. A building up.
- (4) A pulling down. "Throw down the altar of Baal" (Judges 6:25). The removal of all that was wicked and false, seeking to usurp the will of God (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5 RV). Nothing must stand against the knowledge of God.
- (5) Secondly, a Building up. "Build an altar unto the Lord" (Judges 6:25). It is not enough for us to tear down the worship of false gods: we have to preach Christ and Him crucified, and to build up the altar of God (Hebrews 9:13 etc.).

What followed?

- (6) A changed attitude. "The men of the city said, Bring out thy son that he may die" (Judges 6:30). The thinking of fleshly men is usually bitterly opposed to the man of God, who seeks first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. But as Jesus said, "The disciple is not greater than his Master", and usually the first evidence of faithfulness to Christ is the sign for instant opposition of the ungodly.
- (7) A changed name. Therefore on that day Gideon was called Jerubbaal (Judges 6:32). "Let Baal plead", or "Baal's antagonist". It is a blessed stigma to be called a hater of false gods or an enemy to ignorance and superstition. It is quite becoming for a brother or sister to get a "new name" when they become new creatures (Genesis 32:28) in standing if not in nature.

We now approach the fourth part of the story – how Gideon was encouraged.

**Judges 6:33** "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together and pitched in the Valley of Jezreel."

Was this the swift retaliating action to the destruction of Baal, etc.? Possibly, we think, but certainly because of Midian and his in-laws, so to speak; in fact, they were all of them natural relatives of Israel, descendants of Ishmael and Esau. They absolutely swarmed over the fertile land, and it represented their 8th annual invasion of the Land: they crossed the Jordan and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel at the eastern end of Esdraelon, which was not only a particularly fertile area, but also provided a convenient point for raids on the surrounding areas. It is known that Gideon's brothers were slain at Tabor in this area (Judges 8:18,19), but it is by no means certain that it was on this particular occasion.

It is also noticeable that the 8th was the last invasion by Midian into Israel, and they find unexpected resistance from the impoverished, from the despised and humiliated Israelites. God had prepared for His people a Saviour in the person of Gideon. Just so because 8 belongs to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose gematria is 888 in scripture (Jesus). In the very near future, when the greater Gideon shall vanquish the enemy 'who comes in like a flood' in the greater day of Midian, the anointed of the Lord, who clothed Himself with the Word inside, and outside, the Word made flesh, now the Lord made Spirit. How often does the name of the Amalekites crop up in Biblical history, both Midian and Amalek, Fausset says, "Akin to the Edomites, being descended from Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:12)." Balaam under the Spirit said of them (Numbers 24:20, Heb. "Beginning of the heathen (was) Amalek, and its end shall be to the perishing." In age, power and celebrity this Bedouin tribe was certainly not 'the first of the nations', but, as the margin says, 'the first of the nations that warred against Israel'.

- (1) It was the first that opened the conflict against the Kingdom of God (Israel). (Exodus 17:8-16).
- (2) The heinousness of their sin at the outset lay in this when Israel at Rephidim had no water to drink, and God miraculously supplied it from the smitten rock. The Amalekites tried to deprive Israel of a chief necessity of life, just supplied by miracle, thus fighting not so much with them as with God. Instigated by the same hatred of Israel (as the covenant people of God) they joined with the Canaanites in discomfiting Israel at Hormah (Numbers 14:43-45). Next they were in league with Eglon the Moabite, another natural relative of Israel against Israel.
- (3) And now they in league with Midian, the oppressor of the people of God. An old Yorkshire proverb often quoted by my father-in-law says, "The worst ship that ever sailed was relationship." Sadly very true in some circumstances.

The Valley of Jezreel (known as the setting for Armageddon in the near future) extended across central Palestine from the Jordan to the Great Sea (the Mediterranean), separating Mount Carmel and the Samaritan hills from those of Galilee. Its wonderful richness and its exposed position have tempted the invader from the earliest times. This plain has been the great battlefield of Palestine, in ancient as in modern times (Napoleon etc.) and as we look on the political scene today in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Russia, the USA and Britain, we can feel already the tremors of that mighty conflict. This time may it be 'New Clear' (Zechariah 14:12 appears certain: flesh consuming away while standing upon their feet, etc.) We are very privileged to know the end of the matter and pray that we will stand in Daniel's lot at the end of the days.

Gideon has gained the victory over self and Baal in private: now must come the

trial to do the same in public. Openly, no longer in the dark, nor to be in a corner. For all the world to see, and particularly all Israel in that day.

Judges 6: 34 But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet and Abi-ezer was gathered after him.

Literally the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon: the Spirit of the Lord put on Gideon (clothed itself with Gideon), as with a garment (cp. 1 Chronicles 12:18 and 2 Chronicles 24:20; Job 29:14). Cp. Hebrew word (labash), means to put on, so as to fill. See Genesis 28:20, Leviticus 6:10, 15:4 (Gesenius 430). Cp. the obvious quotation having reference to Jesus the Redeemer of Israel, who is described as putting on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clad with zeal as with a cloak (Isaiah 59:17), and the Christian is said at his baptism to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27) and the disciples are said to be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

So we find –

- (1) Gideon strengthened by the Spirit of the Lord, and by
- (2) His father's house, the house of Abi-ezer, now no longer worshippers of Baal, but zealous for the God of Israel.
- (3) Judges 6:35: And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, his own tribe, and
- (4) unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them: the neighbouring tribes, which had hazarded their lives against Sisera, and afterwards produced the greatest champions of all spiritual Israel - the Apostles of Christ.

We have a notable omission here - the men of Issachar. Why? A look at the map will reveal the significance. They dwelt in the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, which was occupied by the enemy.

#### What happened with Gideon?

We will let Joseph Hall introduce Judges 7.

"Of all the instruments that God did use in so great a work, I find none so weak as Gideon, who yet of all others was styled valiant. Natural valour may well stand with spiritual cowardice. Before he knew that he spake with a God, he might have had just colours for his distrust; but after God had approved his presence and almighty power, by fetching fire out of the stone, then to call for a watery sign of his promised deliverance, was no other than to pour water upon the fire of the Spirit. The former trial God gave vanished, this, upon Gideon's choice and entreaty. The former miracle was strong enough to carry Gideon through his first exploit of ruining the idolatrous grove and altar; but now, when he saw the swarm of the Midianites and Amalekites about his ears, he calls for new aid, and not trusting to the Abi-ezrites and his other thousands of Israel he runs to God for a further assurance of victory. The refuge was good, but the manner of seeking it savours of distrust. There is nothing more easy than to be valiant, when no peril appeareth, but when evils assail us upon equal terms, it is hard, and commendable not to be dismayed. If God had made that proclamation now, which afterwards was commanded to be made by Gideon, 'Let the timorous depart', I doubt whether Israel had nor wanted a guide: yet how willing is the Almighty to satisfy our weak desires. What tasks is he content to be set by our infirmity! The fleece must be wet and the ground dry: the ground must be wet, and the fleece dry: both are done, that now Gideon may see whether He would make Himself hard earth, or yielding wool. God could at pleasure distinguish betwixt and the Midianites, and pour down either mercies or judgments where He lists; and that he was set on work by that God which can command all the elements, and they obey Him; fire, water, earth, serve both Him and (when He will) his."

No doubt these words, quaintly but trenchantly spoken, have filled our minds, at times



when we have read these words and marvelled at the grace of God that is shown to Gideon. But is this concept correct in the divine thinking? That Gideon acted rightly in asking for these further signs of God's will could only have pleased the Father and been according to His will, otherwise they would have remained unanswered. The divine concept of Gideon right at the first was that of a mighty man of valour. Joseph Hall was true in his remarks regarding "natural valour may well stand with spiritual cowardice." Many a medal was won in the days of horse cavalry because the horse bolted. One thing is very clearly revealed in Gideon's character - that he never did anything in his own way. He consulted Yahweh, and isn't this the correct way? The world holds with natural valour, so to speak. Remember Ecclesiastes 9:4 - "A living dog is better than a dead lion." Israel had to consult Urim and Thummim before they acted (Numbers 27:21 etc.), and the greatest example of all, the Lord Jesus who admitted being helpless, apart from the Father (John 5:19). Do we consult the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ before we act or speak? It is obvious in many cases that we do not, and strive our hardest to master our personal and ecclesial difficulties. It is indeed manly to do so and try, but first of all we should ask God about it, consult the Head Office so to speak, then we may be sure the final result will be correct if we take Gideon's way and ask whether or not our thinking is right.

One would have thought that after being invested with the Spirit of God, and having previously had the truly wondrous experience of destroying the idol and the grove, Gideon would not have required further testimony from God. But now the manifestation is to be applied to the natural relatives, Midian and Amalek, and apparently Gideon requires more signs. They are to be found in Judges 6:36-40. "And Gideon said unto God, If Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as Thou hast said. And it was so; for he rose early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece: let it now be dry only upon the fleece; and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night; for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

What is the teaching to be found in this incident?

(1) We have a convincing proof that the providence of God in connection with the needs of His people is not the blind working of chance. The Spirit of God, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and, like the dew, it may fall on the fleece or not on the fleece according to the cry of the man of God. This was the twofold witness to Gideon. The Spirit within, and the special token of God's workings without. Prayer and Providence go together in his case. What a further encouragement it must have been to him to have as it were a direct tangible evidence that God was with him, and so it would seem the boldness of faith, even when it seems to need confirmatory signs, never offends our gracious God. Abraham said, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" (i.e. Canaan). Is God offended that His word is not sufficient? Ah, no, but He gives the wondrous night vision of the furnace and the flaming torch (Genesis 15:7-14). "Prove me now" He says to Israel: "Ask of the Lord a sign" He says to King Ahaz (Isaiah 7:11). The Father is well pleased when we seek Him, and will no doubt show us by some sign or means which way we ought to go. Not always our way, but the right way.

We have already adduced that these signs were not arbitrary wonders. They are sent to convey at the least one definite lesson, usually more than one, as we shall see with the one we are investigating at the moment. They meant to confirm faith - a lesson appropriate to the occasion, and reaching far more deeply than the relief of the outward need.

What then are we to learn from this twofold sign?

(2) Dew, as we are all familiar with, was the express token of God's favour, as it was the source largely of the fertility of the land, which would have been parched and barren without it.

(a) Isaac, when pronouncing the blessing upon Jacob, uses this figure (Genesis 27:28). "Therefore God give thee the dew of heaven" etc.

(b) Moses repeats it in the blessing of the tribes (Deuteronomy 33:28).

(c) Elijah shows God's judgment on the land by declaring dew should not fall (1 Kings 17:1).

(d) Haggai repeats the simile, "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit (Haggai 1:10).

(e) Hosea in describing the restoration of the nation, when God will bless them again, describes Him as saying, "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (Hosea 14:5).

(f) Dew is also taught as the resurrection in Scripture. Isaiah 26:19 - "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

(g) Dew, or the forming of dew in the cold chill of the Eastern night, is associated with privation and suffering. Cp. teaching on this point in Song 5, by A. Hall, Debir Press.

(h) These are some of the scriptures and their teaching of dew:

The dew of Hermon in Psalm 133 is compared to the return of the Lord and His saints to bless Zion with life evermore, and so on.

We know that this refreshing is brought about for Israel after the flesh and Israel after the Spirit when the Lord shall come. Acts 3:19-26 - "The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Just as without the dew the land would cease to be fruitful, so without the work of the Spirit there can be no fruits, only barrenness will be the result.

### (3) Removal of the fleece.

The fleece is the wool taken from the sheep, and would appear to suggest the removal from the owner of that which rightly belonged to it. Is it not significant that in three scriptures where sheep-shearing is mentioned, there was evil?

(a) Genesis 38:13. Judah's sin with Tamar was at the time of sheep-shearing (See Song 4:3 - lips of scarlet, for this teaching).

(b) 1 Samuel 25:7-11 etc. Nabal's taunt to David again was at the time of sheep shearing - open house, all over the world, even in our own day and age.

(c) Absalom slew his brother on such an occasion - 2 Samuel 13:23-28.

(d) Ezekiel 34:3, speaking of false prophets or rather shepherds, says, "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock." Scripture abounds with the simile of the shepherd and his care of the flock, but is it not truly striking that these are the only occasions where the shearing of sheep is referred to? And of course, the classic shearing of all time, Isaiah 53:7 - "As the sheep before her shearers is dumb so opened he not his mouth." Apply this to the state of Israel at this time, and we see how fitting is the case. The people had been sheared, we might say, by the Midianites, till nothing but the fleece remained, and that a remnant. This is looking at their state historically we might say. But thinking of their subsequent history, their captivity in Babylon, and their present state, although returned in part to Israel, we conclude that the incident of the fleece in Judges was a prophecy, a warning,

of what was to come. They are "a people scattered and peeled", and now awaiting the spring of 1975 when the flood of the enemy shall rush in, of which more later.

The threshing floor is the place where the grain is separated from the chaff, under the hoofs of the ox, or the teeth of the threshing instrument. In that way it would suggest the enemy, but looked at as Assyria in Isaiah 10 to purge his people.

When Gideon asks for the dew upon the fleece, is he not asking God to give His blessing to His persecuted people, not only at that time, but in the last days? In our day, when He will yet be as the dew to Israel, when the dew is on the floor; does it not speak of the fact the blessing would come to the Gentiles during the times when Israel is Lo-Ammi; not God's people speaking when Yahweh is known as the God of Heaven, not dwelling in the land, and between the cherubim upon the mercy seat. Indeed, the blessing that has come upon us, the present time.

Obviously, whether He give or withhold blessing, God is manifesting Himself for His people. His very chastisements are a pledge of future mercies. Romans plainly indicates that the very dryness of the Jews now, while blessing has come upon the Gentiles, is a sure proof that God will one day intervene for his beloved people: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." (Romans 11:28). With Ridout, may we not thus interpret all God's ways with His people. Faith sees both in the chastening and the blessing, the sign of deliverance. Why should He chasten, unless it were for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness? (Hebrews 12:10). If there is faith to lay hold on Him, might it not receive as a sign even the dryness of the Lord's people - a sign of the coming shower as we are witnessing today? For who shows us the dryness, and if He show it, is not that a pledge of the help Israel so much needs? Judges 1:11-15: Cp. the lesson we have seen with Achsah and the dowry of the south land: she acted rightly and asked for the springs of water.

Dew is saturating in its contact. Gideon asked for the dew on the fleece, and to prove this to himself he wrung a bowl of water from the fleece (Judges 6:37-38). Is there not something suggestive in Gideon's action before he got the bowl of dew? "He thrust (RV pressed) the fleece together and wringed the dew out." The word thrust is a primary one, and means to press together; and the word wringed is also a primary one and means to suck out, to drain, to squeeze.

- (1) It is used in Leviticus 1:15 of the bird offered in sacrifice whose blood was wrung out.
- (2) Of the draining of a cup (Ezekiel 23:34).
- (3) Gideon would never have got the dew from the fleece by a passing touch. There had to be the earnest grip and resolute wringing. The same thing applies to the enduing of the Spirit.
- (4) Christ went down into the waters of death (the Jordan: John 1:25-28) before he was endued with the Spirit.
- (5) He was tried in the wilderness before it is said of him, "He returned in the power of the Spirit.
- (6) Christ taught that those who plead effectually are those who pray with importunity (Luke 11:5-10, 18:5).
- (7) The disciples tarried in the upper room before they were clothed with the Spirit's power.
- (8) It was the prayer that was made earnestly by the ecclesia at Jerusalem that brought Peter out of prison (Acts 12:5 RV). It was because Elijah "prayed earnestly" that the heavens were shut up and opened again, and it is "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man which availeth much" (James 5:16-17). We could say that our

earnestness is not the cause of God's giving, but it is the condition which makes us appreciate His bestowing. In this age of thanklessness and lack of appreciation, these words are a stirring exhortation to us. Listlessness and slackness God abominates. Unbelief is characteristic of both, but faith grips and goes. "Tighten your grip" an old student used to say. They who tighten their grip will find they are gripped, and will be able to grip the tighter. Those who press the fleece of God's promises will always find the dew of the Spirit's blessing.

So we must bring our thoughts on dew in scripture to a close, after a final word on Gideon. The subject is a major one in its teaching in almost every avenue of thought, particularly in Old Testament doctrine. F. E. Marsh sorts out the division briefly:

- (1) Dew is divine in its source
- (2) Dew is refreshing in its favour
- (3) Dew is beneficial in its service
- (4) Dew is precious in its benefits
- (5) Dew is saturating in its contact
- (6) Dew is produced according to law
- (7) Dew is silent in its coming
- (8) Dew is refreshing in its ministry
- (9) Dew is hiding in its enclosure
- (10) Dew is reflective in its mirroring
- (11) Dew is rich in its contents
- (12) Dew is emblematic in its strength
- (13) Dew is glorified in its associations
- (14) Dew is identified with Christ

(Also see Rissah, Numbers 33, pp.29-31; Debir Press).

Such a list of subjects would more than adequately fill a Bible Class programme and would exercise the ability to use a concordance and lexicon. The application would afford indeed a dew-pond of the Spirit in refreshment and spiritual strength to the whole ecclesia.

Finally, the dew in relation to Gideon's enterprise; to Gideon in his fears, the filling of the fleece with dew from heaven, whilst the earth around was dry, intimated that, whereas Israel was heretofore, through apostacy, as dry spiritually as the heathen around (compare the "dry places" - Matthew 12:43), Yahweh was now about to fill Gideon and his nation with reviving grace; Israel is now to be endued with the strength from on high, even as Gideon their champion has been already 'clothed' with the Spirit of Yahweh, whilst the heathen oppressors remain dry and powerless spiritually.

The reversing of the sign at Gideon's request, and the dryness of the fleece whilst the dew rested on the earth around, assured him that Yahweh could and would manifest His power even amidst the weakness and helplessness of His people, in the face of the nations which were flourishing all around. It is of such as Gideon that Hebrews 11:32-34 testifies in that they "out of weakness were made strong". Milton says of the martyrs, "they shook the powers of darkness with the irresistible power of weakness."

## CHAPTER 7

Judges 7:1

Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early and pitched beside the well of Harod, so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.

Now the new name takes over: Jerubbaal (the pleader against Baal), having hewed his idol down (Gideon), is now in the past tense. Under him the whole tribe of Manasseh, his own particular tribe, and those to whom he had sent messages - Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali - are assembled, and Gideon, with his retinue, takes up a position beside the well of Harod, or rather above the well or spring known today as Ein Harod (Jewish text) or Ain Jalud (Arabic), (Beer is a well, but Ain is a spring); so that the Midianites were on the north side of them. Judgment always comes from the north to Israel, that which is black or turned away from the sun. (The north face of the Eiger comes into mind always when we think of the north. No sun ever reaches the forbidding and precipitous heights).

However this may be, Midianite hosts were encamped on the hill Little Hermon, that is on its northern slopes. Just northwards across the valley of Jezreel, less than 5 miles from the Israeli force, was the Midianitish encampment by the hill of Moreh. The Midianites were obviously aware of the presence of the Israelite army and their intelligence service knew the name of Gideon (Judges 7:14), but it does not seem to have been a serious threat to them at this time, no doubt because of their greatly superior numerical force and their successes during the past seven years. The valley between afforded plenty of space for the grasshopper-like encampment spread across the valley.

Hill of Moreh = Heb. teaching, sage, prophet, imparter of wisdom, from which we gather that what is to be worked out here will be of great value to the mind receptive of truth. The divine mind would be revealed, and it became so in a very convincing way. Connected with Hermon, which means lofty mountain, high, majestic, the lessons were to show the loftiness of the God of Israel, and they did this dramatically.

Judges 7:2 And the Lord said unto Gideon, the men that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me.

In keeping with the rest of this book and of divine deliverance by that which is weak and contemptible in the sight of men, yet mighty through God in pulling down everything that rears up itself against God - to His glory, and not ours. One would think that the odds loaded against Gideon's 32,000 men, opposing 135,000 invaders would be quite sufficient in themselves to prove this point, and when we think of the arms Israel had, which would be nil at this time. The conquering powers always made the conquered disarm to the point that only implements of agriculture were left in their hands. The victory of Barak was accomplished from this human standpoint, with arms such as mattocks against 900 iron chariots with swords on their axles (Centurion tanks) in their day, as we have already found, weapons which, from a human standpoint, were utterly futile. For all the tribes descended on Kishon, they only carried agricultural implements, against the might of the Canaanitish armour. The Lord God sent His hail and His floods, and the might of Harosheth of the Gentiles got stuck in the mud and mire of the Kishon floods and were ripe for the attack of Barak and Deborah, and Sisera (the Bismarck of Canaan) at that time died by a wooden tent peg at the hands of Jael, a Gentile housewife. So 32,000 against 135,000 fully armed cavalry, and Israel being unarmed men, certainly didn't seem to make a contest at all. Israel were too many according to

the divine mind. We must, however, remember that Bullinger disputes the number of Israel (so far as I have found, he is the only one who has done so). He takes the 'twenty and two thousand' not as 22,000 as read, but 2,020, making the original number of Gideon's army as 12,020 men, and in supporting his conclusions he gives the following details and references: 1 Samuel 6:19; Judges 12:6. "From Numbers 31:5 we learn that 1000 from each tribe was presented when Israel was directed by Moses in a former war with Midian. After a further test 9,700 must have 'bowed down on their knees unto Baal.' Compare 1 Kings 19:18. Only 300 were left." These figures I leave to your discretion or otherwise. But if there were only 300 left, what happened to the other 20 unaccounted for from Bullinger's figures? We can only be tentatively dogmatic about this one.

- (1) On the one hand, 32,000 men from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  tribes does appear a large number (we remember Manasseh held country on the other side Jordan).
- (2) The final figures do not tally.
- (3) But on the other hand, the hand of the Lord is seen to be more powerful (if one may use this phrase). 12,020 men against 135,000 Midianites and their allies.

This drastic depletion of the Israeli band was given under the directives of Judges 7:2-7, Judges 7:3: Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilboa (not Gilead as narrative). So Fausset and all authorities: Ain Jalud, or Harod, lies at the foot of Mount Gilboa. 22,000 men took advantage of the clause in Deuteronomy 20:8 regarding combat action, cp. Hall, Numbers 33:24, Haradah, pp.39/41 for full exposition of Ein Harod: both words come from the same Heb. root - Haradah, trembling. It will be seen how apt these two names and circumstances are from the fear or 'trembling' of Isaac when he realised that he had very nearly blessed the wrong man (Genesis 27:3), down to our own day when those who 'tremble' at God's word and are of a contrite spirit will receive the approbation of the Lord (Isaiah 66:2). Please refer to the comments on Haradah for further exposition of these words. We will just bring out the lessons at Ein Harod.

- (1) We have seen the fear of doubt, although, in a good sense the fear of taking the wrong decision from God's angle. Not to be confused with fear of doubt, that is lack of faith. This is in regard to Gideon.
- (2) "Let him that is fearful depart." 22,000 men do just this. One third of the men were scared and left: cowardice in one sense, but the odds from a human angle were truly fearful. Common sense in another. Brave men in another, that is the third sense. Brave men indeed who can follow so unpopular a course. We remember the experiences of the brotherhood during two world wars.

We have already seen that Moreh in Judges 7 has been construed as 'rebellion' and comes from a root meaning teacher, illustration, etc., and we do have a remarkably clear demonstration of the conditions prevailing, and which came about because Israel had rebelled against God's law (Leviticus 26:36 is the relevant passage of confirmation). Because every man has been doing what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25, 17:6 etc.)

No doubt the Midianitish patrols had seen this wholesale departure from Mount Gilboa. One wonders what they thought, and they would return with the tidings that Gideon's deeds were only a storm in a teacup, and that things were set for an easy victory and further spoil.

The decision of the Lord 'yet too many' brings them down to the water, and "I will try (test) them for thee there, and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with

thee, the same shall not go." So he brought down the people unto the water, and the Lord said unto Gideon, "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink." And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were 300 men, but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, "by the 300 men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand, and let all the other people go every man to his place (Judges 7:4-7). This is where geography takes over to show us in one sense at the least why this choice was made. Geo. Adam Smith's "Historical Geography of the Holy Land" brings out the aptness of the decision. He shows us quite clearly that those who came down to drink at this spring were under the close scrutiny of the Midianitish patrols on this wall, and of the alertness of the 300 who were finally chosen. Brethren and sisters who have visited this area have brought back pictures to show that even today these findings are accurate. In our own day two kinds of alertness and fear must occupy us all the days of our life in Christ:

- (A) A constant fear in the sense of reverence and of the nearness of the divine presence (God forbid we should ever lose this awareness, like Samson (Judges 16:20) who did not realise that God had forsaken him). Along with this most important of our experiences comes
- (B) A constant awareness and fear of the presence of the enemy, very near and ominous, as these 300 demonstrated. We must never 'lower our sights' from the enemy, nor put away our weapons to slake our thirst. Blind courage is useless, as Song 3:8 illustrates. We must be able to defend our Lord with swords girded ready. Why? For fear of the night (the Gentile night).

Have you noticed, dear reader, that all the action surrounding Gideon, so far as action goes, took place in the night. All our fighting, spiritual that is, must take place in the Gentile night. We have to shine like stars (Philippians 2:15) which are not visible in the day. "The day without clouds" belongs to Zion's glory, for which we hope and daily pray: so we follow with eager anticipation the signs which herald the greater day of Midian with darkness and confused noise, and the destruction by the Lord Jesus. We see as we write the clear signs, armaments, treaties, strikes and civil wars, along with physical displays of winter turning into summer, and vice versa, of earth tremors even felt in our own land. When will the third generation wake up in these last days? Or will it sleep the sleep of spiritual death? The writer exhorts himself first of all. We have just read of the willing blindness of Pharaoh and his generation. We have been and are still writing about the slumber which follows 40 years of peace ensuing after the exploits of Deborah, Barak and Jael, and the days of vicious marauding by Midianitish raiders who plundered Israel until the land swarmed black with locusts, ~~or~~ so it seemed. Seven years passed and Israel were helpless because they had departed from the living God.

Now God had called Gideon to lead the counter attack. Manasseh, Zebulun, Naphtali have gathered together under him; soon the battle is to be heard with confused noise, every man's hand will be against his brother, in the thick darkness of the night. The night is black in our day, the forces are gathering and this battle will shake the world and its cities to their very foundations (Isaiah 24th and 25th chapters). Are we sons of the night and slumbering with them and ready for being swept away with them, or are we the true sons of light, walking in true fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:5-7)? As the third generation we go on either to perfection or destruction: there is no halfway stage. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, and as it is impossible to have one foot in both places at once, so it is impossible to be a child of

darkness and sons of light at one and the same time. Whom do we follow, Christ or Belial? The men of Gideon had to make this choice, decisively, at Harod. Do we "tremble" with the 22,000 who left, secretly at night, and departed quietly to their homes? We note that Rabbi Levi translates, Let him return and depart early, from Heb. Yitzpor, akin to Tzaphirah, Morning, Ezekiel 7:10; but Gesenius, Kiel, from an Arabic root to go in a circle, "Let him slink away by winding by-paths from Mount Gilboa." How do we approach our task in these days? They are dark enough, but do we get down on our knees and lay down our 'Christian arms' to satisfy our thirst of the streams of the well of 'trembling'? Are we awake to the danger and ferocity of the enemy, and slake our thirst like the Gentile dogs that we are, ready for instant action, not laying our arms aside for an instant, ready to do exploits for our God? These thoughts come to mind as we think over the incident before us.

Had the Midianitish patrols really seen the departing cowards? - and those who were unaware of the enemies' presence and the deadly peril two hundred yards away, or did God react, as He did later, and bring a deep sleep upon their activities, so that the non-combatants were able to slip away undiscovered?

We quote from J. Hall:

"So if we cannot make up the match with God (as did Gideon), when we have our own asking, we are worthy to sit out. Gideon had 32,000 men at his heels. The Midianites covered the ground like grasshoppers: and now whilst we think, or rather the Israelites thought, 'we are too few', God says the people are too many. If the Israelites must have looked for victory from their fingers, they might have well said, the Midianites are too many for us: but that God, whose thoughts and words are unlike men's, says, 'They are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands'. If human strength were to be opposed, there should have needed and equally, but now God meant to give the victory; his care is not how to get it, but how not to lose or blemish the glory of it gotten. How jealous God is of His honour. He is willing to give deliverance to Israel, but the praise of the deliverance He will keep to himself, and will shorten the means, that he may have the full measure of the glory. And He will not allow lawful means to stand in the light of his honour: how will He endure it to be crossed so much as indirectly? It is less danger to steal anything from God than His glory. As a prince, which, if we steal or clip his coin, may pardon it, but if we go about to rob him of his crown, will not be appeased. There is nothing that we can give to God, of whom we receive all things; that which He is content to part with He gives us, but He will not abide we should take ought from Him which He would reserve for Himself. It is all one with Him to save with many, as with few (Judges 7:2; Deuteronomy 8:12-17; 1 Corinthians 1:29), but He rather chooses to save by few, that all the victory may redound to Himself."

J. Hall appends a prayer which we could do well to take to ourselves: "O God, what art Thou better for praises, to whom, because Thou art infinite, nothing can be added? It is for our good that Thou wouldest be magnified of us. O teach us to receive the benefit of thy merciful favours, and to thee the thanks" (through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. A.H.)

Just a concluding quote from this 17th Century stalwart, at least for his own beliefs: he went to the Tower of London for 5 years for them. "Although it was not their courage that should save Israel, yet without their courage God would not serve Himself of them. Christianity requires men; for if our spiritual difficulties meet not with high spirits, instead of whetting our fortitude, they quell it. David's royal band of worthies was the type of the forces of the church, all valiant men, and able to encounter with thousands." (See under Andrew; The Lord's Men, by the present



writer, by the Debir Press, for consolidation of this typical aspect, both Davidic and Christ's disciples agree in this principle (and that we should follow their example goes without saying.) "Neither must we be strong only, but acquainted with our own resolutions, not out of any carnal presumption, but out of a faithful reliance upon the strength of God, in whom, when we are weak, then are we strong. O thou white-liver! doth but a foul word, or a frown, scare thee from Christ? doth the loss of a little land or silver disquiet thee, doth but the sight of the Midianites in the valley strike thee? Home, then, home to the world, thou art not then for the conquering band of Christ; if thou canst not resolve to follow him, through infamy, prisons, racks, gibbets, flames, depart to thine house, and save thy life to thy loss", which puts it about right in whatever dispensation we happened to live - antideluvian, Mosaic, or Christian: what is more to the point, it is true to you and to me, and time is getting very short. Compare Psalm 110 v. 3-7, where all this teaching of the dew and stooping down is crystalised in the experience of our Lord, because He drank of the brook by the way He finally had the dew of His youth.

We find then Gideon with his very selective band, specially chosen by God, as were all the fighting men of Israel (Numbers 1): 300 men all told, to destroy the hosts of Midian, 135,000 men. Sixty valiant men guarded the palanquin of Solomon and his bride:  $60 \times 5 = 300$ : the number of the mighties multiplied by 5 - the number of grace. These mighties in Gideon's day represent the Bride through the ages, and Gideon, the man made mighty through obedience, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord, the Captain of our salvation, made perfect through suffering. The very means J. Hall outlined for those who follow the Master, or "they who would valiant be", again of the 17th century. We can follow the path of John Bunyan in Bedford gaol (though we do not necessarily accept his doctrine). He was indeed valiant for his Lord, spending over 15 years in prison, where he learned how to see and equate the vast difference between 'the mud and the stars'. No doubt if we have a similar kind of faith we too shall make the correct division and strive to be like the stars that shine forever, putting to shame the black darkness in which we live (Philippians 2: 15).

Our band is ready in the darkness of the night above Ein Harod, no longer 'trembling' at the nearness of the enemy, only at the word of God, with contrite hearts awaiting the commands of Adonai, or Master, Yahweh of Hosts, or armies. This is very much like the night to be remembered (Exodus 12: 14, 42) when Israel awaited the command of the Lord to march out of Egypt in ranks of five (Exodus 12th and 13th chapters). We have seen  $5 \times 60 = 300$ , our number; but  $5 \times 12 = 60$ . The numerological aspect then is all inclusive. Once again we find 5, the number of grace, this time connected with 12, the tribes of Israel, the gates of new Jerusalem, 12 judges, 12 apostles, and soon a further breakdown is possible,  $12 = 3 \times 4$ : the application first of all in Gideon's day, but the cycle of divine prophecy throughout all ages.  $3 \times$  perfection, and 4, the camps of Israel in their fourfold manifestation to the world. These are some of the lessons intended to be conveyed by the 300 chosen.

Let us now return to the text of Judges 7 and the word of command to Gideon at this time: let us remember that the action was in the Valley of Jezreel, or the plain of Esdraelon, and near to the scene of Barak's significant victory over Sisera.

Judges 7:7. It is significant that of the 300 that lapped, catching water in the hollow of the hand, whilst keeping vigilance for fear of the night, not one perished. These 300 represent indeed the remnant of the ages who will be beautified with salvation at the coming of the Lord.

Judges 7:8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets, and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those 300 men, and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

We have already suggested that the 300 represented the Ecclesia and the believing remnant at this time. It is equally noticeable that the host of Midian was beneath them in the valley; reminiscent of Barak, who descended upon Sisera not far away from here. We notice once again, no arms are notified as being carried, only 'victuals and trumpets'. What is the significance of these words? We quickly see the application of the trumpets in the action about to take place, but what about the victuals? The workman is worthy of his hire, or victuals, indeed. He has already drunk by the way (Psalm 110:7) and overcome the well of 'trembling'. Should he then go faint by the wayside? The example of Saul is before us (but not before them): 1 Samuel 14:24-45. An example of the lack of responsibility on Saul's part, not only in making the foolish curse: whenever did an army not fight on its stomach? and pursuing the enemy all through the heat of the day, this would quickly dissipate their strength. The breaking off of the action by Joshua at an early date in not pressing home his bridgehead at Jericho, nor until after Gilgal with all its implications (see Judges 2:1-5) was of the Lord, and with Joshua always the battle did belong to the Lord of the Battle, i. e. the Lord of Hosts. This is another matter and the contrast is wide. The curse of Saul was foolish. The observance by Joshua of God's law was correct; as events proved in both cases.

In the first century the sin of gluttony and drinking to excess was condemned by Paul, during the Corinthian love feasts. This, of course, is quite wrong (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). The only 'gluttony' we are advised in the New Testament to take part in is in Matthew 5:6, where Jesus says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled". The word for hunger is literally 'glutton'. To sustain strength for the fight is both sensible and right: the victuals would sustain them during their vigil before the attack. So would the Lord have us to be strengthened in the inner man, by the sustaining power of the Word. They were ready for the fight clad in the armour of the Spirit, and their ranks were not broken, neither did they lift up a weapon: in fact, as we have stressed, they had none. We too have our armour. Ephesians 6:10-18, we are to put on "the whole armour of God" for a very simple, though profound reason - we shall require it all.

So the 300 men (or people) took the victuals of the people that had been sent away and their own war trumpets. The full jars, replete with victuals, would, during the course of their vigil, sustain them for the work that they had to do in the night. It has been observed, "But now, who can but bless himself to find of 32,000 Israelites, 22,000 cowards? Yet all these in Gideon's march, made as fair a flourish of courage as the boldest. Who can trust the faces of men, that sees in the army of Israel, above two for one timorous? How many make a glorious show in the warfaring church, which, where they shall see danger of persecution, shall shrink from the standard of God? Hope of safety, examples of neighbours, desire of praise, fear of censures, coercion of laws, fellowship of friends, draw many into the field, which, so soon as ever they see the adversary, repent of their conditions; and if they may cleanly escape will be gone early from whatever Mount Gilboa or Gilead" (J. Hall), may stand for any principle of God today (A.H.)?

How do we think the small remainder of Israel looked when, in the next morning muster, they found themselves but ten thousand? We can well imagine the thoughts of the remnant at this time. Yet, not when there is not scarce left one Israelite to every thousand of the Midianites, it is seasonable with God to join battle. Odds 1000 to one in numbers, and the one without a natural slaughter weapon in his hand: the odds are humanly impossible. So was the War of Independence in Israel in 1948 and 1967. But these are the kind of odds to show that God is the Lord, and He will glorify His name.

Judges 7: 9 "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered them into thine hand."

It is noticeable that Gideon once again fails to act on his own initiative. He knows that he is the deliverer of his people by divine command. He has broken down their idols. He is now to destroy Midian, but patiently waits until ordered to advance by God. The word has now come. What lay before him? That wise providence hath provided or rather prepared a dream in the head of one Midianite, an interpretation in the mouth of another, and hath brought Gideon to be an auditor of both, and hath made his enemies prophets of his victory, encouragers of the attempt, proclaimers of their own confusion. A Midianite dreams, a Midianite interprets. Our very dreams many times are not without God. There is a providence in our sleeping fancies. Even the enemies of God may have visions. One thinks of Pilate's wife, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, all had dreams which they asked for interpretation, or interpreted themselves. No wonder our sleeping fancies are useful for medical diagnosis (homeopathic, that is).

Let us now see how Scripture puts it:

Judges 7: 10 "But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah (= branch, etc.) down to the host and thou shalt hear what they say, and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host." Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host, and the Midianites and the Amalekites, and all the children of the East.

Phurah, the name of Gideon's servant, is interesting and has been construed from two roots: (a) from the Syriac Purah = foliage, Isaiah 10: 33: (b) from the root Paar, to adorn, to glorify, to boast, Isaiah 60: 7; 44: 23; Judges 7: 2 (Bagster's Words). Isaiah 10: 33: "Behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled." This puts the whole position (i. e. the destruction of the enemies of Israel), and because the nations not only executed the judgments of God, but actually delighted themselves in the doing of it, came under the hand of vengeance themselves. Isaiah 10: read the whole chapter from this angle, and it will clear up many misgivings which have afflicted us from time to time. How that it is possible for Yahweh to use the nations to punish Israel, and then vent His wrath upon them for so doing.

Phurah in the sense of Isaiah 10: 33: foliage, the beauty of the trees = foliage, should be 'hewed' down by Gideon, 'the high ones of stature', Assyria here, but Midian in Judges 7, and the haughty shall be humbled. No doubt Phurah was amongst the servants of Gideon that hewed down the idol Baal, and Astarte the groves. It is no wonder that God chose this man to go down to the Midianite camp with Gideon to reconnoitre the position. We are also assured that Phurah was one who lapped like a dog at Ein Harod.

Isaiah 60: 7 "All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee (to Jesus); the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory". Prophetically set in the Millennium, along with the other reference in Isaiah.

Isaiah 44: 23 "Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it. Shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest; and every tree therein, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified (or RV will glorify 'Phurah') himself in Israel."

Taking Isaiah 60: 7 and 44: 23 together, we are given a picture, indeed a theophany of the millennial purpose of Yahweh, the future tense of the word indicating the certainty of realisation.

Kedar, the son of Ishmael, and Nebaioth (the glory) would be gathered unto Jesus as Psalm 72:9 indicates. "They that dwell in the wilderness (Arabia etc.) shall bow before Him, and His enemies shall lick the dust." This Psalm of the millennium is noted for the 31 indications of the certainty of the divine intention: 31 'shalls' are found in this Psalm. Yahweh not only will be, but more definitely shall be, absolute certainty. He will glorify the house of His glory and bestow universal blessing upon mankind, and we see dimly but quite definitely, this is made known to us in the name of Gideon - the hewer down of man's object of veneration, sex in all its endless varieties, and fertility in Baal the Bull God. In the millennium Jesus, the glory of God, would destroy all kinds of man's wisdom and worship, and raise the glory of God to its correct level, not only to the top, or above the glory of the trees (Lebanon in particular, the mighty cedars, but above the top of human mountains (such as Rome, Babylon, U.S.S.R., United States of America and 'little Britain' now drained of her glory). God will stain all human glory in that day. "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in (at the head of, RV) the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." The divine dynamo to effect this tremendous flow of water to the City to be exalted on the sides of the north: "beautiful for situation, the joy of the earth" (John 12:31-33 - the cross of the Lord Jesus).

It would appear then that Gideon, the hewer down of idols, indeed the true Jerubbaal, with whom Baal has pleaded, because Gideon truly beat death with his own weapon (Hebrews 2:14-15), and truly so far as Jesus is concerned, Jerubbesheth, Baal, has been denigrated and Jesus shall laugh at his present day worshippers in derision (Psalm 2:4), and Phurah, as it refers to the glory of our God, shall be exalted, so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea (Numbers 14:21 : Habakkuk 2:14).

Judges 7:11-12 "Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside (RV the outermost part) of the armed men that were in the camp" (RV camps).

The vastness of the enemy is stressed in that the Midianites and the Amalekites etc. in the valley covered the whole face of the land as a swarm or multitude of grasshoppers (or locusts), and their camels were without number ~~for~~ multitude as the sand on the sea shore. The number obviously exoteric, as for instance the seed of Abraham etc., such as Genesis 15:5-6 : Genesis 22:17. So great is the difference between the enemy: Midian, Amalek and their mixed relations (the Children of the East): incidentally the geographic location of the promise to Ishmael. Genesis 16:10-12, AV verse 12, "and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" ; RV or "to the east of his brethren": 1975 has seen the build up of these forces and their decision to drive Israel into the sea. The day of Midian is about to come to its final stage, for just as Gideon was promised that with one stroke he would destroy Midian and uncover the treasures hidden in the sand, not only in Asher's territory, which yet has to find its fulfilment (Genesis 49:20), but also the treasures hidden and uncovered in Saudi Arabia (Transjordan), have not only been brought to light, but have been used very successfully to blackmail the world at large. Black gold is a good description of oil and its value in present day life, both from a monetary and diplomatic level.

Some people have queried how could it be possible for Gideon and his servant to approach the Midianitish host in the darkness of the night. One answer is fairly obvious - the light from the camp fires. If this light could help Gideon to get near enough to hear, could it not have been the means of discovering them to the enemy? Another point emerges upon a little more thought. The descent by Gideon must have occurred during the early watch of the night whilst the fires were still lit (no doubt for doing the cooking of the meal), because if the fires were still lit, the bright gleams of light which they

cast would have reduced the element of surprise that brought the chaos and ultimate victory. We are brought to the answer that this incident happened in the first watch of the guard, as the attack took place at the beginning of the 2nd or middle watch (Judges 7:19). It would appear that the whole camp had given itself over to a comfortable night's sleep, anticipating another day's gathering of the spoils.

So the armed camp, active for war, alert for the prey, even though they were using the strategy of Israel marching in the desert under the hand of God, and under which their ancestors had marched, when they came out in the mixed multitude of human relatives of Israel. Incidentally the Hebrew for the outside of the armed men is very interesting. 'Chamushim' from 'Chamash'. Sharp active in battle (Ges.), or else quinquified from 'chamash', five marshalled as an army in the five parts. The centre two wings front and rear guard (see AV margin Exodus 13:18). The very pattern of Israel's exit from Egypt, and the way they marched for 40 years in the wilderness.

Five once again has to do with the exaltation of God's people. It was stated quite recently in the Daily Express that five is the unlucky number in Egypt because of Exodus 13:18 margin, a ready lesson on the attitude of men towards God (they never learn). Fausset says that five was a sacred number among the Egyptians and quotes Genesis 47:2 and Isaiah 19:18. Genesis 47:2 reveals that Joseph took five of his brethren to see Pharaoh, which, when taken in Bible numerology, means that Joseph expected the grace of God to be with him, and, as eventually transpired, Pharaoh was gracious unto him (Genesis 47:3-10). So, for once, the 'boot was upon the other foot'. The intention was God's amazing grace, No. 5, for evidence see "Gems from the Bible Jewel Box", Debir Press), and not Egyptian superstition.

Isaiah 19:18 prophetically set in the days of Israel's dominance over the nations at the return of the Lord Jesus, says Isaiah 19:25. The foolishness of the wise men in Egypt with the utter confusion and shaking, because the land of Judah would be a bad terror to Egypt etc. Isaiah 19:18 - "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language or lip of Canaan (or Israel), and swear to the Lord of Hosts: one shall be called the city of destruction, of Heres, or the Sun." "In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord, in the midst of the land of Egypt" etc.

The night (at least in Israel) was originally divided into three watches: (1) from sunset to 10 pm: (2) the middle (as here) from 10 pm to 2 am: (3) the third from 2 am to sunrise. We remember this action is given in Israelitish time: we have no reason to think it would be otherwise for Midian. Roman time was divided into four watches.

Why could Gideon and Phurah do as they did without being discovered? Quite a lot could be done naturally (we do not say that it was). Probably the dress wasn't all that different, and as we know, the language was very similar, because Gideon was able to understand the dialogue between the enemy concerning the barley cake, to which we will turn in a moment. But taking things in general, and seeing the hand of Providence in the situation, we can see without any difficulty that everything was overruled by God, and the workings had been seen from before the foundation of the world. There is another possibility discernible. Who in the enemies' camps (Hb. Mahaneh, singular here, but there were evidently two camps, Mahanaim, at work, as in Jacob's experience at Jabbok) would have expected despised Israel to penetrate their lines? For seven successive years they had fled into the mountain caves and holds and left the land to pillage by Midian. Not one would expect it. However, it was accomplished and Gideon's faith was again strengthened as he heard the conversation, as God had said.

Judges 7:13,14 gives us the actual words and phrasing of the experience.

"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his

fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel, for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." Gideon, then, is known to be leading the Israelitish army - the son of Joash - emphatic, the one who had hewed down the idol of Baal their God at Ophrah and made it 'dust', indeed, the City of Dust. This is what Gideon had hoped to hear, Midian would be or was delivered into his hand. Even the enemies of God may have visions, and power to construe them aright. How usually are wicked men forewarned of their own destruction. To foreknow, and not avoid, is but an aggravation of judgment. Very quaintly put, but true. How great is the providence of God, to those who love Him and are faithfully dedicated to do exploits for His Name.

The reaction of Gideon to this good news is the first thought of every godly person who has had vouchsafed to him the opportunity to serve God and save his people.

Judges 7:15 "And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped God (with joyful thanksgiving for the pledge of assurance vouchsafed) and returned unto the host (camp) of Israel and said, Arise, for Yahweh hath delivered into your hand the host (the camp) of Midian."

The cake (a round cake - Gesenius) of barley bread, speaks of the greatest or worst poverty (depending on which way you look at it) of the greatest weakness, poverty. The Hebrew word for cake (not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, is quite appropriate, as the context demands something circular. G.P. Driver, an 'out and out' higher critic, but a very accurate and precise Hebrew scholar, suggests a connection with an Arabic verb meaning 'dry and crackled, or putrid', and observes "a stale loaf going bad and hard would be much more likely than a soft and crumbly loaf of new bread to go bouncing into the camp." The rough cracked loaf, dry and hard, was an abject description of the dejected Israeli farmer or cultivator; equal in distinction to the Lamb who had been sheared by Midian, who now is likened to this humiliating bread.

The word 'tumbled' is very interesting and confirms the general idea of what God had planned for the invaders. In Genesis 3:24 (Mithapeek) this word is used of the sword 'turning itself'. "So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned 'every way', to keep the way of the tree of life." Is it not remarkable that the sword of the Lord and of Gideon was used of this cracked cake of despised barley bread, showing how mighty the weakest thing can be, in the language of the Cherubim and the flaming sword which turned itself every way to keep the tree of life. The chariots of man had swords placed upon the axles, which, turning as they went, scythed the enemy down. Infinitely more destructive was the sword of the Cherubim, and as it proved, the round barley loaf of despised stale bread of Gideon.

(A) The coincidence between the Midianite's interpretation of his fellow's dream, (B) and God's promise to Gideon himself, (C) and the providence which caused the interpretation to be given just at that moment, (D) and also the panic which the interpretation implied as existing among the Midianites, (E) combined to assure of victory the Israelite leader. We have noted the reaction of Gideon to instant worship and thankfulness, which, though earnest and sincere, must of necessity have been brief, because there was much work to be done ere the dawn. So the message of Gideon after hasting back to his 300 chosen men was one of the greatest reassurance.

Judges 7:15 "Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."

By 10 pm his warriors had to be in position for the mission.

Judges 7:16 "And he divided the 300 men into three companies." (So 1 Samuel 11:11; 2 Samuel 18:2).

Three companies (so to assail the camp from three different quarters (v. 18,21)). Awaiting the setting of the middle watch, and shortly afterwards to attack with their strange weapons, when the camp had settled down calculating on a long rest. Hardly had they given themselves up to sleep when Gideon's band from three different quarters startled them. (cp. 1 Thessalonians 5:3).

(A) It is noticeable that the small band was divided by three -  $3 \times 100 =$  three, completion of the divine purpose, therefore Gideon's would be accomplished by (B)  $5 \times 4 =$  divine grace (5) and 4 by the hand of God's chosen men from among mankind (4). A little earlier ~~we~~ we calculated the other aspect of  $300 = 5 \times 60$  and  $5 \times 12 = 60$  (p.61). The meanings in this calculation are almost endless: we urge our readers to search them out with all diligence for their spiritual education, and find out how they apply to (1) Gideon and his men, (2) their application to Jesus and the twelve, (3) how they may apply to us in our days. This is the reason for their inclusion in the Bible. But never did an army advance with such a motley assortment of equipment.

Judges 7:16-22 "And he divided the 300 men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers."

Three hundred men whose armament was one empty pitcher and one trumpet each, against the might of the ferocious Midianite alliance, fully armed. Surely this represents the enormous gap between the weakness of man: the weakness, albeit the strength of faith, has been exhibited all through God's workings with Gideon, when Gideon hewed down the altar of Baal etc. It was all of God, and the circumstances fully outlined this divine theophany. Here we have the ultimate, with Gideon the least of the family of Manasseh, he being the youngest in the household. The power of his weakness overthrew the idol worship and reclaimed his father to the worship of Yahweh.

This power is further evident in his assembling the whole (?) of Manasseh, Zebulun and Naphtali, to revolt against the Midianite scourge. Now he has come to the supreme test of his weakness in self, but powerful faith in God because he has heard the word of God, and believed in it absolutely. The 300 are ready 'armed', and willing to follow his command. But with a trumpet and an empty pitcher: this is very important, and as the 300 men are the Bride in type (see Song of Solomon, by Debir Press), so each man has an empty pitcher, in keeping with all the worthies who make up this glorious Bride. All approach the well with empty pitchers, as the widow woman who had to beg empty pitchers so that the Lord could fill them (2 Kings 4:3; John 4:15).

The empty pitchers here appear to have been those which held the victuals mentioned in Judges 7:8, the means by which the men were fed, which once again is in keeping with "They have drunk of the brook in the way" (Psalm 110:7). The people are willing in the day of Gideon's power, because they have not laboured for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life (John 6:27), which the Son (even the greater Gideon) shall give unto them. Just as Gideon had these 'sealed' men given to him for the express purpose of delivering Israel and destroying the enemy, and no man of his company was lost, never lifting his arm save to shout aloud "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon", so Jesus said, John 6:37-39, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out, for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me, and this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

In all three cases (1) Gideon and his men; (2) the Lord Jesus and his disciples; (3) those who should follow afterwards (i. e. ourselves, we hope and pray), the Father's

will has been our meat and drink, so that when the supreme effort is to be made, as at this time in Gideon's day, the trumpet will be for our right hand, the pitcher whose victuals have sustained us will now be used for the attack, to conceal a firebrand, etc. The empty taunt of the critics is obvious when they deridingly ask, had Gideon's men three hands then? – to hold (a) the trumpet, (b) the pitcher and (c) the firebrand, (as in Judges 15:4, 5). First lesson, of course, three items of equipment, and they were complete to do their work; but once again, they really made five, the other two to be supplied by the warrior, namely, faith, and as this quality is never negative in scripture, effort on the part of those who have been so blessed, agreeing with Romans 8:28: "Knowing that God worketh all things for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose." This is a marvellous lesson in this kind of enterprise, when one is willing to hazard his life for God, when God shows as He did to Gideon that such is His will.

Judges 7:16 emphasises that the firebrands were put into the empty pitchers in such a way that the air could keep them alight and not at the same time show the light from it, or rather the glare in the pitch darkness around them. Secondly, the trumpets would be worn with a strand to go around the neck and shoulders, to leave the hands free until the final moment.

Judges 7:17 "And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do." Gideon said, "Look on me, and as I do so shall ye do." Jesus said, John 13:15: "For I have given you an example, that ye should so do, as I have done to you"; and this great exploit of the Lord had been to do the work of the menial slave! V.14, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." The example and lesson remains and is plain to all (see also John 3:21); again we have the contrast between darkness under which our action is set, and light which was not received. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Paul said (Hebrews 12:2), "Looking unto Jesus, and doing as He did, we shall find Him the finisher, and He is the author of our faith."

It would appear that each man took no more victuals than he could carry in his hand and lived 'from hand to mouth' so to speak. This must be certain fact, (1) because of the scourge of the Midianites who lay on the ground like a host of locusts, and (2) because of Judges 8:5, 15, where we find Gideon asking loaves of bread for his men as they pursued after the fleeing remnants of the invaders. (3) It would appear, as we have suggested, that the victuals were already eaten before the action, otherwise it would be hardly feasible to imagine food and the firebrand in one pitcher. So, too, must we live each day, content with God's provision for the day. The manna of today will not suffice for tomorrow. We must wait on God afresh tomorrow for the things of the morrow (see Matthew 6:11, 34; Deuteronomy 33:25; 1 Kings 8:59 margin).

We too have to bear a trumpet in or ready at our right hand. This is the Gospel trumpet. See "Thessalonians" by the Debir Press on Thessalonians 1:7-10. After 18 months only as an ecclesia the Thessalonians had 'sounded out' (word for the trumpet blast which can penetrate even through the greatest orchestra, the Greek word here), given the echo of such a clarion call. It had reached Rome and the outposts of the Roman world. This is our task: are we equipped for it? The Old Testament parallel is Joshua 6:13 etc., when the walls of Jericho (the World City) fell flat at the shout of Israel and the blasts of the trumpets, and of course, the presence of the Ark of the Lord. Isaiah 58:1: our voice must be lifted up like a trumpet to welcome the judgments of the Lord; Hebrew - spare no pity. This chapter is steeped in the Day of Atonement symbology.



The time had arrived for the judgment on Israel, Israel must be duly notified. The trumpet must not give an uncertain sound, the truth must be told in no uncertain way, good or evil. Israel must be aware of God's intentions and if this is done in truth, the trumpeter, be he prophet or otherwise, would be without blame, 1 Corinthians 14:8. It must be intelligently used, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?" - very appropriate for our subject at the moment, for the idea was to attack purposefully and faithfully.

1. The fleshly part is seen when we realise that the most wonderful trumpet had to be blown by the trumpeter. Consequently then the player himself stood in the responsible part. So was it at the oncoming conflict.
2. The blowing of the trumpet in this aspect was the signal of God's presence with them (Exodus 19:16, 19).
3. The trumpet had already been used to gather the nation (Judges 3:27).
4. No doubt it would signal at this time a national alert against the enemy (cp. Nehemiah 4:18-20). That is, Manasseh, Zebulun, Naphtali and Ephraim, as we shall see directly.
5. We know before long it will herald the return of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 24:31).
6. Also the resurrection of the dead (1 Thessalonians 4:16). If we are permitted to remain until He comes, and we anticipate the reunion with our loved ones, we know the former things will have passed away, but recognition is certain - the holes in the hands of Jesus; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as Jesus told the Pharisees in his day (Luke 13:28; Mark 12:18-27).

We await the glad day when the trumpet shall sound (1 Corinthians 15:51-58). Please God may it not be long delayed. And the antitypical Feast of Trumpets in Israel (Leviticus 23:24 etc.)

Each man bore in his left hand an earthen pitcher with a torch light hidden within. So we, the body of Christ in particular, have "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God", whilst we are still in a fragile body (2 Corinthians 4:4, 18). The pearl of great price is often hidden in an unsightly oyster shell. The breaking of the vessel, so far from quenching the light, only brings it to view - flashing destruction to the foe, salvation to the Israel of God. So it is often, when the believer's body is breaking up, that the light from the Word within shines the brightest. The light beamed forth from Stephen's face just when he was about to be crushed by the stones hurled by his persecutors (Acts 6:15).

The gospel trumpet sounds out at the same time that the light shines forth. Could we say today that preacher's words are as thunder, whose life is as the lightning? If we belong to the Lord Jesus they ought to. Paul puts it this way, and so he is entitled to, because he has already judged himself: (2 Corinthians 4:4-11) "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted but not destroyed. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." This is the Pauline formula of what happened when

Gideon's weakness destroyed the wickedness in the Midian high places. Shall we see how it fits? (Cp. 2 Corinthians 10:4/5).

Gideon now begins his plan of campaign. He said, as we have observed, "Look on me, and do likewise", so we continue with -

Judges 7:18 "When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpet also on every side of all the camp, and say, or shout (or keep shouting), The sword of the Lord and of Gideon". Consequently, as verse 19 says, "So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him, came to the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch; and they blew the trumpets and brake the pitchers that were in their hands." Hidden in the pitchers were the firebrands until the decisive moment. The moment has arrived, and brought panic and chaos into the sleepy camp.

Judges 7:20-21 "And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps or firebrands in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp, and all the host ran, and cried, and fled." We find that Paul's case is well and truly proven. Everyone 'in Christ', who has believed and been publicly baptized in the belief of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:16) has within himself or herself the light of the gospel. This light is in an earthenware pitcher of clay (or flesh), but until that earthly clay is shattered, the light is no better than under a bushel (Matthew 5:14), and it is hidden, but as even flickering oil lamps which lit the homes in the days of Jesus, if put on a candlestick they would give their light unto all the house. What when the pitcher is shattered and the shout along with the trumpet call are heard, the enemy are terrified and utterly routed. When the 'candle' of the gospel is lifted in the home, then there is light shining from it. Whether or not those whom we love accept it cannot affect us in the day of judgment, so long as we have shed the light to the best of our ability, for salvation is an individual matter and concern for those whom we love. But the Lord of all the earth will do right, and what follows must be left to Him. One thing is certain, the light will be unable to shine to full capacity until the pitcher is absolutely shattered. This ruling applies whether to the enemy or home life. As Gideon previously commenced his career for God at home, so one could truthfully state, unless we can produce the home 'shine', the rout of the enemy will be impossible. Paul is absolutely correct in his findings. The body must die before Christ can shine out from us. Yes, this principle had to be impressed on Paul, should we say (reverently) the hard way. Read 2 Corinthians 11, and match your own strivings against his: the perfection of Paul's portrayal of Jesus as Christ was a lifetime's battle. Take, for instance, Romans 7. He knew that human ego requires constant vigil and performance to eradicate. Paul is telling us in this chapter not to take the light out of the pitcher and to set the pitcher carefully on one side (to be used again, as we say in good old Yorkshire fashion - waste not want not - quite true, but not in this connection), it is to shatter the pitcher, indeed like a potter's vessel (Psalm 2:9) as Gideon did, and as the Lord Jesus will do at His coming and Kingdom. Our life's work is to break the earthen vessel, in order that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God, and not of ourselves. Ego, sex, higher education, higher wages, these not only hide the light, they harden the vessel and prevent the shattering. Oh this self. Why is it that God's people have no power over the world? This wretched miserable self. If we care to study Romans 7 carefully, we shall see how many times the first person is there spoken of - 'I', 'me', 'my' - 40 times. Surely this is a vessel enough to prevent the light from shining out. We do not see any light shining out in Romans 7. 'I' beclouds it all, and it is thick darkness. Jesus said, "how thick was that darkness when it thought that the darkness was light". They would all fall into the

ditch, and a ditch is not much different from a 'rut', and they both are only a step from the grave, total darkness and oblivion, and this is not the way of truth, it is Midian exemplified, and is the enemy we must all strive to vanquish.

There is nothing to do according to the Pauline reckoning, but to reckon ourselves dead (obviously to sin as he has outlined in Romans 6:11). Dead to sin, but alive to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the practical end, the breaking of the vessel. Then it will be seen that the excellency of the power is of God. What a comfort it is. Who can think of meeting all we have to face in our own strength?

We submit then that Paul has made full use of this incident at Ein Harod: we have seen the pitcher and how it may be broken to allow the light to shine, and the remainder of the chapter is an illustration of how the pitcher is broken by outward circumstances.

(1) There is first the reckoning of faith by which self is refused, and then all the untoward events, (2) trouble, persecution, perplexity, even death, are but the practical breaking of that which faith hath set aside - creature strength. As a result our beloved brother Paul is led about in triumph, in Christ. Stones, dungeons, long years of captivity, only serve to let the light shine, the excellency of the power of God, the light that no calamity can darken. (2 Corinthians 4).

It appears obvious that the blowing of the trumpet is necessarily connected with the breaking of the vessel. We may try to blow the trumpet of testimony, that which is God's martial note of victory. But the first necessity, both practically and spiritually, to the absolute accompaniment of a trumpet testimony, is the broken vessel of self - I, the ego of myself. These are the twin conceptions of the life of a brother or sister in Christ. They go together.

(A) God does not want the trumpet testimony of the gospel with darkness. (B) He wants the testimony accompanied by light. (C) He wants not merely words, no matter how powerful the words may be, no matter how true and clear they may be, no matter what trumpet ring of victory there may be in the words. (D) He wants more than words. (E) He wants the broken vessel, in order that the light may come to the front. (F) Trumpet and light, testimony and life, as in the Philippians. (G) To shine as lights in the world in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the word of life (Philippians 2:15). (H) We shine as lights: there is light shining. "Holding forth the word of life". There is the trumpet testimony that accompanies the light. The world cannot stand that. It cannot stand the feeblest company holding forth the word of life - and they shining as lights in the world. It doesn't add, however (at least in our days - likened unto the days of Noah), that we shall convert the whole world by our testimony, notwithstanding the year of dedication and testimony which afflicts us at the present time. That is not the point at issue. So long as our light is the candlestick giving light to the home or truth, and as a city on a hill shining as stars in the blackness of Gentile night, then we are following the pattern of Gideon of old and may hope with reverence and with fear to stand in his lot at the end of the days. (See Part Three under this issue).

Returning to our immediate context:

Judges 7:21 "And they stood every man in his place, round about the camp, and all the host ran..." (hither and thither, not knowing what was the matter).

Absolute confusion and noise, precisely what the Lord had in mind - "and cried" in alarm, "and fled", supposing that an army was behind the firebrand bearers. Their own camp was in darkness: the sudden flashings of the lights and blowing of trumpets confused them, so they mistook friend for foe, and those who fled, for the pursuers. By standing still each trumpeter seemed to be cleaving a passage for the armed man

to advance into the Midianite camp. (See 1 Samuel 14:20 ; 2 Chronicles 20:23). Suspicion of treachery would arise in the mixed host of the Midianites, Amalekites and Arabs.

The Chethib or Hebrew text reads, 'caused to flee' (yanisu) for the Queri or margin (yanusu, fled, i.e. they carried their goods to a place of safety, as in 6:11 margin, also Exodus 9:20). Fausset thinks that the Chethib is probably the original reading, and the Queri an amendment, to escape the difficulty of the sense. The clamour would also cause unrest among the camels and no doubt a stampede would add to the confusion. It is not surprising that in the resultant confusion soldiers lashed out at everyone who loomed up in the darkness, not knowing who was friend or foe. "All the host ran, and cried, and fled" (v.21 AV). We have seen what Fausset thought about the incident. We also learn. The verbs in this verse describe graphically the process of panic which struck the Midianites: 'ran', which appears tautologous: 'fled' is never found in the Old Testament with the meaning of running away in flight. Its meaning here undoubtedly suggests the first reaction of the Midianites, when their slumber was so rudely shattered: they 'leapt up' in alarm, uttered a loud cry of alarm and fled precipitately. A modern idiom is seen in the cry of alarm, "Don't panic!"

Well might Isaiah 9:6 refer to this period regarding the return of the Lord Jesus. We cannot stress too strongly the advisability of comparing the whole of Isaiah 9 with the day of Midian and the victory of Gideon and his forces. There are many analogies to be found: by all means write in to the Debir Press.

Isaiah 9:1 The affliction of Zebulun and Naphtali.

" 9:2 The people that walked in darkness saw a great light. The contrast with the darkness of affliction. The people that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, i.e. by affliction, famine, and persecution; upon them hath the light shined - the breaking of the vessels we have just examined. Also Matthew 4:16 etc.

Isaiah 9:3 "Thou hast multiplied the people, or nation, and not to fill with joy" (paraphrase). That is because they had forsaken the God of their strength. But now "they joy before thee according to the joy of harvest and men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Manasseh, Zebulun and Naphtali had joy as of the joy in harvest because God had broken the yoke of Midian; accordingly the joy became a spoil even though they were the work of their own hands.

Isaiah 9:4 "For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian." Here is the reason of their joy, indeed of the harvest they thought would never be there. Their rejoicing would be as men when they divide the spoil. Here we are getting the national or tribal joy after Ein Harod.

Isaiah 9:5 "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood." This is a reference to the events we have followed closely, and is Isaiah's version of what happened. However, he continues, "but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire" - straight to the real day of Midian in the future. Isaiah gives further clarification in 66:15-16, "For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and His chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many." (2 Thessalonians 1). In confidence, yet with fear, we look forward to this great work of God, now so near, when once again the Lord shall go forth to fight against these nations, as when He fought in the day of battle (Zechariah 14:1-3 ; 2 Chronicles 20:20-30; 2 Kings 3:21-27, etc.)

The day of Midian has had many things to say to us and now as we witness the terrible slaughter in Jezreel, and look forward into the near future for its latter day unfolding, we let Joseph Hall have the final word on Judges 7.

"When Gideon heard good news, though from an enemy, he fell down and worshipped. To hear himself but a barley cake troubled him not when he heard withal that his rolling down the hill should break the tents of Midian. It matters not how base we be thought, so we may be victorious. The soul that hath received full confirmation from God in the assurance of his salvation cannot but bow the knee and by gestures of body tell how it is ravished. I would have thought Gideon should rather have found full confirmation in the promise and act of God, than in the dreams of the Midianite. Dreams may be full of uncertainty; God's undertakings are infallible. Well, therefore, might the miracle of God give strength to the dream of a Midianite; but what strength could a pagan's dream give to the miraculous act of God? Yet by this is Gideon thoroughly settled. When we are going, a little thing drives us on; when we are come near the shore, the very tide, without sails, is enough to put us into the harbour. We shall now hear no more of Gideon's doubts, but of his achievements, and though God had promised by these 300 men to chase the Midianites, yet he neglects not wise stratagems to effect it. To wait for God's performance in doing nothing, is to abuse that divine providence which will so work that will not allow us idle. Now, when we would look that Gideon should give charge of whetting their swords and sharpening their spears, and fitting their armour (which was minus, AH), he only gives orders for empty pitchers, and lights, and trumpets. The cracking of these pitchers shall break in pieces this Midianitish clay; the kindling of these lights shall extinguish the light of Midian; these trumpets sound no other than a soul peal to all the host of Midian; there shall need nothing but noise and light to confound this enumerable army. And if the pitchers, and brands, and trumpets of Gideon, did so daunt and dismay the proud troops of Midian and Amalek, who can we think shall be able to stand before the last terror, wherein the trumpet of the Archangel shall stand, and the heaven and the earth shall pass away with a noise, and the elements shall be in flame about our ears?

"Any of the weakest Israelites would have served to have broken an empty pitcher, to have carried a light, and to have sounded a trumpet, and to strike a flying adversary. Not to the basest use will God employ an unworthy agent. He will not so allow so much as a cowardly torch bearer." (See *Military Service under the Law and Christ*, by present writer, Testimony 1975).

So J. Hall continues: "Those two and twenty thousand Israelites that slipped away for fear when the fearful Midianites fled, can pursue and kill them, and can follow them at the heels, whom they durst not look in the face. Our flight gives advantage to the feeblest adversary, whereas our resistance foileth the greatest. How much more, if we have once turned our backs upon a temptation, shall our spiritual enemies, which are ever strong, trample us in the dust? Resist, and they shall fly, stand still, and we shall see the salvation of the Lord."

So we will follow the chaotic retreat of the enemy and the exploits of Gideon and his men, strong in the might of the Lord – as yet! That mighty host in number fled like a flock of frightened sheep before the irresistible power of God. We, too, can put to flight the armies of the aliens. We, too, can be made strong out of weakness and wax valiant in fight, if we learn this lesson in our inmost mind.

We come next to what, alas, gets only too common, as we go on with our book, and that is the strife connected with the victory, and in a sense growing out of it. The people flock to the victory (as J. Hall has just commented), just as they will whenever individual faith has opened the way, and it is a comfort to think that this is the case.

We saw the same in Ehud's case: when he blew a trumpet Israel was gathered together after him. But first he had, singlehanded, to slay the King of Moab. So here, when the battle has been won, and the enemy put to flight, the rest of Israel gather together and join in the pursuit, Gideon in fact sending messengers to show them that he does not want to have the credit (if we may use that word) of the victory himself. He sends messengers to Ephraim to go down and take the fords of Jordan in order that they may obliterate the enemy entirely.

Judges 7:22 "And the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath."

The natural line of flight for the Midianites was eastwards down the valley and over the Jordan into the region from which they had attacked Israel, and that they took this route is confirmed by the instructions to the Ephraimites to secure the fords of the Jordan (Judges 7:24). All the three towns mentioned were in Transjordan and each may be located with reference to Jabesh-Gilead, Zererath (or Zaretan) was 10 miles due south, Abel-meholah was approximately 6 miles east and Tabbath about 7 miles south-south-east. The mention of Succoth and Penuel at a later stage of the flight (Judges 8:5-8, see also 8:11) indicates the general south-easterly direction the Midianites took, and although a wide dispersion of the survivors is likely in such a situation, one point emerges startlingly clear. The Midianites were so sure of absolute victory and pillage, that they never bothered to make sure their bridgeheads over the Jordan. Joshua left it for another reason. After crossing Jordan, instead of making sure his bridgehead and taking Jericho, first of all he passed to Gilgal for the circumcision, which would take some time for the men to heal, and these would be his mighty men of war, born during the wilderness journey. The Passover was also celebrated at Gilgal (Joshua 5). Along with the Passover would be the feast of unleavened bread 7 days also. Why then did not Jericho wage war? The answer is in Joshua 6:1. (For our reasons see Vol.3).

The place names are instructive. Jabesh-Gilead, from which the reference is made, was a town east of Gilead, assigned to Manasseh (Numbers 32:39,40), later consigned to destruction (Judges 21:8-15), at least in the narrative. Saul later routed the Ammonites here (1 Samuel 11:1-11). Citizens of Jabesh-Gilead rescued Saul's body (1 Samuel 31:11-13), David later thanking them for their action (2 Samuel 2:4-7).

The action still is centred towards Manasseh, the weaker tribe: we are never to forget that God overthrows the mighty by the weakest means.

We should not have known the greatness of the slaughter of the Midianites; but it comes out with all particularity of truth in incidental notices in other scriptures – Isaiah 10:26; 9:4; Psalm 83:9,10. As the first and latter quotations have to do with future events we will place them in their context there.

Zererath or Zaretan, probably Zeredath near Succoth in the plain of the Jordan. For exposition of these cities see Numbers 33 and The Temple of Solomon, by the Debir Press. This was the situation where the copper pillars of the temple were cast, Zarthan indicating 'clay ground' and Succoth = tabernacle, and as the region is dominated by Jordan, the indication is judgment - the plunger, the river of judgment, that empties into the Dead Sea. So the Midianites etc. returned from whence they came, to the clay ground: here they would permanently stay, in the judgment of death. To Israel it was only a camping place, and the faithful would inherit the land and would have continued to do so if they (Manasseh) had been obedient. But they failed to cast out the Canaanites, and this is the judgment which can beset us: we shall find a devil 7 times greater invading the empty territory which we failed to fill with the work of the truth, and our embarrassment will become exaggerated by the far-reaching judgment unless we take steps now to remedy the defect.

"And to the border of Abel-meholah" – 'Field of the Dance'. The dance of triumph which now is assured this time there will be no 'let-up', complete annihilation is the order of the day. This was the birthplace of Elisha (1 Kings 19: 16), and it is rather significant that Elisha is to be a scourge of the Children of the East, Syria, Edom and Moab, during his ministry (see Elisha the prophet of grace, by Debir Press, now in course of preparation). 2 Kings 3; 6: 24-33, and even after his death (2 Kings 13: 14 and 20-21).

The last name in Judges 7: 22 is Tabbath, which has the meaning of 'extension', revealing how extended the route, the lines of Midian were, stretched to the extremity, we wonder how fast the retreat was, with the women of the camp, camels, etc. The teaching of this city informs us of the intention of Deity to extend and extend until final crushing defeat (Judges 8: 10 gives the information that "15,000 men, all that were left of all the Children of the East, for there fell 120,000 men that drew sword." Of the significance of this remnant of the enemies of Israel we will refer directly.)

So there was still much work to be done and we see the 'one stroke' by which Gideon should deal to Midian was extended over several days, so to speak, but once again, to emphasise the lesson, the work of destruction must be fully carried out to the last man.

Judges 7: 23 "And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh" (both sides of the Jordan, including the 22,700 faint-hearted and dumb-witted of his tribe) and they pursued after the Midianites.

Judges 7: 24 Now comes the time for Gideon to ask help of the haughty Ephraimites, his own blood relatives, saying "Come down against the Midianites and take before them the waters (or fords) unto Beth-Barah and Jordan." Beth-Barah signified the 'house of passage' and was one of the fords over Jordan, quite possibly the place where Israel passed over under Joshua. Perhaps it was also the place where John Baptist baptized, and where Jesus underwent the act (John 1: 19-28), Gk. Bethabara. Once again, this place has been dealt with in Numbers 33 by the present author, and for the sake of brevity we ask you to refer to it (see "The Question that beset Israel here"). What is important for our study at the moment is the fact that Ephraim listened to Gideon's plea for help.

Judges 7: 24-25 "Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-Barah and Jordan."

Ephraim and Manasseh acted together in concert as the firstborn of Joseph and of Jacob (Genesis 48: 1-22; Genesis 50: 1-4), and smashed the might of Midian forever.

Judges 7: 25 "And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and they slew Oreb upon the Rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the Winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon" on the other side Jordan – east of Jordan, probably now Ashel Ghorab, i.e. 'Raven's Nest'. 'Wolf's den', a wady and mound, answers to the Winepress of Zeeb (the Wolf). The promise of Yahweh was found to be true (Deuteronomy 26: 7-8), ten of them should chase ten thousand. This was proved fully to Gideon and his generation. "The ungodly shall hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb" (Isaiah 2: 21; Revelation 6: 15-17). Later fulfilments of course. As Oreb had formerly forced Israel to hide in the rocks, (6:2) so was he slain at the Rock Oreb; and as Gideon was formerly forced to hide his corn by the winepress (6:11) from the Midianites, so their prince Zeeb was slain by the Israelites at the Winepress of Zeeb. The place of their shelter became the places of their slaughter. They were punished in kind (as was Assyria in Isaiah 10 etc.); the instrument of their sin being made the instrument of their punishment. So shall it be in the final award. The Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for 'Antichrist' according to the slaughter of Midian at the Rock of Oreb by Ephraim (Isaiah 10: 26). The

transgressor's own wickedness shall reprove him; his sin shall find him out; and he shall, too late, see, to his eternal self-reproach, that it was an evil thing and bitter that he forsook the Lord God. (Jeremiah 2:18; Isaiah 3:9; Proverbs 1:31; Revelation 22:11; etc.)

## CHAPTER 8

It was the Lord Jesus, the meek and lowly King of glory, who said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5). We could say to conquer self in the strength of the Lord and "not to be overcome of evil but to overcome evil with good" is a grand first victory, as God taught through Joshua at Gilgal (Joshua 5), and of course Jesus ideally (John 3:13-16); one might say that this is the hardest. How easy it is to sow discord among those who are brethren, in the common war against the powers of evil. Ephraim strives against Manasseh (Isaiah 9:21) and against Gideon: "Why hast thou served us thus?" None are louder in finding fault than those who are most in fault. "Passionate invective betrays a bad cause" (M. Henry). Reason runs low when chiding flies high. Instead of chiding, Ephraim ought to have been congratulating Gideon and thanking God for his success in the common conflict. Unless Gideon had immediately quenched the spark of strife, it would have burst forth into a deadly flame (cp chapter 12), for "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19). So we read in

Judges 8:1-3 "And all the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide (argue) with him sharply. And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that."

Whereas we have seen humility exhibited in Gideon, his greater relatives Ephraim show the opposite. Ephraim was very jealous for his position as leader, although the younger son according to divine reckoning, Ephraim should be (Joseph's) firstborn in defect of Reuben who defiled his father's bed. While we have to be jealous, or rather zealous, for the honour of our God, this feeling of resentment must be banished from our minds, and rightly so. In this incident before us there is no trace of jealousy or pride in Gideon, but Ephraim shows his envy of the man of faith. Can we detect the source of this jealousy in the Book of Joshua (that is in a local sense)? Joshua was from Ephraim. Though as leader of all Israel his tribal connection was not prominent, yet no doubt Ephraim's pride was fostered by it. When the tribe got their portion they objected to it. The reason, they said, was that they were a great people and they had not a sufficiently large portion for themselves: in flat contradiction to Joshua, who was last to receive his portion and had to be exhorted to do so. Joshua, as Gideon, showed true humility. That is the lesson Ephraim teaches all through his history. He is a great people (could we say, and knows it?) Gideon was a mighty person and didn't know it; and we find a man who does not feel that he is mighty and great, is not going to be drawn into conflict with a great people.

Joshua's answer to Ephraim at the time we have referred to was a significant one. He says, "If you are a great people, go up and overthrow the enemy with his chariots of iron." Let your greatness be shown in work, not boasting. That was his answer to Ephraim then; but from that time on, the tribe of Ephraim was always jealous as to its position in the nation of Israel. We have referred to the calf-god worship (in that



the calf was a hieroglyphic symbol of Joseph, with a shock of corn over his head (Deuteronomy 33:17), giving the biblical correlation to the fact). Jeroboam the son of Nebat was also an Ephraimite. He made Israel to sin by further rearing up the calf-gods from Dan to Beersheba. To him was rehearsed the offer of being king after God had deposed Rehoboam, son of Solomon, but instead of cleaving to his God, he led Israel a-whoring after these abominable calves. See Hosea for a full description of the character deliniation given by Jacob (Genesis 49:22-26; Deuteronomy 33:13-17; Hosea 12:11, 13:2, 14:2; 2 Chronicles 11:14-16; 1 Kings 12:16-20; 12:25-31; 1 Kings 11:29-40). Thus had Ephraim great pretensions in taking first place, and of course, before the ark dwelt in Shiloh, and before God had made His sanction on Judah to be the tribal leader. This distinction belonged to Ephraim (Genesis 48:12-22), by right of forfeit of the firstborn by Reuben.

We can imagine then the pride and self-importance of Ephraim, and can appreciate from this point the approach of Gideon to the tribe. It of course was the correct one. He might have very properly said, "The enemy is a common enemy, and had overwhelmed the whole land. Why then did you not drive him out? Why did you not overthrow him? God has raised me up to do it, and I have through His power done it. But why did you not do it instead of finding fault with one who has?" But this is 'fighting talk' and among brethren it must not be found: it causes discontent and friction and schism. Although one wishes to say this, for the sake of peace and concord among brethren it must be stilled on our lips. Unless Gideon had immediately quenched the spark of strife, it would have (most likely) burst forth into a deadly flame (cp. chapter 12), for "a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city" (Proverbs 18:19). Then, as usually happens (at least in human affairs), the fruit of victory, just won over the foe, would have been lost through the mutual strife of the conquerors. If the cause of Christ is placed first in every consideration, and if the honour of Christ or the Truth placed before the honour of self, we will "esteem others better than ourselves" (Philippians 2:3), "in honour preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). (See also 1 Corinthians 1:10-15).

Yet, whilst ready to humble ourselves in order to honour our brethren, we will be, like Gideon (8:3), jealous for the honour of the Lord, and will never let regard for others prevent our giving all the glory unto Him. So, in the great vintage to come, every man shall have his praise of God, so proving himself a true Jew (Romans 2:29) according to his efforts against the enemy, whether he have been but a gleaner or a gatherer of many clusters for the Great Master (1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 14:18-20).

We quote from J. Hall:

"We do not hear the Ephraimites offering themselves into the front of the army before the fight with Midian: I hear them expostulating after it. After the exploit done, cowards are valiant. Their quarrel was that they were not called. It had been greater praise of their valour to have gone unbidden. What need was there to call them, when God complained of multitude, and sent away those which were called? None speak so big in the end of the fray, as the fearfullest.

"Ephraim flies upon Gideon, whilst the Midianites fly from him. When Gideon should be pursuing the enemies, he is pursued by brethren, and now glad to spend that wind in pacifying of his own, which should have been spent in the slaughter of a common adversary. Had not Gideon learned to speak fair, as well as to smite, he had found work enough from the sons of Joseph's sons, his good words are as victorious as his sword, his pacification of friends, better than his execution of enemies."

J. Hall completes his meditations on this strife between brethren with these words: "For aught I see the envy of Israelites was not more troublesome to Gideon, than the opposition of Midian. He hath left the envy of Ephraim behind him; before him, he finds

the envy of Succoth and Peniel. The one envies that he should overcome without them; the other that he should say that he had overcome.

Do not the names of the main actors in this dialogue further us? Here we have found Ephraim counts upon his headship as a right; and on the other hand, Manasseh, answering to his name (Manasseh = forgetting), is the figure of one who does not dwell in the past, but presses forward in the energy of a present faith. If we look more deeply, too, we will see the far-reaching spiritual lesson to be learned from Ephraim's envy. He stands for fruitfulness in the child of God, we might say for works. But works can never lead - they follow. Judah, praise (Romans 2:29) must ever be leader - praise based on and flowing from the truth of God and His word.

But how easy it is for works to seem to be more important. It is the strife between Martha and Mary. Mary had helped Martha until the Lord Jesus had arrived; then immediately she left her works to hear the word of God at his feet. This is the burden of the story. "Let Mary help me, then we will both sit at thy feet Lord", but said Jesus, Mary had taken the better part. No doubt Jesus liked a tidy house and food well prepared, but not at the expense of the word of His Father (Luke 10:38-42). Wherever self is put forward there is jealousy, discontent and uselessness. The lesson of Gideon is self put aside. The warning of Ephraim is put to the front, and so they chide with Gideon and ask why they were not called up to do the fighting, and to overthrow the enemy from the beginning.

Let us then, as we pass on with the company 'faint but pursuing', take the lesson to ourselves, and remove that spirit of discontent that oppresses us from time to time, of envy and jealousy, that cannot bear to see God use others. Paul had not one particle of that when the gospel was preached, no matter by whom (within the brotherhood, of course). Paul could rejoice at it. And when Christ was preached even of contention, not in sincerity, he could still thank God that it was Christ who was being preached, for in some way or other God would get glory out of it. Here is Ephraim, though, they are just simply jealous. Why? Because God had used a more spiritual instrument than themselves. Jealousy is a proof that God cannot use us: if we are envious of others of the spiritual state or power of another, it is simply the proof that God cannot use us. We would not be jealous of another if God could use us; and the thing that jealousy teaches first of all, is to go on our face in the very dust (Ophrah) where it all began, as indeed Gideon did, and own up to God, as Gideon did, that we are unprofitable servants. The brother who envies his brethren should rather criticise himself. In this lesson before us we get to the bedrock of a lot of trouble that has bedevilled the Truth for ages; very much so in the international scene at the present time. Let us heed the lesson and leave jealousy as far as we are concerned in the proper quarter; Song 8:6 - secure in the heart of Jesus, and let us be zealous in the things of God, not in our own interest. A soft answer turneth away wrath, and so the envy of Ephraim melted at the answer of Gideon: very highly commendable, the way of Christ himself (Judges 8:3).

Judges 8:4 "And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he and the 300 men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them."

As Gideon knew when to yield, so he knew when to be stern. So the soldier of Christ, whilst he will readily yield to the brethren fighting the same enemy, will faithfully denounce the terrors of the Lord to false brethren and to unbelieving mockers. We find Gideon and his brave 300 men still intact: we cannot begin to imagine their strength of faith at this time. Although the outward man was somewhat weary and worn, they were still following on in their course with what little strength they had, like their leader, relying entirely on the Lord - faint yet pursuing - typifying the Christian warrior, "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; cast down but not destroyed." (2 Corinthians 4:7-10; 6:9-10).

"The excellency of the power of God" to sustain has most scope for exercise in our weakness, if only we run with patience (or endurance) the race set before us, looking unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27), "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (if we absorb the Word as we should). "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4). Ever be reminded that our Lord said to Paul, and His brethren to follow, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, we will rather glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us." "Therefore we take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when we are weak then are we strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). We have paraphrased a little to bring the lesson straight home to ourselves, collectively as the Truth or an ecclesia within the Truth. Should we wish to apply direct to ourself personally, the singular as in the original will be more than appropriate. All the working out must be found within the ecclesia, i. e. the body of Christ mystical. No man liveth or dieth to himself: the only single unit in the Christ body is the Head Himself, and from him all things proceed.

Paul sums up for us in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5: "For though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." These words are not just wonderful prose: they are spiritual instruction for every one who would follow the greater Gideon. These are not just words to admire, but the deep things of God, to keep and strive daily with ourselves, that our jealousy may lead to 'zealousy' for the Lord.

Is it not remarkable that Gideon and his 300 men passed over Jordan and so to Transjordan - the Jordan, Yarkan = the plunger, the river of judgment. So will the Christ body in the glorious day, bring judgment and chastisement to those who know not God, yet who claim the holy places of Israel as their own through Ishmael and Mahomet. (Revelation 14:6-7). "Fear God and give glory to Him" will be the message in that day. Psalm 2:1-12, finally they will kiss the Son in submission, but not before terrible judgments will have been poured out. Then shall Ishmael dwell in his own territory, and lay no more right to the things of Israel. "He shall dwell to the east of his brethren" according to divine right (Genesis 17:20, Genesis 16:12 - A.V. margin).

Nor was it right at this time to depreciate the work of Ephraim. Oreb and Zeeb - raven and wolf - the princes of Midian, had fallen to their hands at the fords of Jordan. These names suggest the destructive character of the world whose 'prince' spares not. But we appreciate as time passes in the service of the Lord and His Christ, the fruits of the Spirit overcome the hosts of this world and the 'principalities and powers' who lead them, when 'works' are in their true place - at the Jordan, the river of death - they do their work most effectually.

But a true Manassite cannot linger, but press forward to make a complete victory. He crosses over Jordan and follows after the fleeing host, faint yet pursuing. There is a tantalising connection between these two words. It is still out of weakness made strong (Hebrews 11). We might almost read it 'pursuing because faint'. It is the faintness and helplessness of the man that leads him to press on, for it is God who is working in him, which reminds us of one of the old worthies in David's day, whose hand clave to the sword, or like Ruth who clave (same Heb. word) to Naomi (Ruth 1:8). Gideon had lost sight of all but God, and will never rest till he has overthrown the whole power of the enemy.

Judges 8:5 "And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the men that follow me (proving the point made beforehand re the empty pitchers having been the containers for the victuals before the 'battle'), for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, Kings of Midian."

It is obvious that it is in bodily weakness that he asks the men of Succoth and Peniel for food. One hides one's face for shame on reading the answer of these Israelites who were to share in the victory; those who would have shared, but for their churlish attitude. They were to suffer a much more humiliating and painful death. What a contradiction to their names. Midian means the strife of flesh and its terrorising power. Succoth is a pilgrim word and means 'tents' etc. (See Numbers 33 - Debir Press). Pilgrims have a set place to go and one aim in life to fit their pilgrim standing, and surely people who dwell in tents, as Abraham did centuries before, not only fight against wickedness in the high places of his day. Abraham rescued out of their clutches Lot and others who yet returned back into Sodom, and finally had to be forcibly ejected out of Sodom by the angels (Genesis chapters 14 and 18). They ought to be willing to help their exhausted brethren to overthrow the power of Midian. Peniel means 'the face of God' (see 'Song of Solomon' by the present writer), and men who are looking upon the face of God surely would be ready to give every assistance to take captive the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna. A query runs through our thoughts - if the inhabitants of Succoth and Peniel had food, were they in league with the kings of Midian? The answer to Gideon can be understood to mean this.

Judges 8:6 "And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?"

The answer of self-effacing Gideon now comes strong with faith, and full of foreboding and destruction.

Judges 8:7-9 "And Gideon said, Therefore when the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and briers. And he went up thence to Peniel" (we all go up or look up to the face of God - see Punon, Numbers 33, Debir Press).

But once again, the answer of the men of Peniel was similar to that of the men of Succoth. "And Gideon spake unto them, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower." In peace - Shalom: the victory will be by Yahweh Shalom - the Lord will give peace, and not only so, the number will still be intact; Gideon going up or looking unto the face of God.

J. Hall once again very aptly outlines the position:

"He hath left the envy of Ephraim behind him; before him he finds the envy of Succoth and Peniel. The one envies that he should overcome without them, the other, that he should say he had overcome. His pursuits lead him to Succoth; there he craves relief and is repelled. Had he said, come forth and draw your sword with me against Zebah and Zalmunna, the motion had been but equal. A common interest challenges universal aid. Now he says but 'Give morsels of bread to my followers', he is turned off with a stone, he asks bread, they turn him off with a stone, before this act. Could he ask a more slender recompense of their deliverance, or a less reward of his victory? 'Give morsels of bread'. Before this act, all their substance had been too small for a hire of their freedom from Midian. Now, when it is done, a morsel of bread is too much. Well might he challenge bread, where he gave liberty and life.

"It is hard if those which fight the wars of God may not have the necessary relief; that whilst the enemy dies for them that they should die by famine. If they had laboured for God at home in peace, they had been worthy of maintenance; how much more now,

that danger is added to their toils. Even very executioners look for fees; but here were not malefactors, but adversaries to be slain; the sword of power and revenge was now to be wielded, not of quiet justice. Those that fight for our lives against (wickedness in higher places) may challenge bread from us, it is shameless unthankfulness to deny it. When Abraham had vanquished the five kings and delivered Lot and his family, the King of Salem met him with bread and wine, and now these sons of Abraham, after an equal victory, ask dry bread, and are denied by their brethren. Craftily yet, and under pretence of a false title, had they acknowledged the victory of Gideon; with what forehead could they have denied him bread?" which about sums up the situation at this time in the career of Gideon. They mock Gideon, and so you find that he had no gentle words for them as he had for the men of Ephraim. It is a very different thing. Ephraim had taken the field against the enemy, but the men of Succoth were holding back and were really on the side of Midian (as we conjectured a little earlier).

No one can be neutral in a time when the lines between Christ and the world are drawn. No one can ever be neutral without being on the side of the enemy. "He that is not with me is against me" says the Lord. So these men were really as much the enemies of God as Midian: more the enemies, because they were the professed people of God. And John put it just the opposite way, in his 3rd Epistle, verses 5-8: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers, which have borne witness of thy charity before the church, whom, if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well; because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth." This is the true Christian appreciation, whereby "some have entertained angels unaware." (Hebrews 13:1-2). The men of Succoth and Penuel knew full well whom they were to entertain, and yet stubbornly refused to help.

1. Gideon limited his request to their supplying the first necessity of life - loaves of bread. Common humanity ought to have made them willing, yea glad, to satisfy the hunger of fainting fellow men.
2. The tie of religious and national brotherhood was a still stronger claim, but
3. selfishness, cowardly fear of Midian, and disbelief in God's faithfulness to his promise of victory to Gideon, steeled their hearts: they proved themselves traitors to the Israel of God, and they added insult to their unfeeling refusal, and as usual this scourge with which they belaboured Gideon, the scourge of the tongue wherewith they insulted him (cp. Job 5:21) brought upon them the overflowing scourge (Isaiah 28:18 etc.) Instead of the sweet brier wherewith God chastens His children, they were made to feel the tearing terror of vengeance (Psalm 89:32; 104:12-13). So shall it be in the coming day of retribution. The Lord Jesus will say to those on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire", the fit place for casting away scratching briars and thorns, "for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat" (Matthew 25:41-45). He who is the meek and loving lamb will show Himself the avenging God of wrath to the scorers. The Arabs' proverbial comment was "Take heed thy tongue cut not thy throat". We have already referred to Jude 13. He shall convict all the ungodly of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Solomon observed, "judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools" (Proverbs 19:29). Do we not live in the days prophesied by Peter? "Where is the promise of His coming?" Refusing to believe it until they have seen it (2 Peter 3:3-4; Isaiah 5:19; 66:5; Jeremiah 17:15, Amos 5:18).

Though the followers of our Lord are now said to be "a little flock" and the world seems far the stronger, yet faith will enable us to overcome the world and to act as knowing that ours is the winning side. Every ministration of love, every service of love to the brethren for our Lord's sake, shall be richly rewarded, as surely as the unprofitable servant shall be cast into outer darkness at the great day.

Judges 8:10-12 "Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and all their hosts with them, about 15,000 men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east; for there fell 120,000 men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbethah, and smote the host; for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host."

The word for loaf (Judges 8:5) is 'ciccar', a circular cake (Ges. 396), the same word as in Exodus 29:33 and in 1 Samuel 2:36, where it is rendered "a morsel of bread". They should have offered sustenance to the people of God who are fighting His battle (Judges 7:18). Zebah signifies 'sacrifice' (Ges. 238) and Zalmunna 'shadow taken away' (Ges. 487).

Judges 8:5 We notice that these two tyrants were something more than Oreb and Zeeb who are only designated as princes. Quite an interesting distinction is to be observed in the application (typical) of Zebah which equals 'sacrifice', actually the peace offering, Zebath(Hb) along with Zalmunna, 'the shadow is taken away', which can be seen in two senses.

1. Sacrifice under the Law Zebach (peace offering) which is fulfilled, and so 'the shadow is taken away' in Christ; or as here and as Psalm 83:12 indicates, that these two kings represent the overthrow of the enemies of the Lord Jesus and His Body. No doubt these names are prophetic, Zebah again meaning sacrifice and Zalmunna shadow restrained etc. The acts of Gideon typify the working of Christ in his ecclesia. The overthrow of the princes and kings of Midian prefigures the victories of the gospel. May it not be that the victories over Zebah and Zalmunna represent the effect of Christianity in putting an end to sacrifice, heathen and Jewish, by the one sacrifice of Christ, and in restraining and dispersing the shadows of darkness and of death, and in sunning out the shadowy outlines of the law, in the glorious light of the gospel (Isaiah 9:2; Luke 1:79; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1), and in Gideon defeating forever the domination of Midian in one stroke, quite vividly. Hebrews 9:25-26 stands out before us: "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and as it is appointed unto men once to die, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear without sin unto salvation."

We shall find that Gideon gained his victory at sunrise, and Christ is he who has turned the shadow of death into the morning; the Lord is his name." (Amos 5:8). Presumably the victory at one stroke took three days for execution, and is not this the time that the greater Gideon, and Jonah, took? Just as Jesus was three days and three nights in the tomb, so Jonah was found in the fish's belly a similar time. Jonah we believe died as did Jesus, the great miracle being that the active or digestive juices of the fish were non-existent for this time. So Manasseh and the territories around were sitting in the shadow of death by starvation under Midian. But as Jesus the great antitype of them both arose early on the third morning, so at least the battle with Midian was concluded for ever at sunrise on the third day. "O Lord, how wonderful is thy law and thy ways past finding out. Blessed be the Lord for all His mercies." Judges 8:13 says "before the sun was up", precisely as Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2 etc. Along with all the worthies of the Lord we will arise and seek Him early. Abraham etc., Genesis 22:3 etc.

Judges 8:10 "Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor". Gesenius 745 - Karkor = level place: a levelling in scripture means coming under judgment. Such is the level of the Spirit (Isaiah 40:3-5. Jogbethah, exalted, from the fut. Hophal, Heb. of the root gabhah, to be high, vid. Gibbethon - a town of the tribe of Gad, where the hosts

of Zebah and Zalmunna were encamped when Gideon surprised them. Isn't it rather odd that Midian were surprised the second time in three days, and that at night, as at the first?

(A) Midian was truly surprised on the first occasion because they did not think Manasseh able to put up even the least resistance.

(B) The second time because they thought they were beyond the reaches of his army 'faint but pursuing', but an old score had to be settled. Some time beforehand these two kings, Zebah and Zalmunna (actually in one of the previous raids?) had cruelly murdered Gideon's brethren in cold blood, having tracked them down to their hiding place in Mount Tabor. How blind and deaf is the heart of flesh; it will never learn the lesson of retribution that comes from God. They thought at that time that they were perfectly secure from all penal consequences. But - sins long forgotten by man must be answered for to God.

The serpent's lie began this in the beginning, deluding Eve and Adam, saying "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). It will continue so long as human nature survives.

Perhaps it would be appropriate at this point to mark the difference between Zeeb and Oreb who were captains (Heb. saree) and Zebah and Zalmunna who were princes (Heb. mal'kee) - a higher division of authority altogether in those we are considering at the moment. The Midianite kings on Mount Tabor - Heb. 'a stone quarry, to separate'. Isaiah 49:2, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me", Jesus speaking. So Jesus was hidden time and time again from persecution in this very locality. Isaiah 49 is rich in Messianic typology and will figure largely in Armageddon so near at hand.

However, these kings thought they were well out of reach of the gallant 300 and the avenger of the blood of Gideon's relatives. But justice overtook them, even when they had crossed over Jordan and reached the wild region of the way of them that dwelt in tents. They were dogmatically certain of being beyond the clutches of Gideon, and apparently were either too tired to set a watch, or too indifferent to bother. Whatever happened, justice overtook them (see Amos 9:2-3) just when the host was thought to be secure.

As judgment began with the recalcitrant Israelites of Succoth and Peniel, so it fell with the heaviest weight on Zebah and Zalmunna and the godless and heedless enemy. Gideon took a circuit past the most easterly frontier city of God so as to fall upon them from the east, a quarter whence they apprehended no danger, especially at night; actually taken by surprise and therefore panic struck by the second attack at night. Verse 13 proves this. The English version, it is thought, wrongly puts in italics 'was up', as if these words were not in the Hebrew. The literal translation is "From in connection with the going up of the sun" (cp. Genesis 19:15 "when the sun arose". The use of the same Hebrew 'heres' for the sun in verse 23 sustains this meaning here).

We have seen, however, the antitype proves the type in the resurrection of Jesus. Just as Gideon 'prevented' the morning by his surprise attack, so did the Lord Jesus by his resurrection, while it was yet dark, just as the morning light brought victory for Gideon on both occasions; so the dayspring from on high arose to glorify the Father, and as the 300 men were still with him (that is, Gideon), so those whom the Father hath given Him will be with Jesus on the final day of victory. None can snatch them from the Father's hand (John 10:29). "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams." (Malachi 4:2).

Again, had it been in daylight the Midianites would have seen the meagre force of Gideon, but as the action is always in the night, darkness covered the movements and the victory was final and complete. With the rising sun the victory is complete, and as in 2 Thessalonians 2, comes retribution to those who have changed sides and given their

allegiance to the enemy will feel the wrath of the Lamb and His saints (Rev. 19: 11-16).

J. Hall writes: "Thinking back on the men of Succoth and Peniel, we find a powerful exhortation on the advisability of never to measure events by the power of the instrument; nor, in the causes of God (whose calling makes all the difference) to measure others by ourselves. There is nothing more dangerous than in holy businesses to stand upon comparisons and our own reputation, since it is reason God should both choose, and bless, where He lists. To have questioned so sudden a victory had been pardonable; but to deny it scornfully was unworthy of Israelites. Carnal men think that impossible to others, which themselves cannot do: from hence are their censures, hence their exclamations. Gideon hath vowed a fearful revenge and now performs it; the taunts of his brethren may not stay him from the pursuit of the Midianites: common enmities must first be opposed, domestical at more leisure. The princes of Succoth feared the tyranny of the Midianitish, but they feared Gideon's victory. What a condition hath their envy drawn them into, that they are sorry to see God's enemies captive, that Israel's freedom must be their death, that the Midianites and they must tremble at one and the same revenger. To see themselves prisoners to Zebah and Zalmunna prisoners to Gideon. Nothing is more terrible to evil minds than to read their own condemnation in the happy success of others. Nothing is more terrible to evil minds than to read their own condemnation in the happy success of others. Hell itself would want one piece of its torment if the wicked did not know those whom they contemned glorious (metaphorically speaking of course - AH.) I know not whether more to commend Gideon's wisdom, and moderation in the proceedings than his resolution and justice in the execution of this business. I do not see him run into the city and kill the next; his sword had been so drunken with blood that it should know no difference, but he writes down the names of the princes and singles them forth for revenge. When the leaders of God came to Jericho or Ai, their slaughter was impartial: not a woman or child might live to tell the news; but now that Gideon comes to Succoth, a city of Israelites, the rulers are called forth to death, the people are frightened with the example, not hurt with judgment. To enwrap the innocent in any vengeance is a murderous injustice indeed; where all join in the sin, all are worthy to meet in the punishment. It is like the citizens of Succoth could have been glad to succour Gideon, if their rulers had not forbidden. They must therefore escape while their princes perish."

These words sort out the various judgments very clearly, and the resultant punishments would certainly frighten the lay people as they watched their elders undergoing their just retribution. When I entered the Truth some 40 years ago I used to think that being "taught with thorns" was a rather severe beating on the nether end, such as we received at the hands of our master at school, and could imagine the effect should thorns be used, hawthorn for instance; but now, after considerable research and mentally appreciating the terrible thorns of the east, that tear the flesh terribly (see Numbers 33, by the present writer, p. 16: the literal meaning of 'Sinai' is Ten Brambles), Gideon's treatment of the traitors and mockers is almost too terrible to contemplate.

Hear once again what J. Hall says, and he lived during those terrible days when men were hanged, drawn and quartered, and that in public. This man also spent 5 years in that classical place of torture, the Tower of London. The screams and cries from the dungeons were his everyday experience, Yet are his contemplations on the punishment meted out to these men of Succoth and Peniel: "I cannot think of Gideon's revenge without horror; that the rulers of Succoth should have their flesh torn from their back with thorns and briars, that they should be at once beaten and scratched to death. What a spectacle it was, to see their bare bones looking somewhere through the bloody rags of their flesh and skin, and every stroke worse than the last, death multiplied by torment. Justice is sometimes so severe that a tender beholder can scarce discern it from cruelty.



I see the Midianites fare less ill; the edge of the sword makes a speedy and easy passage for their lives, while these rebellious Israelites die lingering under thorns and briars, envying those on their death whom their life abhorred. Howsoever men live or die without the pale of the (Ecclesia, AH), a wicked Israelite shall be sure of plagues. How many shall unwish themselves Christians, when God's revenges have found them out."

Some authorities think that Gideon spread the ground with thorns and then ground them with an iron sledge. Whichever punishment was meted out, the end was slow and terribly painful.

The place where Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed, now hath wrestled against God and takes a fall; they see God avenged which would not believe him delivering. It was now time for Zebah and Zalmunna to follow those their troops to the grave whom they had led in the field. Those which the day before were attended with 135,000 followers have not so much as a page now left to weep for their death, and have lived only to see all their friends and some enemies die for their sakes. He well says, "Who can regard earthy greatness that sees two of the greatest kings of the world into captives. It had been both pity and sin, that the heads of that Midianitish tyranny, into which they had drawn so many thousands, should have escaped that death. . And yet, if private revenge had not made Gideon just, I doubt whether they had died. The blood of the brothers calls for theirs and awakes his sword to their execution. He both knew and complained of the Midianite oppression, under which Israel groaned; yet the cruelty of all the thousands of his father's sons had not drawn the blood of Zebah and Zalmunna, if his own mother's sons had not bled by their hands," which is a rather quaint but pithy comment on what we say today, that 'blood is thicker than water.'

"He that slew the rulers of Succoth and Penuel and spared the people, now hath slain the people of Midian, and would have spared their rulers: But that God, which will find occasions to wind wicked men into judgment, will have them slain in a private quarrel which had more deserved it for the public; if we may not rather say that Gideon revenged these as a magistrate, not as a brother. For governors to respect their own ends in public action and to wear the sword of justice in their own sheath, it is a wrongful use of abuse of authority."

The following words, though written in the early 17th century, have a modern tang and acid taste. "Some that have gone away with unnatural filthiness, and capital thefts, have cupped off their own days with their coin, others whose bloody murders have been punished in a mutinous word, others, whose suspected felony hath paid the price of their own unknown rape. O God, thy judgments are just even when men's are unjust." It brings to mind the words of Jesus who said that the worst sinners would be beaten with many stripes and the lesser with few (Luke 12:47). It is too horrible to contemplate: our God is not only a God of love, but also of severity (Romans 9:14-25-30 etc.) We ourselves as did these men of old, Gideon, the men of Succoth, and Peniel, make the terms of our own judgment. If our stand is always on the Lord's side we shall never slide, and if we stay underneath the shadowing wings as Joshua did (Psalm 91), then we can await the coming judgment with joy and yet with fear.

Judges 8:13-14, describing the prelude to these events, says, "And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun was up (we have already seen the significance of this timing) and caught a young man of the men of Succoth and inquired of him, and he (the young man) described unto him the princes of Succoth and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men ." Seventy seven men of whom much could be said (but tempus fugit). Briefly then. The AV and RV particularly unfortunately translate 'describe' (v. 14), which have helped to obscure this last fact, which is a witness to the wide dissemination of the arts of writing and reading (cp. RSV 'wrote down'). The development

of the alphabetical script, with its limited number of letters compared to the multitude of elements in ideographic or syllabic writing, was one of the great steps forward in civilisation and brought within the compass of this young man of Succoth as well as of Gideon himself. Possibly the youth used a sharp pointed instrument to scratch the words upon a fragment of pottery or a piece of shale, a method frequently employed for much of the Old Testament period. Armed with this list Gideon approached and reminded the rulers of Succoth (15). Scripture once again puts it - Judges 8:15, "And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna with whom ye did upbraid me saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?" This is the reason why Gideon had not dispatched these two kings before now: he brought them alive but captive in the hollow of his hand (as the Hebrew means), then slew the 77 elders in the manner prescribed (just a few pages back). No doubt Zebah and Zalmunna watched the slow lingering death of these men, and wondered what would happen when their turn came.

However, 77 is the number of retribution in Lamech (Gen. 4:24), and incidentally for bringing in of full forgiveness in Christ (Luke 3:23). The people of Succoth that remained were indeed taught by severe means what they ought to have known before by other means, and in our days once more, they who now despise the mercy of Christ as the Lamb, will hereafter feel the wrath of Christ as the Lion (Rev. 5:5).

Judges 8:17 describes in brief detail the punishment of the men of Penuel, "And he beat down the Tower of Penuel and slew the men of the city" - the tower into which the women and children and also the men would retire when attacked. That Gideon tore this edifice down is proof that these men put their trust in the tower rather than in the face of God (Penuel) at this time. We notice that all the men of this place are executed, not just the elders this time. The whole population was in agreement with the attitude of their rulers.

Having given these traitors their just deserts, Gideon turns to the kings who had slain his brothers. We have already dealt with Tabor etc.

Judges 8:18 "Then said he to Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art so were they, each one resembled the children of a king." This answer seems to have arisen because Gideon had proved to be (or appeared to be) to these men a mighty king, 300 men having absolutely routed and degraded 135,000 armed men of their armies. Not only once, but twice, as we have read, the Greater Gideon's victory over the forces of darkness (Midian darkness) was or will be accomplished in two stages. (1) Hebrews 2, when Jesus slew him who had power over death - that is the devil or sin in the flesh, when he rose again from the dead by the glory of the Father (Romans 1:4); (2) and in the morning without clouds for which we all are waiting, when He will bring again the dead who sleep (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Gideon's answer is significant: Judges 8:19 - "And he answered, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive I would not slay you." My brethren - the sons of my mother. The brethren of Christ have one mother along with Him: Jerusalem from above, she is our mother, and the Lord Jesus is the first born, and if we are found worthy He will be pleased to call us brethren (Galatians 4:26; Psalm 87:5; Hebrews 2:11-14). Is there not a warning here, pointing to the Lord Jesus and to the great day of reckoning? At that day, the Son of man (Matt. 25:31), who had taken our nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary his mother, will say to those on the right hand, Inasmuch as ye have done it (i.e. acts of mercy) unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me, and he will condemn the unmerciful, as guilty of unkindness to Himself (Matthew 25:31-46). This prophetic reference is confirmed by what goes before. They whom Zebah and Zalmunna had destroyed at Tabor are described as having the form of the sons of kings.

We who are Christian Israel should take good note of this saying because it came from the enemies of the Lord. Paul said that we ought to have a good report of those inside and outside the Truth. It is our responsibility then to strive to resemble 'the form' or character of our king, the Lord Jesus Christ. If people who are utterly opposed to any form of Christian character and belief can testify such of us with their dying breath (for such it turned out to be with these Midian kings) we shall not be far from the Kingdom of God. With our baptism into Christ we became sons of a king, and that of heaven, by faith in Jesus. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His Name" (John 1:12). And sins of cruelty against the brethren are sins against Christ and against God. Acts 9:4: "Saul, Saul, why persecuteest thou me?" Jesus said to our beloved brother Paul, who had not as yet given himself wholly to Christ.

It would appear that the brothers of Gideon had been murdered in cold blood and not fallen in open battle. Zebah and Zalmunna must therefore pay with their blood the innocent blood they had shed (Genesis 9:5; 1 Samuel 15:32-33). Here we find Gideon's basically humane nature is revealed in the latter part of verse 19, but according to the standards of the Book of Judges, both he and the Midianite kings knew that their death was imminent. The relationship obviously was closer (of the same mother) than by the same father (Genesis 43:29; Psalm 69:8). Gideon and his band would have died a similar death, had he lost the battles. They had slain men at Tabor and, confronted with Gideon, they probably became aware of the likeness between the men they had slain and Gideon. There is also an incidental witness to the imposing appearance of Gideon.

The end of the incident is in sight. Gideon turned to his eldest son Jether, which means 'excellence' or 'great abundance' (Yether, Heb.). This name had been well chosen, for Gideon had 70 sons to his name, but all came to an abrupt end, as we shall see. Apparently Jether was only a youth at this time, very unlike David who advanced alone to the combat with Goliath (10 feet tall?) Once again the antitype reveals the truth of the matter.

Judges 8:20 "And he said unto Jether his firstborn, up (and) slay them." The eldest son of Gideon cannot execute vengeance on the kings of Midian. No one can execute judgments but Christ. So it was that no one could slay Goliath but David. Even Jonathan who will face a force of the enemy alone except with his armour bearer could not attempt such a feat. Saul with his excess height - head and shoulders above any man in Israel - with his armour and sword, but with a chicken heart. He was not acceptable. David alone, as Hebrews 2:14 informs us, could bring victory to Israel. Such is the case with Gideon in this incident. He alone could do it, representing our Lord Jesus in his victory over death. So Jether was not able to take from his father his own duty of avenging his brethren's blood (2 Samuel 3:30). The condemned men protested strongly, not wishing further disgrace in dying at the hands of a boy. Cp the delight of Agag being slain by such a man as Samuel.

Judges 8:21 "Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength", looking forward to the dramatic future. The saints will not fail the Lord Jesus Christ in His day of judgement on Midian in that day. They will share in the honour and spoil. So Christ shall honour his saints (Psalm 99:6-9; Rev. 19:13-15). The blood of the saints which has been poured at the foot of the brazen altar and on the horns of the incense altar will find their fulfilment. So Judges 8:21, "Gideon arose and slew Zebah and Zalmunna". What a difference the Holy Spirit which clad Gideon as with a garment made on him; we could hardly view this aspect, only three days before. To stress once more all the work of Gideon was done in the dark of the night with the exception of the vengeance on Succoth, Penuel and the kings of Midian.

These are judgments in the light of day which will be seen antitypically in the glorious light of the morning without clouds, and of course full strength to kill speedily belongs to men of full age, not boys.

He also took away the ornaments (little moons or crescent-shaped ornaments) of gold and silver worn as amulets round the neck. Even today we find the Bedouin Arabs decorating their camels' necks with such ornaments.

Judges 8:22 Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also, for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. (We counsel our readers to keep in mind this verse - 8:23. It will resume full meaning directly). (Exodus 34:7-9 etc.) Note here brethren and sisters, "Rule thou over us unto the third and fourth generation". Gideon rightly refused.

Judges 8:23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son reign over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

The enemy thus is fully overthrown, and Gideon, the 'hewer down', has hewed down the 'high things that exalted themselves against the knowledge of God'. He is a mighty victor: we have one more part of his life to look at and that is a sad one: very much like Solomon, who began in humility and lowliness with his God, giving all the glory to God in everything; but finally his wives led him (Solomon) away, and Gideon, like Solomon, had many wives. Solomon's wives led him astray, as Scripture plainly tells us, and he worshipped strange gods. We are not told so in the case of Gideon, and apparently even after these visible theophanies of God, he became a snare to Israel as did Solomon. So much promise, so much given by God, and in the end time failure. May it not be our lot in the coming day. We know there was a constant tendency in Israel to have a visible leader and ruler, someone like all the nations, who would lead them forth to battle and reign over them in peace.

Today we still find us trying to 'ape' the preaching of this world, which is foolishness with God. We want to have marches, fill London with bus loads of pilgrims, fill the Albert Hall at a cost of £110,000 and force over 100 Policemen to watch over us and to keep the peace. This in our opinion is no different from Israel in the Old Testament. We preach Christ daily, not in large conferences nor television broadcasts, but daily in our everyday dealing with people. Scripturally we believe the idea is all wrong. We are no different from the miners etc. with their demonstrations. Brother or sister, create a little light all around you: it will be far more effective.

Israel got their desire at last when Saul was put over them. Here we have the budding of that idea in the wish that Gideon should rule, but he had learnt too much of God's authority to usurp authority for himself, and it is truly beautiful to see that the man who had been belittling himself all along continues to do so and refuses to take the throne that had been vacated by Zebah and Zalmunna. The thought behind the idea is that as these two were kings and rulers, Gideon would automatically become the supreme ruler in the east: but this territory belonged to Ishmael, so the idea is wrong in any case. We are sure that Gideon realised this trap and skilfully avoided it. "God shall be their King" he says. If Israel had always remembered that God was sufficient, and that He alone was their King, how many bitter lessons it would have saved them. But as humans are, they did not remember. They forgot their Rock, and suffered the blistering heat of a Sinai day without their shade, and consequently they were afflicted and punished time after time.

We note then that Gideon had faith to decline it and refuses to allow his sons to take it. But in a little while it crops up again, and the very thing which the people desired is what they get a little later on. And alas, we come to something that Gideon could not stand: I suppose one of the greatest temptations with men is the desire for power.

Perhaps there is one thing greater, and that is the desire for privilege – outward nearness to God : something different from that which is enjoyed by everybody else. Gideon asks for the gold that had been gathered from the defeated enemy, and out of it he makes not exactly a golden calf as Aaron made of the gold that had been brought from Egypt, but a priestly ephod. We remember Manasseh (the tribe to which Gideon belonged) was a son of Joseph, as was Ephraim. If Ephraim (the younger son) was to be given the leadership, could not Manasseh (actually the elder) be given the priesthood? We wonder.

What made Gideon take this step, obviously the first one without the consent and approval of God? The scripture reference is Judges 8:24-26 - "And Gideon said to them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey (for they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites), and they answered, we will willingly give them, and they spread a garment and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, beside ornaments and collars and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. Verse 27: And Gideon made an ephod (the force of the Hebrew is directed around this word) thereof, and put it in his city, even Ophrah; and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." So we find Gideon, though he rejected the tempting offer of kingship, yielded to the temptation of securing to himself his quasi-priestly office, an office in relation to Yahweh and His people.

What are the facts of the case?

- (A) He had been honoured with the vision of the angel of Yahweh, calling him to be judge and deliverer of Israel.
- (B) His gift had been accepted, as a well pleasing sacrifice.
- (C) By divine command he had built an altar to Yahweh, and sacrificed a bullock as a burnt offering with the wood of the Asherah, after destroying it and the altar of Baal.
- (D) By thus re-establishing the worship of Yahweh he had restored God's favour to Israel; and God granted him several revelations.
- (E) But making the ephod was at Gideon's own instigation and not of God's command, and caused Israel to sin.

The earring or nose ring of Rebekah was  $\frac{1}{2}$  shekel: therefore 1,700 equalled 3,400 men who wore these ornaments, Heb. Nezero - Genesis 24:47, 53.

Judges 8:24 This parenthetical remark solves the difficulty of Genesis 37 verses 25, 28, 36, and ch. 39 v.1. Ishmael and Midian were half brothers, both sons of Abraham, but Ishmael by Hagar and Midian by Keturah (Genesis 16:11-12; 25:1-2). Cundall states, "The term Ishmaelites had come to be used very loosely to describe any trading group - Genesis 37:25-28, 39:1."

What Gideon did in this particular respect was contrary to God's law, for the ephod was to be worn by the priest alone, and by means of it God revealed His will to him (Exodus 28:30). In this sense we can see behind Gideon's mind (he certainly couldn't be called devious in any way). Being the leader of the army of Israel he desired to learn from the ephod what he ought to do. But his act was an occasion of evil to the people, "for all Israel went a whoring after it." The guidance from God which he desired also became impossible, for God answered by Urim and Thummim alone, and that only through the High Priest (Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8). Perhaps the lukewarmness and unworthiness of the regular priesthood - which seems to have taken no part in the restoration under Gideon, and to have made no resistance to idolatry - may have scandalized Gideon and may have tempted him to set up a separate ephod in his own home. The fact that "all Israel went a whoring" after Gideon's ephod proves that the

legitimate priesthood and ritual had lost their hold in the respect and affections of the people, and shows a great demoralization in the Levitical ministry at that time.

Gideon, whose zeal burned for God's glory, was probably provoked and irritated into impatience by this priestly degeneration, and he was tempted and perhaps was elated also by the abundance of revelations with which he had been favoured by God, and set up a separate ephod for himself. The evil effects of Gideon's example were seen in the degeneracy of the people after his death and in the foul worship of Baal Berith in Shechem under Abimelech his son (Judges 9:4) and in the other ephod made by Micah (17:5).

Gideon was therefore culpable in this matter and his history is a warning for anyone in Christ not to "leave their first estate" (Jude 6 etc.), and that it requires more than a good intention to make a good act, and that the examples of the best of men are not a safe guide of conduct, and the better a man is, the worse will be the consequences of bad acts done by him. The only right rule is the law of God.

J. Hall once again: "Gideon meant well by his rich ephod, yet this act set all Israel a whoring. God had chosen a place and service of His own; and when the wit of man will be overpleasing God with better devices than His own it ends in mischief." Especially does this example form a salutary warning in evil days that men should not suffer themselves to be exasperated by the defects of men or brethren in our midst who resort to irregular means for the attainments of good ends. (The proposed 1976 massive conference etc. is a good example). By such practices these Jerubbaals of Christ's ecclesia may become Jerubbesheths, 2 Samuel 11:21 etc., and may lead to further troubles. (1) Jerubbaal = He will contend with Baal - let Baal plead. (2) Jerubbesheth = He will contend with shame. May this last never be our designation.

Gideon, as we know, is numbered among the worthies of old in Hebrews 11:32, but the saints were men of flesh and no man is free from blemish of human infirmity. The Father knoweth that we are flesh and forgives us our trespasses when we ask Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. And the sins of these men of God are recorded in the Holy Scriptures to show that we have in scripture a true and impartial record of their lives, and to remind us that, though in many things they are types and figures of Christ, yet in one aspect they are not like the Divine Antitype, who alone is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (Hebrews 7:26) and who, by his perfect holiness, corrects all the aberrations of the types.

Even the blemishes of the human types are suggestive of the contrary perfectness in the antitype. We do not say that their sins are not sins, although God used their sins for a foreshadowing of His own will.

There is no doubt that Gideon erred in making this ephod. After more cogitation on this matter and the resultant Baal worship into which Israel fell after Gideon's death: they worshipped Baal Berith, equivalent to Baal as a God in covenant. This worship was an imitation of the worship of Yahweh. Was it because of this knowledge that Gideon made the ephod? To remind Israel not only of what he had done as Jerubbaal, but also of the reason of it? Did he attempt at least to keep his own household clean of the foul worship? Was it for this reason that while he lived he had quietness and tranquillity? Consequently the expression Jerubbaal - Gideon, to point out what he had accomplished on their behalf by Yahweh their deliverer?

Christ also has made an ephod and placed it in His own Ophrah. He has constituted himself our Priest by coming in our flesh, and He has been anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our Priest, and He wears the priestly ephod on His own Divine Person in heaven (Revelation 1:13), and, having received gifts for men (Psalm 68:18, cp Ephesians 4:8)

and being enriched with the offerings from all lands as Isaiah prophesied (Isaiah 9: 6-7) He has placed an ephod in his earthly Ophrah by sending forth His apostles, and then successors, even as in this 20th century, to minister His word and truth. So once again the antitype has corrected the type.

Gideon's ephod brought apostasy and declension, whatever his motives may have been. The Christ ephod is still ministering the Word all over the earth, until from even the least unto the greatest shall not only know the Lord, but also glory in His Name Yahweh.

It may, perhaps, be not unworthy to note that the word Ophrah, besides speaking of 'dust', also signifies a fawn, and that the masculine form Opher is a word used in the Song of Solomon to describe the beauty and love of Christ and His Ecclesia (Song of Solomon 2: 9, 17; 4: 5; 7: 3; 8: 14).

Judges 8: 28 Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. In one stroke lasting 3 days and 3 nights did this mighty man of God destroy Midian and their power from afflicting Israel any more. So with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as we have read, and the country had rest 40 years in the days of Gideon, speaking of the 40 days which followed the resurrection of our Lord. Whether or not Israel immediately followed on to whore after the ephod we are not told. It would seem to be so. Yet God granted them these 40 years rest (note in the days of Gideon)- so long as he lived). 40, as we know, is the number of probation which can either conclude in perfection or in decline. Israel travelled 40 years in the wilderness as we know, until all the older men died: only Joshua and Caleb overcame. Numbers 14. So the land had 40 years of quietness, the land had rest. How peaceful it sounds amidst all the bustle of our noisy world. Pray the Father that the whole earth will soon sit and be at rest (Zechariah 1: 10-11), when the judgments of God have done their work.

Judges 8: 29 "And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house" - pictorially representing the fact as in Ezekiel 3: 24.

The name Jerubbaal here resumed from ch. 7: 1 is used throughout ch. 9, to which we are now about to turn. It brings into vivid contrast the repose which succeeded the conflict. The Baal conqueror who overthrew Midian declined the crown and withdrew into domestic privacy.

There has been quite a mountain of conjecture regarding the ephod which Gideon caused to be made. Incidentally, the weight of gold has been estimated at 50lb or 75lb according to which measure was used, the great or small shekel.

- (A) What we are interested in is what fashion of decoration was used in its manufacture.
- (B) What design did it take? and
- (C) Has it any connection with what happened later in Hannah's case, and the ephod garment she made for Samuel (1 Samuel 2: 18). Although the situations were different, the principles were not.
- (D) The priesthood in Samuel's day were corrupt as the history plainly shows, and apparently this is the reason why a small child was called to serve with Eli.
- (E) Who among us have been dedicated before our birth to the Lord and lent to the Lord after weaning, as Samuel was (1 Samuel 1: 28). Samson was (Judges 13: 1-5). John the Baptist was, of course (Luke 1: 12-15), and of course the Lord Jesus Christ himself (Luke 1: 28-32). More later.
- (F) So far as the Concordance is concerned the priesthood in authority at least, were practically non-existent. We have only one reference to them in the whole of Judges (Judges 20: 26-28).
- (G) The ephod made by Hannah was of linen, and apparently unadorned by embroidery.

- (H) But Gideon's ephod was made with 50-70 lb of gold.
- (I) Was the gold used to pay for making such a garment?
- (J) Or was it beaten into wire to ornament the garment?
- (K) The suggestion that emerges to me personally is that the intention was to supply something after the style of Aaron's ephod.
- (L) We are not told who ministered in the High Priest's office in those days, and our findings, after considerable cogitation, are that Gideon is attempting to safeguard (1) his own family which was sizeable, and (2) Israel, from the falling away which would happen after his death. (3) The germs of Gideon's error, which became a snare to him and to his house, lie unquestionably it would appear (though we can only be tentatively dogmatic about this one) in the fact that the High Priesthood had probably lost its worth in the eyes of the people, on account of the degeneracy: and therefore Gideon, to whom God had manifested Himself directly, as He had not to any leader or judge since Joshua, might suppose that he was not acting in violation of the law when he had the ephod made, and thus provided himself (so he thought) with a substratum or vehicle for inquiring into the will of the Lord.

In the light of centuries of history, and looking backwards even to the Garden of Eden, we find this one thing happening almost to every person. The serpent's lie to know good and evil. Eve couldn't wait until God moved. Noah could. Abraham and Sarah couldn't. Rebekah couldn't. Joseph could. Joshua, apart from one instance, did. Elisha could, whereas Elijah failed to do - "O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers. It is enough. I only am left" - but 7,000 men had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19: 4 - 18). Zechariah and Elizabeth could, but Zechariah could not believe for joy when told that God had heard his prayer (Luke 1: 11-22). The Lord Jesus could and did, although he knew his end from the beginning.

The point is, how are we faring, upon whom the ends of the world have come? God will make His will known whenever necessary: we suppose Gideon should have known this; he was not unacquainted with Israel's history as he told the Angel. Judges 6: 12-13. The angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said unto him, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?"

The sin of Gideon therefore consisted chiefly in his invading of the prerogative of the Aaronic Priesthood, drawing away the people from the one legitimate approach unto God, through the Urim and Thummim, into the worship of the foul god he had once humiliated and destroyed in the House of the Fawn; now retreating backward, and finally becoming a snare not only unto his house, but also to Israel. Though the influence of Midian had been shattered, the belief in idols had not. Did the ephod help towards this? Which makes us think that even after the greater day of Midian, and their shattering defeat by the Lord Jesus, even after 1000 years of rest, at the end time, Gog and Magog shall once again challenge the might of Deity, and from this conflict will arise that day of perfection; God will be all and in all. So perish all God's enemies (Revelation 20: 10).

So ends the momentous career of Gideon, one of whom the world was not worthy. "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon" (Hebrews 11: 32). Indeed, as we have found, one could say much more, but it is time no longer. Oh for that blessed day, when mere time will pass away, and Bible time will be unlimited.

In the case of Gideon and his ephod, there are three possible alternatives:

- (1) that it was a garment after the pattern of the high-priestly ephod but with an unusual degree of gold ornamentation,
- (2) that it was a replica of the high-priestly garment made of pure gold,
- (3) or that it was a free-standing image.



Its very preciousness became a snare, for it became an object of worship to a people only one stage removed from polytheism (cp. Joshua 24 : 15), and obliterated one of the characteristics of Israel's faith, namely the entire prohibition of images. It may be assumed that Gideon had no intention of apostasy and hoped (no doubt as Aaron before him) to lead Israel back to Yahweh worship. Both ideas proved false. The expression "and all Israel played the harlot after it there" (RSV) suggests that the form of worship inspired by this ephod was Canaanite in origin.

Again we quote J. Hall: "Who is so worthy to wear the crown of Israel, as he that won the crown from Midian? Their usurpers were gone, now they are heedless: it is a doubt whether they were better to have no kings or tyrant. They sue to Gideon to accept of the kingdom and are rebuked. There is no greater example of modesty than Gideon. When the angel spake to him, he abased himself below all Israel. When the Ephraimites contended with him, he prefers their gleanings to his vintage, and casts his honour at their feet; and now, when Israel proffers that kingdom he refuses it. He that in overcoming would allow them to cry 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon' in governing will have but 'The sword of the Lord'. That which others plot and sue, and swear and bribe for (dignity and superiority) he seriously rejects, whether it were not that he knew God had not yet called them to a monarchy, or rather for that he saw the crown among thorns. Why do we ambitiously affect the command of these mole-hills of earth when wise men have refused the proffers of kingdoms? Why do we not rather labour for that kingdom which is free from all cares, from all uncertainty?"

How true and aptly put by our 17th century friend. From the time of Gideon down to today, this is a general survey, in which to some degree we all share.

Continuing our quotation from J. Hall: "Yet he that refuses their crown calls for their ear rings, although not to enrich himself, but religion. So long as God had been a stranger to Israel that now superstition goes current for devout worship. It were pity that good intentions should make any man wicked; here they did so. Never man meant better than Gideon in his rich ephod: yet this very act set all Israel on whoring. God had chosen a place and service of His own: when the wit of man will be over-pleasing God with better services than His own, it turns to madness and ends in mischief, which is a sorry ending to such a wonderful beginning, almost like Solomon who followed after."

Judges 8 : 30 And Gideon had 70 sons of his body begotten. For he had many wives (another blemish in his otherwise generally upright character). (Deut. 17:17: 1 Kings 11 : 1-3).

At the opening of Judges chapter 9 forty years have transpired since those three dramatic nights when Gideon smote Midian, to be remembered evermore as the Day of Midian; and to be prophetically trajected forward into actual 20th century experience, as we await the spring of 1975 and turn our eyes to the Heights of Golan, we wonder what it will bring forth. The portents are very pregnant. We wait and pray, but still carry on in the Lord's service, until He come. Autumn is now upon us, and the Lord still remains away. How long, O Lord?

So ended the career of the 5th weak thing of Yahweh: one very humble man who simply would not do anything in his own strength, against whom only one sin is recorded - the sin of the ephod - and the unwisdom of his polygamy (and that went wrong). Against the might of the whole Midianite host and relatives, he brought 300 men chosen by Yahweh: they carried no weapons, only empty earthenware pitchers and flaming torch light, along with the shout of his men, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." This was sufficient to cause utter chaos and defeat in the marauding hosts of 135,000 men.

There is a great difference in circumstances at the end of his life. The hero of Israel, with fame, and wealth, and a multiplicity of wives. He no longer hides his threshing: he has threshed Midian; openly, personally slain their kings Zebah and Zalmunna, and also terribly punished the men of Succoth and Peniel, and retires from public life in a blaze of public glory. While he lived Israel were at least free from apostasy, but the ephod caused them to go a-whoring after Baal.

How often do we read of the sons of good men going astray. It is not only found in our own generation. Think of, for instance, the sons of David, the sons of Eli before him, Rehoboam after him, and so forth, as we turn to Judges chapter 9, and to the exploits of Gideon's son Abimelech, we are shown further deepening trouble into which Gideon's ephod brought Israel. This is the 6th weak thing. Abimelech was actually a usurper, not chosen by God, he is definitely earth given. This is the only time the son of a judge is portrayed at length in this book (cp. p.16, Part 1 of Judges). The reason behind the record of Abimelech is that it illustrates the spiritual lesson of the whole.

Once more, Gideon's sin in making the ephod resulted in the destruction of all his family except Jotham, and this by the son of his concubine, Abimelech aided by the men of Shechem. Then these in turn, Abimelech and the men of Shechem, were made by God the instruments of punishing one another. Such was the fatal issue of the first efforts to substitute an earthly king in Israel for Yahweh of Hosts. It was only an earnest of the things to come.

So the 8th chapter ends, "And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel."

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## CHAPTER 9

How low has Israel sunk after the 'giddy' heights which were found in the exploits of faith during the lifetime of Gideon. Once again, with sickening repetition we read, "And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God." We notice the never failing mercy of the Lord God as always, "who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies on every side." (Judges 8 : 34). From the towering heights of faith, down to the degrading depths of the foul worship of Baal. This is the story of religious decline and degeneracy, indeed the very first phase.

- (1) They remembered not the Lord their God. The decalogue sternly taught, "Thou shalt have no other gods before ME." (Exodus 20 : 3).
- (2) Just as idolatry followed this decline, so in our own times idolatry may steal into the Truth. The mask in current favour is mistaken values of right and wrong, particularly amongst the younger element in the world. A lot of sentimental trash is sprayed over wrong doing, not only among parents, but also on the magistrates bench in general. One person in our experience got fined for boxing his son's ears. Not only had the son openly defied his father and been duly punished, but he said to his father "I will get you for this." The father was reported to the police and got fined. What a difference between Old Testament times and our own, when a son or daughter who cursed father or mother had to face terminal punishment (Exodus 21 : 17).
- (3) Hence the terrific rise in juvenile crime in our days. Unless great care is exercised it will inevitably creep into the ecclesia in one form or another. Could we put it this way. The removal of discipline is the greenhouse to stretch out young tender plants. Place them outside to face the elements and they will inevitably perish, unless they have first been disciplined by a 'cold frame'.

- (1) Such was the case before Gideon's day.
- (2) Aaron made the golden calf on Horeb, but at the same time he invited the people to celebrate a feast of the Lord (Exodus 32 : 5), and we are told that the people rose up to play. (3) Play what? we may ask. As usual, fornication associated with the 'dungy' gods of the heathen. (4) When true religion lapses the exact opposite always takes place. (5) Even at the end of the Millenium God and Magog rise again, proving that even in the best of conditions, when sin has been restrained, war removed from all society, and the world has had rest for almost 1000 years, with full peace and plenty, when poverty is no more; yet men in some instances will yield feigned loyalty, and when the rule of the saints is relaxed, then once again these nations will rebel and utterly corrupt themselves. - God's way, we believe, in revealing to us that human flesh without the divine ingredient of faith is useless to Him and will most surely be absolutely removed by Him ere He is "all in all". Man will even corrupt the divine security service in the Millenium.

Jeroboam followed the example of Aaron and established hero worship from Dan to Beersheba, the Bull Calf, as we have indicated, being related to Joseph. Had Aaron actually fallen into the same trap, or was the golden calf an outward expression of the inward wish of Israel - "These be thy gods, oh Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." As a Levite the premises look ridiculous, but in practice they did apparently follow. What do our readers think; as an Ephraimite we can see, but do not agree with the point.

So Baal here is linked with Berith (covenant). Israel had fallen clean away from their God, the place being Shechem. In later days Zephaniah 1 : 5 derides Israel for trying to make a match with Malcham or Molech.

We find that it was necessary by this time to remind Israel that Jerubbaal, who destroyed the idol in Ophrah was none other than Gideon (the hewer down) who had

levelled and destroyed Astarte and the idol groves.

How soon did Israel forget the love of their God. We must let Paul's advice remain with us and "be thankful". Lack of this quality ferments the vices of idolatry.

Judges 9:1 "And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went unto Shechem, unto his mother's brethren and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father."

Once again a 'thorn' left in the people's side began to flourish, and by and by it will say "Rest in my shadow." Whenever did a buckthorn bush give shade? (More later - Judges 9:14, 15). Indeed, this man was truly born out of due time absolutely, and not like Paul just the very opposite.

Abimelech, then, went back to the original Canaanite population, which ought to have been exterminated according to God's command. Gideon's neglect of this eventuated in his concubinage with them, entailing judgment upon his house after his death. Hence the bastard son of Gideon, Abimelech ('Father King' literally) decides to exterminate the whole of the Israelite opposition at one blow, as the chapter unfolds. Regarding the name Abimelech, the word for 'called' (8:31) has in the margin 'set'. The phrase, therefore, is not the ordinary one and perhaps the name Abimelech was given him by Gideon on observing his ambitious, boastful character. (Cassels).

This chapter is of outstanding interest, for it offers clear evidence of the influence of a Canaanite community existing within the tribal structure of Israel, and in Gideon's case it brought on the downfall of his house, just as happened to Solomon who, too, had many wives which led him astray. (1 Kings 11:1-13).

In Part I, p.16, we have mentioned that Gideon is the only judge whose son's career is detailed and the reason doubtless is because it illustrates the spiritual lesson of the whole. Gideon's sin in making the ephod resulted in the destruction of all his house except Jotham, and this by the son of his concubine, Abimelech (aided by the ancient enemies, the men of Shechem, leading back as far as Jacob's time, and the dreadful slaughter of Hamor and the men of the city (Genesis 34:25). Then these in turn, Abimelech, aided by the men of Shechem, were made by God the instruments of punishing one another. Such was the fatal issue of the first effort to substitute an earthly king for Yahweh of Hosts.

In one sentence we have a thumbnail sketch of the purpose of Judges and the consequent history of God with Israel. Gideon failed to destroy Shechem, so they were happy to demolish his house, and yet Paul says, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon" (Hebrews 11:32 etc.) We may add that there is a marked contrast between the other seventy sons of Gideon and Abimelech. We are told that the former "came out of his loins" (so the meaning of the Hebrew), the seat of procreative power, the meaning being that they were reckoned by male descent to his own tribe. Abimelech, on the other hand, was the son of a concubine who probably remained with her own family group in Shechem, being visited by her husband from time to time (rather like the Mormon early days, when they kept 'sealed wives' separately). A similar situation may be observed in the case of Samson (15:1, 16:4). It is important to understand that any offspring of such a union belonged to the wife's family. Hence the insistence of the phrase that Abimelech went and communed with the family or the whole clan of his mother's father.

Thus seventy legitimate sons traced their descent through Gideon and Abiezer, but Abimelech's lineage was reckoned through his Shechemite mother. Seventy sons, and at least one born of the concubine. How many daughters did he have? The text is silent. But we think we have been able to trace one daughter - albeit of modern times! - her courage and spirit are similar and she is a true daughter of faith, a daughter of Gideon indeed!

As there is evidence to show that Shechem was a Canaanite city incorporated by alliance into Israel, we have already commented at length on the failure of Israel to exterminate the Canaanites as directed by God, and we find in these incidents the fruit of disobedience. Mixed marriages resulted and the damning evidence of such proceedings is outlined in this incident. The question of the relationship of Yahweh and the Baal gods became an acute family problem. Whenever two groups of people come into contact there is an inevitable tendency to syncretism; the gods become identified, as they did here where the Israelites worshipped Yahweh and the other part of Gideon's 'family' worshipped Baal. Gideon has punished Baal, now Abimelech will try the opposite in the destruction of the legitimate sons of Gideon. This he does by putting to death the seventy sons: does it also mean the extermination or captivity of their families? This was the usual method in these times and before, as we saw with Hamor and the Shechemites (Genesis 34).

The city of Shechem was marked out by nature to play an important part in the history of its day. It was situated in a fertile valley between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, which formed a natural link between the coastal plain and the Jordan Valley. Many of the trade routes converged on Shechem which, standing at one of the cross roads of Palestine, dominated a considerable area of the surrounding countryside.

- (A) Shechem is hallowed in Israelitish tradition as the place where Yahweh first revealed Himself to Abraham after his arrival from Haran (Genesis 12: 6-9).
- (B) Jacob had lived on friendly terms with the children of Hamor at Shechem until the vindictive action of Simeon and Levi had disrupted this harmony (Genesis 33: 18 – 34: 31).
- (C) But at an apparently later date the patriarchs are found again in the vicinity (Genesis 37: 13-14).

It is remarkable that the capture of Shechem by Joshua is nowhere hinted at nor mentioned in passing, and yet at a very early date a covenant-renewal ceremony was held between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (Joshua 8: 30-35). This would have been impossible unless Shechem had been either captured or else been on friendly terms with the invaders. The evidence which has come before us would tend to suggest that the latter is the most probable explanation.

The fact that the Shechemites were still described as the 'men of Hamor' (Judges 9: 28), together with their obedience to the Canaanite deity Baal-Berith, and the obvious point of the appeal made by Abimelech at the end of verse 2 ("Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh"), make it clear that the population of Shechem was dominantly Canaanite. It had probably been incorporated into Israel by treaty at the time of the conquest. Here, then, is a witness to the friction which existed between the Israelites and the original inhabitants of the land. This was probably the reason why Shechem, although it was hallowed as the resting place of the bones of Joseph (Joshua 24: 32), maintained its place as the central sanctuary for a limited period only, being replaced by Bethel and then Shiloh (A. E. Condal: Sanctuaries in Pre-Exilic History; Epworth 1965).

The reference to the 'men of Shechem' (verse 2) is literally 'the Baals of Shechem', the word here having its original meaning of 'lord' or 'owner' (cp Joshua 24: 11; Judges 20: 5; 1 Samuel 23: 11; 2 Samuel 21: 12). (Heb. Baalee 'men of Gibeah' 20: 5; Canaanite citizens of Jericho, Joshua 24: 11; 'men of Keilah', 1 Samuel 28: 11-12. The continual reference to this word can hardly be accidental: it is used 13 times in Judges 9, in verses 2, 6, 7, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 39, 46, 47, 51).

The fear implanted in the minds of the Shechemites may have had little foundation in fact. Abimelech's own personal ambition, and very possibly a jealous hatred of his brethren (who no doubt regarded him as inferior), were probably the real motives. Note verse 18: the implication behind it is obvious - "And ye are risen up against my

father's house this day, and have slain his sons upon one stone, and have made Abimelech the son of his maidservant king over the men of Shechem because he is your brother." The fact that the family of Gideon was still in residence at Ophrah (verse 5), and not in one of the more important centres, indicates that the influence of Gideon himself was limited and the expansion of his family, though large, was small in importance would also indicate that they had no interest in reigning over the city. So then Shechem, one of the old city states of Canaan, may have been more inclined to accept a king than the Israelites, and the son of the great Gideon, who was one of them by the ties of flesh and blood, was an obvious first choice. Abimelech's plan met with ready acceptance and he acted with a vigour characteristic of his father, but without any of his father's scruples.

The insistence of the word Baalee 13 times gives credence to what was said in the Introduction to Judges Part 1, p.10, where Bullinger demonstrated that the twelve judges by Gematria are a multiple of  $8 \times 13$ ,  $\neq 3848 = 8 \times 13 \times 37$ , whilst the usurper Abimelech has the factor of 13 dominant (Number in Scripture, p.214); from which we gather that God raised up 12 judges in number to deliver Israel. Amongst this selection we find Abimelech who raised up himself to rule, figuring quite plainly under the apostasy defection ideas we had just outlined.

We wonder who named this wicked one Abimelech - 'father king', or 'my father is king', or again 'in the form of a king'. All these translations are allowable in the original word. It has been thought that he derived his name from his determined character, similar to Gideon, or that this name was given to him after he had showed leadership; or could it be that he, Abimelech, would be the first king in Israel? - and that apostate! Is it not tragic that the first real king turned apostate and ended in miserable failure? No doubt all three meanings have their basis in this incident. Marshall, in "Men of the Bible", says, "The episode of Abimelech's reign must not be omitted from our survey of the time of Gideon and the Judges. It completes the annals of the house of Jerubbaal and in so doing, it supplies one out of many proofs of the vanity of the desire to form a family. Titles may be hereditary; not character nor face. It introduces us to the first official sovereignty in Israel - to a king before the days of the monarchy. It records the destruction of the most primitive and sacred city of Palestine: as a picture of morals and manners, it sheds a lurid light on the period. It forms a striking paragraph in the book of retributive Providence. We might add this unhappy man gives the most flagrant example of the murderous striving of one seeking to leave his first estate. Since Eve downwards these examples have arisen in the turbulent history of Israel."

So Shechem is before us, the city of Hamor the Canaanite, from one of whose line Jacob bought a parcel of a field where he spread his tent, and on which he erected the altar called El-elohe Israel (Genesis 33:18-20). It was on the border of Yahweh's sanctuary, and it was the most venerable of sanctuaries (Jacob and Joseph etc.). The twin heights of Gerizim and Ebal, the one rising behind, the other rising in front of it, were designated by the Lawgiver before the entrance into the Promised Land, the one the pulpit for the sounding of the blessings, and the other as the pulpit for the sounding of the curses of the law (Deuteronomy 11:29). Shechem stood near the opening of a valley renowned for its beauty (Joshua 8:33-35). "The only very beautiful spot in Central Palestine", it has been said. "Here", Stanley said, "there is no wilderness, here there are no wild thickets, yet there is always verdure, always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth, but of the olive tree, so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood, etc." At Shechem the first king in Israel was crowned, but his was an irregular and a 'base' kingdom. The coronation, such as it was, marked the end of low intrigues, and it was preceded by a terrible act of blood-guiltiness.

The scene is now set for the horrible massacre of what should have been the whole

of the house of Jerubbaal, and by his own blood, but born of a Shechemite (Judges 9:2).

"Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the Baale (Heb. 'men') of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal which are three score and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh." The name employed - Jerubbaal, or destroyer of Baal - was one calculated to produce prejudice against the seventy sons of Gideon. They had not aspired to kingship; but it suits Abimelech's purpose to assume that they did - well calculated therefore to create the worst image possible. The seventy sons had obeyed their father's explicit wish, "My sons shall not reign over you" (8:23). J. Hall says very much to the point: "Gideon refused the kingdom of Israel when it was offered; his seventy sons offered not to obtain that sceptre which their father's victory had deserved to make hereditary. Only Abimelech, the concubine's son, sues, and ambitiously plots for it. What could Abimelech see in himself, that he should overlook all his brethren? If he looked to his father, they were his equals: if to his mother, they were his betters."

How the modern minds would quail at this reasoning, in the days of free love and women's lib etc., when the mode of conception and birth does not seem to matter. But they do in the sight of God.

J. Hall continues: "Those that are most unworthy of honour are hottest in the chase of it; whilst the consciousness of better deserts bids men sit still, and stay to be either importuned or neglected. There can be no greater sign of unfitness, than vehement suits. It is hard to say whether there be more pride or ignorance in ambition. I have noted this difference betwixt spiritual and earthly honour and the clients of both: we cannot be worthy of the one without earnest prosecution, nor with earnest prosecution worthy of the other." He also says (paraphrase A.H.): "the violent obtain the kingdom of heaven as later said Jesus, but only the meek are worthy to inherit the earth. That which an aspiring heart hath projected, it will find both argument and means to affect: if either bribes or favour will carry it, the proud man will not sit out. The Shechemites are fit brokers for Abimelech: that city which once betrayed itself to utter depopulation in yielding to the suit of Hamor now betrays itself, and all Israel in yielding to the suit of Hamor, now betrays itself and all Israel in yielding to the request of Abimelech."

Query: Could the concubine have survived had the destruction of all the city been done properly? The women and children were saved. J. Hall again: "By them hath this usurper made himself a fair way to the throne. (1) It was an easy question, whether will ye admit of the sons of Gideon for your rulers, or of strangers? (2) If of the sons of Gideon; whether of all, or one. (3) If of one, whether of your own flesh and blood, or of others unknown? (4) To cast off the sons of Gideon for strangers, were unthankful. (5) To admit of seventy kings in one small country, were unreasonable. (6) To admit of any other, rather than their own kinsman, were unnatural: Gideon's sons therefore must rule amongst all Israel. (7) One of his sons amongst those seventy; and who should be that one but Abimelech?"

Then follow some very trenchant words on nepotism, fitting for all ages of the Truth, and written during times of stress and uprisings, 'out and out' war between Catholic and Protestant, and again between these and the Old Puritans. Note J. Hall's comments on this point: they are really pungent. "Natural respects are the most dangerous corrupters of all elections. What hope can there be of worthy superiors in any free people, where nearness of blood carries it from fitness of disposition, whilst they say 'He is our brother', they are enemies to themselves and Israel."

Who amongst us in these latter days of the Truth has not so suffered by this blight? It is indeed human in origin. Jesus wouldn't allow favour when Salome approached Him concerning His 'cousins'. "Grant that my two sons may sit on either side of thee in thy

kingdom." "It is not mine to give" said Jesus, "but it is appointed by my Father who shall sit at my right hand and left hand." (Matthew 20:20-23).

Another old commentator asks a very pertinent question under Abimelech - the bramble king - but this title is running ahead of us in its prophecy. He asks, "Is Abimelech dead? Has he reappeared in our own days? Or after the devil made Abimelech did he throw the mould away? These questions are not difficult" he conjectures, "we can easily determine them, either in the positive, or in the negative. It would be something worth doing to be able to establish as a fact the absolute certainty of the death of Abimelech and all his progeny, principally speaking. But we must take the evidence as we find it, and abide by the issue to which it points, whatever that issue may be. This is the only just way of reading human history, and we must not suspend it, or pervert it, to confirm our own prejudices, or inclinations. The broad outlines of the career of Abimelech are written in this chapter, and are easy of comprehension. Abimelech was the son of Gideon. So far that may be put down to his credit. But his mother was only a concubine or a wife of the second rank. So Abimelech stands somewhat on one side in history. It is awkward to have incidental relations in life; they may surprise the parties interested at unexpected times: they flash out light in the darkness; they make a noise when deep sleep falleth upon man. Still, Abimelech had advantages arising from the concubinage of Gideon. He was related to the Ephraimites on the one hand, and to the Canaanites on the other. It has been pointed out in the case of our own Henry the Second that he boasted that he was 'the first Norman son of a Saxon mother'. Abimelech may make use of this peculiarity in his history and may work along that line of policy and adventure. Still, we must not blame Abimelech where no blame is due. We are not asked how we will be born into the world, or where; otherwise some of us would never have been born at all. There are misfortunes as well as crimes, and a just criticism of character, and of history, will ever distinguish between the one and the other. Abimelech must (and did very emphatically) speak for himself; then we shall understand somewhat of the quality of his mind, but even there we must make critical and perhaps generous allowance. We do not now begin the human race. Even now we are tainted or blessed by our past. Only God, therefore, can judge the world. We see but the individual man, the narrow and open circumstances of life, and the basis of inference is too narrow, and open circumstances of life not sufficiently clear, therefore the basis of inference is too narrow to justify us in supposing that it is in our power to form a comprehensive and final judgment."

"Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matthew 7:1-6). Abimelech was ambitious. By so much he lives today. He would be king. Who would not, may we ask. We do not see any crowding for the lowest offices (so called) in the ecclesias, and even if there were there is the air in which Uriah Heap can be detected. Human flesh is poor stuff and at the end of the Millennium will be absolutely cast aside. So if we find Abimelech wanting to be king, the air is full of Abimelechs. Who among us has not his, or her, private ambitions? It looks innocent enough in some cases. Is it but to add a letter or two to the name, or to live in a larger house, or to be able to give hospitality that will create a reputation for itself etc.? But as a mere matter of analysis the action or purpose underlying it is as full of ambition as if the man had fixed his eyes upon the supreme office.

Abimelech was adroit. He put a question that was noble and unselfish in its letters, namely, "Whether is better for you?" as if to say, "It is no matter of mine, your interests are supreme." We are vividly reminded of the representatives of the different magazines, 'Reader's Digest' and the like. They send books and records on 10 days free trial. Bolster us up, this is all in your interest. Modern business methods are not really modern; they are as old, yes as old as Abimelech, and



further back to the serpent's lie : You too will know good and evil, take the apple and eat it; it is all for your good. Such was the huge 'con' trick being deviously planned for Shechem. It savours very much of that heinous business centuries ago in Hamor's day when, after accepting circumcision and acceptance of the demands of Israel, Simeon and Levi put all the males to the sword (already mentioned). Just as the modern trend. Our business is for the public's good; it is of no consequence to us whether or not you buy our goods, but we have put before you the golden opportunity.

Once again we ask the question, is Abimelech dead? The man undoubtedly is, and died a most humiliating death. But his spirit is still abroad. He is a thousand strong in nearly every great thoroughfare. Time cannot kill it, it is always around us, as Paul rightly stressed in Romans 7. We have seen the question that Abimelech put to Shechem, "Would you like to have seventy kings or one king?" We have mentioned the fact that there is no proof that the other sons of Gideon wanted to occupy the throne. Why do we first credit men with bad motives, and then charge those bad motives upon them as accusations, as if they had originated in the spirit of the men themselves? How subtle is the temptation to misconstrue a man's purposes, and then to treat him as if he had actually originated those purposes. We transfer ourselves to the man, and having invested him with an enforced personality we judge him by that investiture. The spirit of injustice is a cruel spirit, and it is an enemy as ruthless as death. Surely we can all say "There, except by the grace of God go I."

Judges 9:3 We have the full results of his overtures to his kinsfolk. "And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, he is our brother." The chief men or Baale of Shechem were swift in reaction. Seventy men stood in the way of their 'freedom'. How the whole incident rings with the implications and violence of today. Everyone is searching for freedom from something - (1) women for freedom, (2) Ireland for freedom from Britain, (3) black people from white domination, (4) Palestine Arabs from Israel, (5) South Vietnam from the aggression of Viet Cong, and so the list could go on ad infinitum. The ruling action today is aggression and violence. Murder is committed every minute of the day: already as we write in October 1975, 750 people have been murdered in Chicago. Is this just applicable to our days in particular? It is as old as Cain and the lawless sons of Name (the Nephilim) who rose against God in the days of Enos (Genesis 6:1-22).

So seventy men stand between the men of Shechem and freedom, and savage revenge for Hamor's sake and for Baal's sake against the progeny of the destroyer of their idols. What then is the name of the game? MURDER, 70 times over. We outlined the meaning of 70 in Part 1, also of 70, indicating the completeness of the work, but we are shown that this was not quite so: 69 perished, but one, the 'little' one, the youngest, Jotham, survived, and the numerology reveals 69, one short of divine spiritual perfection and ordinal perfection, on this undoubtedly judicial punishment of Gideon's house, unto the 3rd and 4th generation of those who apostatized and refused to conform to the divine will.

Seventy sons of a man like Gideon do not just die in this way: there must have been a reason for the slaughter. Why? We do not know. It must have been because they fell away through the influence of Gideon's ephod (we are only tentatively dogmatic about this one) obviously in view of what we have just advanced re judgment. The ways of God in mercy and seventy are perfectly clear, as we are well aware, and so must expound the context as it falls within these two principles.

So it was that the Baale of Shechem listened to their kinsman and showed their consent and intent by donating 70 shekels, indicating the life of each of the sons of this great Gideon as one shekel only. It was not a great sum, approximately £7 only, but it was sufficient. At so little did Abimelech value the blood of his brethren. The narrative says, "And they gave him threescore and ten (pieces) of silver (i.e. shekels)(Numbers 7:13-14) out of the house of Baal-berith." (Judges 9:4, see also Judges 8:33). Temple

treasures were often used for political ends (1 Kings 15:18). These temples were the repositories of wealth in those days. The spoils of war were often presented to the Deities to whom the temples were dedicated, and, both for religious purposes and as places of safety, money and valuables were laid up within their precincts (cp Joshua 9:3 etc.) And in the Chronicles of the Kings we read that the wrath of foreign potentates was averted, or the favour of allies was purchased, by the exhaustion of the money found in the coffers of the sanctuary (1 Kings 15:18, 2 Kings 18:15-16). Heathen temples were sometimes very rich. From the temple of Delphi £2,500,000 sterling were taken at one time. Smith's Classical Dictionary notes that the wealth of the temple at Delphi induced Xerxes, 480 BC, to send an army for the purpose of plunder, but peals of thunder and the fall of two crags crushing many soldiers, struck the army with terror and it fled." For the modern day application see "The Vatican Billion's", by Avro Manhattan, and wonder greatly at the plight of the 'poor little sisters'. The book is stark, sharp and revealing, along with its companion volume "Religious Terror in Ireland".

However, the message of revenge was heard with sympathetic savagery by the Baale of Shechem, and out of the store accumulated in the house of Baal-berith they gave 70 shekels (as we have already seen) to their favourite - and this sum was sufficient to hire the service of some mercenaries ready for any enterprise. (The Hebrew for these persons is 'Pochazim' - light, literally boiling up, so wanton, desperate. 'Vain', i.e. empty, the same word as 'Raca', Matthew 5:22; 'light', that is boiling over, or furious). It is not unlikely that, as the money, 70 pieces or shekels of silver, was supplied to him out of the treasury of Baal, the 70 sons of Gideon were intended to be expiatory victims to Baal for the sacrilege done to him by Jerubbaal their father. The first action was one in consonance with the practice of oriental despotisms, "Old and New", or Ancient and Modern, as some would put it. It was a precedent repeated at particular epochs in the future history of Israel.

(A) The whole family of Jeroboam was put to death by Baasha (1 Kings 15:29).

(B) The whole family of Baasha was put to death by Zimri (1 Kings 16:11-12).

(C) The seventy sons of Ahab were slain by Jehu (2 Kings 10:7).

We have similar happenings in Nigeria and all over the African continent today, and how reminiscent of the various gang warfares of Al Capone days, particularly with the massacre on St. Valentine's Day forty years or so ago. Human flesh, its ambitions and cruelties have changed little down the centuries: the Nazi, Fascist and Communist decrees are as old as time, since the day of Cain, as we have suggested. Even in comparatively recent times it was the custom in Turkey (1879-1920) to slay or put out the eyes of the children of the deceased king, other than the heir to the throne. It was a consequence that family unions were destroyed, and that claimants for power were so multiplied as to menace the welfare of the dynasty and of the state. Modern times are no different. A very striking application was seen only a few days ago (March 1975) in the assassination of King Faisal: the rival claimants of his huge progeny are already suing for the vast power he has wielded. History repeating itself once again. Is it another startling indication that the true day of Midian is at hand, that before long every man's hand will be against his brother, the battle being with fire and confused noise, and the intervention once more, not with a 'weak thing' as Gideon, but with the personal intervention of the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus?

Judges 9:4-5 The record states, "And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren, the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, for he hid himself." Sixty-nine perished miserably, but the 'little one' or the youngest son had the sense, or rather the opportunity, or both, to escape, and did so. Very much like the Christians at Jerusalem in AD 70, Jotham took the opportunity and hid himself from the menace of his evil brother. Several very fascinating points arise out of this incident, particularly when we look into the meaning of his name, Jotham.

(1)

Yotham - Heb. 'The Lord is upright', or 'The Lord of integrity', and whilst we must not dare to presume, we do remember the commands in Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20, that a man should not die for his father's sins, but rather his own personal sins. If the son then forsook the wicked ways of his fathers he would live; but judgment would be taken to the third generation of those who followed in their father's sins.

(2) Could it be that Jotham alone of all the house of Gideon was found 'upright in his generation and trusted still in the Lord of the Covenant (Yahweh)?

(3) Was he like Noah found righteous alone among his contemporaries? - and so survived and prophesied in the Name of the Lord in the fable or parable concerning Abimelech and Shechem (Judges 9:7-21).

(4) It is very helpful to compare this incident with Jotham son of Uzziah. His father Uzziah had been a good king for many years, reigning powerfully. Why? may we ask. His name helps, which means 'Strength of strengthened of Yah', a comp. of the appell. 'oz' - power, strength, Job 12:16 (from the root Azaz, to become strong, Judges 3:10, and Yah, an abbreviated form of Yahweh, Bagsters). He was the tenth King of Judah. He ascended the throne when only 16 years old, and he reigned 52 years, the longest period that any king of Judah reigned. It is recorded of him that during a great part of his reign he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and that the Lord prospered him and made him strong. Hence the meaning of his name. His first care was the honour of God and the promotion of religion among his people.

It is also said of him that he loved husbandry and encouraged his people to promote the breeding of cattle and the cultivation of the vine; but while fostering these arts of peace which were the main sources of Jewish prosperity, he did not overlook the art of war and the security of his kingdom. We are told he had hosts of fighting men, and manufactured in Jerusalem engines of warfare, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and on the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal (2 Chronicles 26:15). Thus his name became most famous among all the nations of that period and the Lord prospered him, and he was strong, viz. Uzziah.

There is, however, a dark side to speak of. When he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against the Lord his God in rudely and irreverently usurping priestly functions and burning incense before the Lord. He had been invested with the power of the sword, but not with the power of the keys: therefore when he sacrilegiously seized the spiritual power and presumptuously went into the temple of the Lord and was wroth because the priests rebuked him and withstood him, the Lord smote him with leprosy and he was a leper unto the day of his death. This was a dire calamity. He was thus cut off from all communication with his fellow men; and though a king, that horrid disease, that type of sin, and dire physical manifestation of it, clung to him as long as he lived. See 2 Chronicles 26. Jotham his son managed the affairs of the kingdom for 5 years during these latter years of Uzziah. His regency commenced in keeping with or rather before Isaiah 6 these many years back, and a study of this chapter along with the season around the Day of Atonement can be very profitable for the devout student, and of course the Jubilee etc. It is said after his father's death he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, "howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord"; that is, he did not transgress as his father did in profanely offering incense. Solomon Jaschi asserts that all the kings of Judah have something recorded against them excepting Jotham. Readers may like to prove this for themselves; viz. (1) David sinned in the matter of Uriah: (2) Solomon was seduced to idolatry by his heathen wives: (3) Rehoboam forsook the law of God: (4) Abijah walked in his steps: (5) Asa took the treasures of God's house: (6) Jehoshaphat made a league with Ahab and offended his God: (7) and so on down to Uzziah, but with Jotham no fault is found. This is truly remarkable. Perhaps his mother was the source and foundation of his strength: her name was Jerushah -

'possession', namely by a husband, from the root Yarash, to possess, to take possession, to inherit, to be an heir. 2 Kings 15:33. She was the daughter of Zadok = 'just' or 'righteous' (Melchizedek is from the same root word). The evidence suggests that she was a godly woman, possessed by her husband and also by Yahweh. She was a true figure of the Bride of the Son because her end was peace and she dwelt in Jerusalem, the possession of peace: she chose to educate Jotham to show forth the "uprightness of the Lord". Whether or not she was the daughter of a Levite in the line of Zadok we are not certain. It is a wonderful picture of a son being brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and his willingness to comply.

However, to be fair to the other monarchs of Judah it is said of his times (2 Kings 15:35), "Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense in the high places." Probably a little on the debit side to the character of Jotham, but again coming back strongly on the credit, "he built the higher gate of the house of the Lord." So ends a lovely scripture duo on the two Jothams, of note to summarise:

- (1) Both Jothams had fathers who were strengthened by God: viz. Gideon 'a mighty man of valour': Uzziah 'strengthened by Yah'.
- (2) Both parents were strong and faithful in their beginnings, when the power and might of the Lord was with them.
- (3) The effect of Gideon's valour and prestige had a lasting impression for 40 years. Very similar would be the first 40 years of Uzziah: he reigned for 52 years, of which Jotham acted as regent for 5 years before his death (Companion Bible Notes 2 Chronicles 27:1-9).
- (4) Both Gideon and Uzziah went astray in the latter end of their lives. The latter went astray wittingly. That Gideon did appears likely. (We remember our earlier premise in the introduction, that the Judges were only types of the Lord Jesus Christ when they followed the commands of the Lord fully. Never, when the Judge declined from the ways of God, did he portray the work of the Lord Jesus).
- (5) The effect of both these fallings away caused Israel to go a whoring after strange gods.
- (6) Again both Jothams were found to be righteous with their God: this is hinted very strongly with regard to Jotham son of Uzziah, and from what we can gather the earlier Jotham could be so described.
- (7) What happened to Jotham in Judges 9 after his declaration at Gerizim? The scripture remains silent. The later Jotham continued for another 16 years after the death of Uzziah, with some success as we have seen (above, 2 Chronicles 27:1-9).

Thus must we leave our sevenfold duo and hark back again to the text.

We have already seen that the vain and light persons (Judges 9:4) were in reality mercenaries who hired their swords to the highest bidders, the Pochorzin, the same word being used of Reuben (Genesis 49:4), and in Zephaniah 3:4, from a root meaning to boil over. Further research has revealed that they were exactly analogous to the 'Dymphoroi', a bodyguard of spearbearers which an ambitious Greek always hired as the first step to setting up a tyranny (Diog. Laert. 1:49). We find (a) Jephthah, Judges 11:3; (b) David, 1 Samuel 22:2; (c) Absalom, 2 Samuel 15:1; (d) Rezin, 1 Kings 11:24; (e) Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:5; and (f) Jeroboam, 2 Chronicles 8:7; doing exactly the same thing. Who these 'vain' persons were is best defined in 1 Samuel 22:2: they were like condottieri, or free lances. We have all the elements for a bloody massacre before us; hence we read in Judges 9:5, "And he (Abimelech) went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew all the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone." Notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself." It should be noted that Abimelech

formally executed them, as though it were not an assassination but a judicial execution, at one particular spot. How would it be possible to seize 70 sons at one time? - and presumably at one attempt?. The most probable answer would be that he seized the opportunity of some local or family feast at which all his brethren would be assembled. 2 Samuel 13:25. Absalom did precisely the same: could the exploits of Abimelech at this time have been his example? Both of them betrayed the same cold-bloodedness. It has been thought that the anniversary of Gideon's vision may have been the source. However, this is the first mention of such a hideous custom which became common with oriental despots.

Judges 9:5 The words here "upon one stone" are very significant and are a precise reference to a place of execution (verses 5 and 18). It was perhaps the rock on which Gideon's altar was built, and may be a significant parallel to the sacrificial slaughtering of animals in the open (1 Samuel 14:33-35). The disposal of the blood of slaughtered beasts was a matter of great consequence, for "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). It has been hazarded that Abimelech may have been seeking to avoid adverse repercussions by punctilious care in disposing of the blood of his victims. It would appear that he was too closely connected with grossness of conduct than to be too much perturbed with such religious significance -

- (A) He disregarded his father's will that none of his sons should be elected as ruler.
- (B) Family ties had been violently destroyed by the hideous massacre of his father's sons.
- (C) That becoming ruler over Shechem is the thing his father never foresaw. Gideon rightly said God alone should be their King.
- (D) And yet here is the son of his father who declares that his father was king, and, furthermore, in the strongest way declares that his son also is going to be king.
- (E) He sets himself to exercise authority over a portion (the least) of the people of God, and in order to do so rebuilds his throne upon violence.
- (F) Abimelech was the apostate, the judge who chose himself, and that always imposes violence towards those who would oppose him. Abimelech is the spirit of all the would-be Hamans of the modern Mussolinis, Hitlers, Mosleys, Lenins and Stalins. The opposers were soon dealt with effectively. One wonders how the IRA and terrorists would have fared with them in command. Although we can never agree with such terminal ferocity, yet at least their methods were effective. Yet we have to realise these are the last days, and as the days go darker, the deeds will equal them. Violence will still erupt worldwide, and whichever government takes over, the slide will continue until we finally reach the civil chaos of Luke 21. Pray the Lord will send our Lord Jesus Christ to take over and purge the earth from its wickedness and filth.
- (G) There must be violence if men like Abimelech reign. If it is the rule of man, then it must be by violence, and it will finally fall by such means.
- (H) And as we have suggested earlier, it was just retributive judgment on the house of Gideon as they had been latterly turning away from the law of God, so under the vengeful influence of Abimelech they should be punished with such a terrible vengeance.
- (I) Polygamy begets treachery and fratricide, especially when ambition instigates men. A false religion removes all moral restraint.
- (J) Abimelech's bloody act at Shechem was the precursor of the extermination of dynasty after dynasty in the kingdom of the ten tribes which was founded by Jeroboam at the same Shechem and upheld by idolatry (1 Kings 15:27-29 ; 16:10,11,18 ; 2 Kings 10; 7 ; 15:13-16 ; 25:30). The terrible deed by Simeon and Levi in Genesis 34 was the forerunner of much terror and death in the years and centuries that followed after.

We have viewed this fratricide in this light, which should have been a lesson for all

ages, but with man, as usual, it was always disregarded whenever the opportunity occurred.

J. Hall observes as follows: "Fair words have won his brethren, they the Shechemites: the Shechemites furnish him with money, money with men: his men begin with murder, and now Abimelech reigns alone. Flattery, bribes, and blood are the usual stairs of the ambitious. The money of Baal is a fit hire for murders: that which idolatry hath gathered is fitly spent upon treason. One devil is ready to help another in mischief: seldom ever are ill-gotten riches better employed. It is no wonder if he, that hath Baal his idol, now make an idol of honour. There was never any man that worshipped but one idol. Woe be to them that lie in the way of the aspiring; though they be brothers they shall bleed; yea, the nearer they are, the more sure is their ruin. Who would not think that Abimelech should find a hell in his breast after so barbarous and unnatural a massacre? And yet, behold, he is senseless as the stone upon which the blood of his seventy brethren was spilt. Where ambition hath possessed itself thoroughly of the soul (or person, AH), it turns the heart into steel, and makes it incapable of a conscience. All sins will easily down with the man that is resolved to rise." Which just about wraps up our thoughts on this black and foul deed, except to remark that the idea of killing "upon one stone" seemed to be expressed in flinging the sons of Gideon from a height, to be dashed to pieces on the rock below. This method was attempted with Jesus (Luke 3:29-30).

Judges 9:6 "And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem."

Once again the Heb. for 'men' is Baalee (verse 46 etc.). 'Millo', the citadel of Shechem distinct from but close to the town, called 'the tower of Shechem', verses 46-49. The word means a rampart consisting of two walls, with the intervening space filled (from 'Malee') with rubbish. The Millo in Jerusalem was a similar tower (2 Samuel 5:9; 1 Kings 9:15; 11:27; 2 Kings 12:20). "And went and made" - the phrase implies going in a determined course (Isaiah 52:17); - "Abimelech king" (whereas God was the true king of Israel (1 Samuel 11:7). The title 'king' was not offered to Gideon, but only that of 'ruler' (Judges 8:22).

It is to be remembered that the Spirit through Moses anticipated the contingency of their desiring an earthly king, and laid down laws concerning him (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), but this, though permitted in condescension to Israel's infirmity, was not the highest ideal. Israel's true glory was to have Yahweh among and over them as King. Why do mere men like Abimelech and all the other enemies of God, think that they can catch God asleep so to speak? All things even from the beginning to the end, even the smallest incidents, are known to Him. Time after time Israel seemed to fall into this snare. "The Holy One of Israel neither sleeps nor is weary", there are no emergencies with Him. Everything in its time and dispensation works together to perfect His will. Do we not thank the Father that we, of all men and peoples, have been allowed to know it and to trust in the Hope of Israel, when the Lord Jesus shall reign gloriously before His saints in Jerusalem. May the Lord send her peace, swiftly, when all men shall know and praise the Name of the Lord. These things are as set and certain as the returning night and day (Jeremiah 31:23-40; Isaiah 41:1-16; 45:1-17).

The site of the 'coronation' was hallowed by tradition, the mention of an oak (RV, RSV) or 'terebinth' (AV), and a pillar connecting with Joshua 24:26, where Joshua, in the covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem, set up a memorial stone by the oak which was adjacent to the sanctuary (see also Genesis 35:4). The associations of such sites were very tenacious, and it is of interest to note that Rehoboam went to Shechem following the death of Solomon, to secure the acclamation of the Israelites, although

the city itself was in ruins at this time (1 Kings 12: 1-25) – (Cundall). The extent of Abimelech's kingdom was very limited: only Shechem, Beth-Millo, Arumah (Judges 9: 41) and Thebez (v. 50), are mentioned as under his jurisdiction, and it is unlikely that it extended beyond a portion of western Manasseh. The reference in verse 22 must be understood in this limited sense. His turbulent three year rule, secured by guile and cruelty, as we have seen, and maintained by force, was hardly more than an incident in the development of the monarchy, for the kingdom itself did not survive his death. In the same way, as we have indicated, Abimelech, the opportunist, must not be given a place amongst the Judges of Israel, who were inspired by God, and owed their character and achievements in delivering the people to Him. The answer is simple and clear. Abimelech took the city by force, by himself, and not of God, and is a type of the unworthy and fleshly opportunist, in every kind of society.

We note once again the title 'king' was not offered to Gideon, but only that of 'ruler' (Judges 8: 22-23). Even it he rejected. But the son snatches at the Canaanite title, being a true Canaanite, at heart and partly by birth.

The terebinth ('oak') of the garrison, (Heb. Mutztzab: the two nouns together express 'by the memorial' (the thing set up)) better brings out the significance that Abimelech's usurpation of royalty took place on the spot where the memorial stone was set up by Joshua (Joshua 24: 1, 25, 26) when he held the national assembly for renewing Israel's covenant with the true Covenant God, Yahweh: the oak was associated with Israel's forefathers, Abraham (Genesis 12: 6; where translated 'Oak of Moreh') and Jacob (Genesis 35: 4). Hard by was the temple of the falsely called Covenant God, Baal-Berith (Judges 9: 46) that was in Shechem. "What thou doest, do it with all thy might", the Scripture saith. Jesus said that we should either be "hot or cold". Abimelech certainly did what he was about to do. He was, as we would say, 'a thoroughly bad lot', and his actions here remind us very much of a Judas kiss. Hitler said, "Make the lie big enough and everybody will believe it"; make it small and no one will be deceived. One could almost say "Amin" to these methods, very much to the fore in our day.

Veneration attached to old trees in Palestine and the terebinth of Mamre was celebrated for over one thousand years. How will Abimelech die? We must wait to see. But one son escaped, namely, the youngest, Jotham, as the narrative has said. How is it that one always does escape? Account for the little one, the one of the least importance. It is this factor by which Yahweh confounds the mighty in spirit. Not the oldest, strongest son, but little Jotham, we may call him, for he certainly was the youngest, like David after him, who also was the little one, the eighth son, who defeated Goliath of Gath (1 Samuel 17). It is in so-called little things that the providence of God is vividly shown. Jotham was indeed 'the skeleton in Abimelech's cupboard', and rattled very strongly upon being told of the doings in Shechem.

Judges 9: 7 "And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim (2, 500 feet above the Mediterranean, commanding one of the finest views in Israel) and lifted up his voice and cried (cp. Proverbs 8: 1, 3; 9: 3) and said unto them...." Who these were in Judges 9: 7 is debatable. It would suggest a faithful servant ~~of~~ retainers still dedicated to Yahweh, among those who remembered what Gideon had done 40 years ago, and of course the word came rather quickly, one would think, to Jotham, whose only hope of safety lay in putting the greatest possible distance between himself and Abimelech. This principle we have often observed in the various pets we have had down the years: when anything happened unexpectedly immediate flight was the order of the day. Elijah, too, took to precipitous flight when warned of Jezebel. No doubt Belshazzar would have done likewise had the opportunity arisen, but God saw there was none for one who had so scathingly and wantonly outraged the temple vessels (Daniel 5 and the infamous feast). Jotham fled, however, and uttered his famous fable or parable, which was both a protest against the shameful treatment meted out to the house of Gideon, and a prophecy of the effect of Abimelech's rule.

Approximately a century and a half before, six of the tribes had stood on the slopes of Mount Gerizim, the southern mount, and thundered out their 'Amens' to the blessings of the law, pronounced by the Levites (Deuteronomy 27:12, 28), for the Hebrews associated life and light with the south. It has been our privilege to search out these facts in scripture, and particularly with the south wind, in the Song of Solomon (Debir Press). Always the south is connected with life and light: when the Holy wishes to express itself it is always the south, south land, etc. The other mountain in the vicinity is Ebal, which was the hill of the curses (Joshua 8:30-35) on the north, and the north is always representative of trouble for Israel. Who can forget the King of the North controversy during the last war, and we still are waiting for that particular firebrand to erupt in Israel in the time of her final trouble, 'Jacob's day', so long foretold by Jeremiah, who himself had experienced that northern invader.

Always from the north does trouble arise for Israel in scripture; before long Golan heights, the ancient scene of the City of Refuge, situated in this very tribal canton of Manasseh. Golan has ever been associated with joy in the dancing, meaning 'circuit', and these dances were witnessed in the wild scenes of joy in Jerusalem, when Israel regained their independence in 1948. These happenings were recorded live at the time, and a very fascinating record was cut, to record these historic events, called 'Israel Reborn'. We had the pleasing duty of making these happenings known to the Jewish community in Coventry many years ago. The dances are known as the 'Hourie' we believe. Israel's joy was transmitted effectively to us as many happened to be patients at that time.

We remember that from the north came Cushan Rishathaim - 'double dyed blackness': came to harass Israel, but Othniel, the Lion of God from Judah, he who had the 'praise of God', effectively silenced him. We now await the Lion of God to remove all the clamour and wickedness of the system of which Cushan was a forerunner, then peace will reign supreme, when all the earth sitteth still and is at rest. Only then will the blessings of Gerizim ring out to the thunderous response of the thousands of Israel. Amen. Amen. Meanwhile we have cursing in the place of blessing, with indeed black foreboding to Israel.

The time is shortly after the massacre at Ophrah; Gideon's house is truly in the dust, and in Shechem a festival to Baal Berith is being observed (or so it would seem). Suddenly a striking voice is heard over the din of the Baal orgies: all eyes are turned to Gerizim and on a spur of the rocky face some 1000 feet above. Jotham, the little one, of no account - the youngest of 70 sons. How many daughters we are not informed. But how insignificant he was; as we would say today, the small arms taking on the Panzer Tank division. Probably at first Shechem was amused, highly amused, but the ironic laughter and jeers didn't last long; it turned to sullen anger as the fable or parable went home to them, and no doubt the pickets were sent out to catch this little insignificant one who had dared with the same spirit and courage to denounce their recent return to freedom by the advent of Abimelech - quite modern the tone of this incident in Judges sounds. Everything in Bible history can be brought down to our days, and for our learning, otherwise it is not the true word of God. While different dispensations have their own applications, the general and overall picture can fit if we let the scripture interpret itself with other scripture. It belongs to all ages, and to the coming reign of God. What a privilege to sit at the feet of Jesus, with immortal minds to take in every word and know absolutely that our appreciation of scripture without any doubt is the true one. There will be no tentative dogmatism in that day - absolute truth known and understood. This son of Gideon possesses his father's courage, and possesses also the wit and readiness which Joash his grandfather illustrated on a memorable occasion over 40 years before.

He delivers his charge in the form, not of a parable, but of a fable. His fable is the first of two fables found in the Old Testament. The other is found in 2 Kings 14:9.



Parable is the favourite clothing of truth, especially in the Gospel, for it differs from the fable in this, that its standpoint is heavenly, not earthly: it is so arranged that, through natural objects, it conveys spiritual instruction to the mind, it invites thought to the eternal verities of the moral universe. The fable is earthly in its point, in its aim. It is intended to teach lessons of prudence, of wise conduct, of foresight in action. The parable never reverses the order of nature; the fable does. Animals speak, laugh, reason, instruct. In the two Old Testament fables it is not animals, but trees that discourse to excellent purpose.

A bright, pithy, sarcastic wit is that of Jotham. Its material was presented to him, as we have described a few pages back, which from his elevated and isolated craggy precipice, he contemplated. How is it that the men at the time cannot write the history of what they see, that is humanly speaking? Even in our own generation, for 40 years, to my personal knowledge, with the glorious span of an open Bible, we have not fared too well. History has to be seen as fulfilled before accuracy in any form can be attained. We have had the advantage, or otherwise, of listening to the prophetic vagaries ever since we entered the Truth. The Lord Jesus has been at the door: second only to this, we have the mysterious King of the North, which almost rose to disfellowship level during the latter war days. The Common Market and Britain's emergence into a European nation poses continual problems. The continual roaring of the sea of nations likewise has caused embarrassment to all historians. The Irish question and I. R. A. along with U. D. A. continues to embarrass Britain, and all the while Russia is penetrating the British defences off the shore of Scotland and particularly the oil rigs. We say that this statesman, or that reformer, must be left for critical judgment to the historian. Or we say the event is too near us to be correctly judged. That is to say, a person who is not yet born will arise and tell the world the exact meaning of what we are now doing! Why then this stubborn objection by the critics (and sometimes within our own midst). Our reaction is a definite pointer to the days of Noah (in which we live). In fact in these days everything is topsy-turvy, upside down so to speak, and while we know (or hope so) the general tenor of history, the coming of the Lord will make known our errors, and otherwise make quite sure that we understand what is happening now and at His coming. How terrible it will be for those who are rejected in that day: they, along with the accepted, will be quite sure, the only generation (if we can use this phrase) to understand perfectly.

Back there to Jotham, and why this objection to Biblical prophets and Biblical judgments? It is the very principle upon which we ourselves operate day by day. There can be nothing much more startling to what we call commonsense than that a man who is not yet born shall arise and give a true version of the motives, purposes and histories of men who lived a thousand years before he himself was born. We personally witnessed a rather unique situation when President Nixon was about to take up his office: a person said to me, "Mr. Nixon will be the most tragic President the U. S. A. will ever see." Every word was absolutely true, but indeed a very rare phenomenon.

So fable takes up the real meaning of things - that marvellous composition we call fiction, dramatic interpretation, the liftings of things up from low levels, into right line and colour - that most wondrous of all God's gifts to man, the gift of imagination. (We must not forget, of course, in Jotham's case this was inspiration). Jotham displayed amazing intellectual sagacity, and expressed himself with exquisite verbal beauty. It required an attentive mind to follow him.

Judges 9:7 "And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice."

We have already described that 'in the top of Mount Gerizim' meant some rocky crag high above Shechem. The slaughter of Abimelech's brethren reversed the situation allotted to Gerizim, giving curses instead of blessings, and that which is to come to

pass very shortly is delivered in a fable or parable - or both.

"And cried" - It may be asked how Jotham ventured to risk his life by thus upbraiding the Shechemites. Obviously there were various reasons as to why he took this course. (1) He was inspired of God to do this, to make known His will, in not only a prophecy of what was about to happen shortly after in a primary sense, but (2) also included a far more wide-reaching prophecy regarding Israel. (3) It may be asked how could it be possible that the inhabitants of Shechem could hear what he said, so far away. The answer of course lies in the acoustics of the place chosen by Joshua for the "Blessings" and "Curses" (Joshua 8:30-35). In the clear still air, and for a 'mountain' man like Jotham, there was no problem. Travellers like Lord Hervey said: "I have myself heard the human voice utter an articulate word at a measured distance of one mile, one furlong, and seventeen yards; but it was in a peculiar state of the atmosphere. The experiment has been made in recent years, and it has been proved that a man's voice can be distinctly heard in Nablus and also upon Ebal, from Gerizim." Dr. Thomson reminds us that the people in these mountainous countries are able, from long practice, so to pitch their voices as to be heard distinctly at distances almost incredible ("The Land and the Book", chapter 31 - Central Palestine).

Many of the scholars disallow the parabolic nature of Jotham's utterance. Dr. E.W. Bullinger in "Figures of Speech" says "This is not a parable, because there is no similitude by which one thing is likened unto another. Where trees or animals speak and reason we have fable; and if the fable is explained then we have fable; and if fable is explained then we have allegory. But for the explanation 'Ye have made Abimelech king' (9:16) which renders it allegory we should have fable."

Dr. A.T. Pierson refers to it as "the first and oldest allegory in Scriptures - one of the most beautiful of all the fables or apologues in the whole range of literature." Professor Salmond likewise speaks of it as "a genuine example of the fable - the grotesque and improbable elements which unfit it for serving as an instrument for the expression of the highest religious truth."

Ellicot comments "As in this chapter we have (a) the first Israelite king, (b) the first massacre of brethren, (c) so here we have the first fable.

Fables are extremely popular in the East, where they are often current under the name of the slave-philosopher Lokman, the counterpart of the Greek Aesop. A fable is a fanciful story to inculcate prudential morality. Other expositors, however, incline towards the parabolic aspect of Jotham's appeal, who, as Stanley says, "spoke like the bard of English ode." Lang thinks of it as a parable and makes these three observations:

- 1) The material of a parable may be real, as trees are actual objects.
- 2) The use of the material may be wholly fanciful; as when trees were pictured holding a conclave, proposing to elect a king, invite low growing trees - the olive, fig, vine, bramble - to wave to and fro over the far loftier trees, as the cedar.
- 3) The purely fanciful details may correspond accurately to the men who are to be instructed and to their doings. . . . The cedar tree was a tall and lofty one, so were the men of Shechem strong enough to carry out the horrible massacre.

A further word is necessary as to the difference between interpretation and application. The former has to do with the matter in hand, namely, the relation between Israel and Abimelech and is historical and local. The latter is dispensational and prophetic. As to the direct interpretation of Jotham's parable: the various trees are represented as seeking a king and successively apply to the olive, the fig tree, the vine, and lastly to the bramble. By these trees desiring a king we have a figurative presentation of the Shechemites, who were discontented with God's direct government and yearned for a visible titular head such as the surrounding heathen nations had. The slain sons of Gideon are compared with Abimelech as good trees with the bramble.

The words 'rule over' in this text (Judges 9:7-20) imply to float about, and includes the idea of restlessness and insecurity. Keil and Delitzsch in their Old Testament studies comment that "wherever the Lord does not found the monarchy or the king himself does not lay the foundations of his government in the grace of God, he is never anything but a tree, moving about above other trees without a firm root in a fruitful soil, utterly unable to bear fruit to the glory of God and the good of men." The words of the briar, "Trust in my shadow", contain a deep irony, the truth of which the Shechemites were very soon to discover. Then, as we are to see, the national life of Israel is portrayed under the similitude of the trees cited in the parable, each of which possessed properties making it peculiarly valuable, the life of each being distinct from every other. While all trees derive their sustenance from the same soil, yet each tree takes from the soil that which is fitted to its own nature and necessary for the production of its own fruit and use. Then the trees are different in respect to their size and form and worth. Each tree has its own glory. Strong trees shelter and protect weaker ones from intense heat and furious storms (Daniel 4:20-22, Isaiah 32:1).

It is interesting to note that the principle of the monarchy itself is not condemned. The main point at issue is that a worthless person, Abimelech, had been chosen, or the people had been coerced by him to make him ruler. Israel, whose fathers had so vigorously avenged the murder of the Levite's concubine (evidence for an early date during the Judges period was given in Part 1), now not only does not avenge the murder of the sons of the nation's deliverer, but sets up a concubine's son, the murderer, on the throne. On the very spot where Joshua erected the memorial of Israel's covenant with Yahweh, there degenerate Israel covenants with Baal Berith and Baal's hireling ruler Abimelech. Have we not here a type of man's awful sin in selling in the name of religion, and betraying for thirty pieces of silver and then murdering in the name of justice (John 19:1) the innocent Saviour, the Prince of life, and desiring a murderer to be granted them (Acts 3:14,15). God witnessed through Jotham their sin. God has never left His cause without a witness even in the worst times (1 Kings 19:18). It was the providence of God that saved Jotham from the general massacre of his brethren, and then endued him with the Spirit of Prophecy, qualifying him to announce the eternal principles of God's righteousness on which prophecy rests. On the mount of blessing, Gerizim, He declares the sure curse which must overtake the transgressor, a gloomy omen for a coronation day.

The act of bloody fratricide might have forewarned Abimelech's Shechemite brethren what kind of a 'brother' he would be towards them, when promoted to be their king. A leopard cannot change its spots, nor an Ethiopian his skin. They had been the first to raise him up, and they must be the first to feel the weight of his sceptre (Psalm 7:15,16). The preface of Jotham is solemn and arresting, indeed calculated to this end. Judges 9:7 - "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you." If we would have God to hear us in prayer, we must heed whatever God the Lord speaks in admonition. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination." Reproof is not pleasant to hear, but if heeded it saves us from what will be infinitely more unpleasant in the end - the withdrawal of the grace of God for ever (Proverbs 1:24-31).

Jotham's fable is perhaps the oldest in existence (approx. 1209 BC). We have seen the fable represents man's relations to his fellowmen. The parable rises higher, for it represents the relations between man and God; it rests on the fact that man is made in the image of God, and that the world of nature reflects the spiritual realities of the unseen world. The resemblances in the case of the fable are only fanciful (2 Kings 14:9 - the only other fable, strictly speaking, in scripture). In the parable they are real analogies, hence the divine Son of man uses the parable often, the fable never.

First Jotham speaks of the error of the trees (Judges 9:8). "The trees went forth

on a time to anoint a king over them." This point shows the eagerness of the Shechemites which proved ill timed, and it proves the age old northern proverb, "There is nothing begotten in haste, only trouble." People on the roads today with the increasing traffic have not time to wait, but again the saying, "they will have to find time to die."

Back to Judges 9; but there was no occasion for them anointing a king over them; for are they not all 'the trees of the Lord, which He hath planted' (Psalm 104:16), and which, therefore, he will not fail to tend? So the Israelites only betrayed their ingratitude and unbelief in seeking a king when Yahweh was their king. Christianity (so called) in the middle ages, impatient of having only an invisible head (whose manifestation we are still waiting for - the true Gideon in our case), set up a temporal and visible head, the Bishop of Rome. We are hardly to be found following their mistake in this aspect. They thought of taking matters into their own hands, as man has always done since the day of Adam and they present a stern lesson to the Truth. Paul defines our attitude today in 1 Corinthians 12, that we belong to the mystical body of Christ, and that He is our Head and the Captain of our salvation, and that we await His coming to take His Bride up out of the wilderness, to dwell and reign with Him in Jerusalem, when the old things have passed away and new things are with us, and the bride, the New Jerusalem will have made herself ready (Revelation 21). With this attitude we should be content and wait for the call, "Come, the Master calleth for thee." At that day all will be assembled to Him, and receive in their bodies that which they have done, either good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). We say "Come Lord Jesus" and salute that day with joy if yet with fear.

Gerizim means 'cutter down', a plural name from Gariz, to cut off, which occurs only once (Psalm 31:22), "For I said in my haste I am cut off from before thine eyes." So in Judges 9. Jotham pronounced the cursing because Israel, i. e. Shechem, had forsaken the Law of his God. In turn there was a 'cutting down' of (1) the brethren of Abimelech, (2) then of Shechem, (3) then of Abimelech himself. Judges 9:56,57 neatly summarises. "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham ("The Lord is upright", "Lord of integrity", innocent, from the root Tamar, to complete, to make whole, to be upright: cp Tamar, a palm tree, from the root Tamar, to stand erect (Ithamar), 'righteous', and Judah's assertion "thou art more righteous than I" (Genesis 38:6). Here we are shown the absolute righteousness of God, and His policy of removing Abimelech and the Shechemites is vindicated. Jerubbaal, the destruction of Baal, reveals the policy through Gideon, the cutter down. They by whom this course was effected we will now consider.

Only Jotham fell not at that fatal stone with his brethren. It is a hard battle where none escapes. Jotham escapes, not to reign, not to revenge, but to be a prophet and a witness of the vengeance of God upon the usurper, upon the abettors; he lives to tell Abimelech that he was but a bramble, a weed rather than a tree: a right bramble indeed, that grew out of the base hedgerow of a concubine; that could not lift up his head from the earth, unless he were supported by some bush or pale of Shechem, that had laid hold of the fleece of Israel and had drawn blood of all his brethren, and, lastly, that had no substance in him but the sap of vain glory and the pricks of cruelty. It was better than a kingdom to Jotham to see the fire out of this bramble consume those trees. The view of God's revenge is so much more pleasing to a good heart than his own.

Then begins the fable, parable, and prophecy of Jotham, concerning 'the trees', in fact 'all the trees'. It is to be carefully noticed in Judges 9:14, "All the trees say to the briar, Be king over us". In the previous verse only 'the trees' are mentioned. This implies that of all the trees not one was willing to be king himself, but that they were unanimous in transferring the honour to the briar.

Let us take careful note of the context.

Judges 9:7 "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" The substance so far is in the answer "go to be promoted over the trees", margin "or go up and down for other trees". The English version here follows the Vulgate (ut inter ligna promoveri); but the verb in the original is much finer and more picturesque, for it expresses the utter scorn of the olive for the proffered honour; the word really means to 'float about'. Compare Isaiah 19:1 ('be moved'), 29:9 ('stagger'), Lamentations 4:14 ('wander'). When in 1868 the crown of Spain was offered to Ferdinand of Portugal, he is reported to have answered "Pour moi pas si imbecile" (Cassels).

Judges 9:10 "And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou and reign over us, but the fig tree said to them, Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit and go and be promoted over the trees?" To stagger over the other trees, all the time the idea is without foundation to sway and stagger like the drunken man in Isaiah 29:9: again the very thought is spurned. The fig tree, famed for its sweetness, was also highly prized. Its fruit was widely consumed. Adam and Eve used fig leaves to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:6,7). Figs are the first fruits recorded in the Bible by name.

Judges 9:12 "Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine (Heb. tirosh) which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" The vine was likewise held in great esteem because of its immense cluster - a great source of wealth (Numbers 13:23). Wine that cheereth the heart of God and man. To sit under one's own fig tree and vine was a proverbial expression, denoting peace and prosperity (Micah 4:4). Again the invitation is refused. Why should such a valuable tree with gifts to man and God (Psalm 104:14-17) be thrown away, to stagger like a man who has looked upon the wine when it was red?

Judges 9:14 "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou and reign over us." The bramble is a powerful bush-like plant flourishing in any soil. It produces no fruit of any value, and the tree, as such, is useless as a means of shelter. Its wood is used by the natives for fuel. Dr. A.T. Pierson reminds us that the bramble is the buckthorn or Rhamnus of Psalm 130:9 (thorns) and is said to be the Rhamnus Palierus of Linnæus, otherwise known as Spica Christi, or Christ's thorn, a shrub with sharp thorns. The application is obvious as the thorns which formed the crown of the Lord Jesus at His crucifixion. We, along with men such as Abimelech and Judas have made, or can make up, the thorns which crowned our crucified Lord. So this base bramble shocks us with its picture of basal crudity and brutality.

Did the thorn-bramble hesitate? Not for a moment. He seized the opportunity with alacrity (Judges 9:15). "And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon." "Of a truth", obviously consistently with truth, honour, and uprightness, as explained in the interpretation of the fable in verses 16 and 19, which read.

Judges 9:16, 19 "Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands"... verse 19 "If ye then have ~~dealt~~ truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then

rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. This indeed is deeply ironic. Truth, honour and uprightness never enter into it so far as these characteristics are known in the Law of God, in fact the real truth is just the opposite, and the 'fire' coming out of the bramble refers to its inflammable character being easily set on fire and rapidly burning. The application is only too obvious, referring to the base-born and vile Abimelech who had accepted their proposition to rule over them, his course as an irritating thorn bush to his subjects and a fierce destroyer, ending like the burning thorn bush in mutual reign of himself and them (Judges 9:16-20). The fire 'coming out' of the bramble can refer to the fact that it often originated among dry bushes by the friction of the branches, thus forming an apt emblem of the war of passions which often destroys combinations of wicked men.

James 3:1-6 gives us an apt illustration in the New Testament of the character whose "tongue sets on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell", which is true in every sphere of life, be it ecclesial, social, political, or even in the family. Abimelech is without peer in this profession. The effect of such a conflagration is seen in verse 15, "let fire come out of the bramble and destroy (or devour) the cedars of Lebanon." The cedar, the greatest of all Bible trees, was renowned for its remarkable height, often one hundred and twenty feet, and forty in girth. Because of the quality of its wood it was used in the building of Solomon's temple and palace. Lofty and strong, the cedars symbolize firstly the Shechemites who were strong enough to carry out their horrible massacre of Gideon's sons. Lang makes the application, "As a burning bramble might set on fire a forest of cedars, or as a burning cedar would cause the destruction of all the brambles around it, so could Abimelech and the men of Shechem prove destructive of each other and inflict on one another the due reward of their common ingratitude and violence," which was precisely what came to pass. While Jotham's skilful use of imagery captured the attention of the men of Shechem and acted as a mirror to reflect their own criminal folly, such a reflection did not result in repentance for their wickedness. The Shechemites did not pass sentence upon themselves as David did after listening to Nathan's moving parable, or as many of the hearers of the parables of Jesus did (Matthew 21:14). Effective eloquence is that which moves the heart to action. The hearers of Jotham's parable of the trees still suffered Abimelech to reign over them for three years (Judges 9:22).

J. Hall remarks: "There was never such a pattern of unthankfulness as these Israelites. They who lately thought a kingdom too small recompense for Gideon and his sons, now think it too much for his seed to live; and take life away from the sons of him that gave them both life and liberty. Yet if this had been some hundreds of years after, when time had worn out the memory of Jerubbaal, it might have borne a better excuse. No man can hope to hold pace with time, the best names may not think scorn to be unknown to following generations. But ere their deliverer was cold in his coffin, to pay his benefits (which deserve to be everlasting) with the extirpation of his posterity, it was more than savage. What can be looked for from idolaters? If a man have cast off his God, he will easily cast off his friends. When religion is once gone, humanity will not stay long after. That which the people were punished afterwards for but desiring, he enjoys. Now is Abimelech seated in the throne which his father refused, and no rival is seen to envy his peace. But how long will this glory last? Stay but three years and ye shall see this bramble withered and burnt. The prosperity of the wicked is but short and fickle. A stolen crown (though it may look fair) (Psalm 73:15-28) cannot but be made of brittle stuff. All life is uncertain; but wickedness overruns Nature."

For ourselves this lesson is obvious. Sweet contentment with one's appointed sphere, and the privilege of being of service to God and man in the place where God has put us, without the vanity of the lust of mere promotion. As the olive tree, fig

tree, and the vine and bramble are often used in a typical sense of Israel, a brief reference to such an application might prove profitable.

(1) The olive tree speaks of Israel's covenant privileges and blessings. This is enhanced and the abundance of such is learned when we are told that a good olive tree provides  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons of fruit yearly. The abundance of the covenant blessings is foreshown in the very nature of it (Romans 11:17-25). It is rightly named as the 'first king of the trees' because, being 'evergreen', it speaks of God's enduring covenant made with Abraham, before Israel came into being. The crux of the covenant was seen as an earnest in Gethsemane (= the garden of the Olive Press), when the Lord suffered in anticipation of its fulfilment in Himself, and as the olive oil was used to light the lamps in the tabernacle and temple and to temper the confection thereof, and the oil had to be gathered, after being processed with the beating of sticks, so the Lord was bruised for our iniquities and with his stripes we were healed (Isaiah 53:5 etc., 1 Peter 1:1-25). In Jotham's parable the olive tree is characterized by fatness, and by its use both God and man were honoured, both king and priest being anointed with it into the work for God (Exodus 27:20-21, Leviticus 1:1).

Israel's privileges (fatness) are found in Romans 3: No other nation was ever so blessed of God as Israel. Israel's failure is seen in that some of the branches are broken off and wild branches are grafted into their places. We Gentiles are enjoying some of the privileges and blessings of the olive tree. Chief among the blessings granted to Israel was the gift of the Word of God and the Son of God. Today, regenerated Gentiles are preaching the Son of God and dispensing the Word of God to Israel. But her restoration is seen in the fatness in that day "when all Israel shall be saved. If the fall of them be the riches of the world . . . however much more their fulness."

(2) The fig tree speaks of Israel's national privileges (Matthew 21:18-20; 24:32-33; Mark 11:12-14; Luke 13:6-8). That which characterized the fig tree was sweetness and good fruit. God planted Israel - His fig tree - but the fruit was corrupt, and instead of sweetness there was bitterness. So it was when our Lord came to Israel, for His own (people) received Him not. In bitterness they branded Him as devil-possessed and 'held a council against Him how they might destroy Him.' It is still the same today, for Israel continues to reject her Messiah, and is bitter against Him. David Baron, a converted Jew and Hebrew scholar of no mean ability, said, "I have known personally most amiable, and as men, lovable characters among the Jews; but immediately the name Jesus was mentioned, a change came over their countenances, and they would fall into a passion of anger, clenching their fists, gnashing their teeth, and spitting on the ground at the very mention of the name."

Israel's failure is seen in the withering away of the fig tree (Matthew 21:19-20). Our Lord came seeking fruit and when He found none He ~~cursed~~ the fruitless tree and it withered away. In the parable in Luke the tree is cut down. This has been Israel's condition naturally for centuries. She is dried up with no king (until very recent times without flag and home). Now Israel is home: her flag is the shield of David, the colour blue (See Blue in Scripture - Debir Press). But she has no king and still is the tail instead of the promised head of the nations (Deuteronomy 28:13). Israel's restoration is seen in the green shoots on the fig tree (the time of the first-ripe figs). When our Lord cursed the fig tree, because, as Scripture says, it was not yet the time of the first-ripe figs, the foliage witnessed that the early shoots from the last year's crop should be showing. All leaves, foliage, but no fruit, was the condition Jesus found and denounced. Was this to continue for ever? In the English translation this would seem to be, but Jesus said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth to the age" (Gk.) These words tell us that the fig tree is destined to sprout and bear fruit again. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree" said Jesus, "when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh, so likewise ye, when ye see these things

come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Matthew 24 : 32 ; Luke 21 : 30).

A nation's roots are in her religion. When Jesus withered the fig tree, from the roots upward He castigated Jewry and their tradition, and almost 2000 years have passed, and still the Jews live by their tradition as personal experience has shown. They say that keeping the Passover is very hard and trying, but upon being asked why they still keep it (apart from the scriptural view, that is), they always say "it is our tradition". How utterly complex it all is. That which led them away from God - 'the traditions of men' said Jesus - in these last days has kept them for nearly 2000 years to their belief in God.

(3) The vine symbolizes Israel's spiritual privileges (Isaiah 5 : 1-7 ; Psalm 80 : 9-19 ; Ezekiel 15 ; John 15). That which characterized the vine was wine, which cheered both God and man. Wine is God's chosen symbol for joy. 'God and men', Judges 9 : 13, cp verse 9. The reference is to libations (Numbers 15 : 7 : 28 : 7, and feasts (Psalm 104 : 15). When Israel found their wine vats full to overflowing it was proof positive that the blessing of God was upon them to the full and overflowing, and of course there was joy under His approval and God Himself had joy in the drink offering of His people. Israel's failure is seen in the wasted devoured vine, and the vineyard trodden down. God brought the vine out of Egypt, planted it in a prepared place, did everything for it ; but the vine failed : so the hedges were taken away and the vineyard is desolate. There is no wine. Israel's restoration is seen in the day of God's visitation. "O God of hosts ; look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine and the vineyard which thy right hand planted. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (Psalm 80). That visitation will be in the person of our Lord Jesus for all spiritual blessings are bound up in him and from henceforth Israel will find them only through the True Vine.

(4) Finally the bramble. The bramble is a powerful bush-like plant flourishing in any soil. It produces no fruit of any value, and the tree, as such, is useless as a means of any shelter. Its wood is used by the nations for fuel. A.T. Pierson reminds us again that the bramble is the buckthorn or Rhamnus and that fire coming out of the bramble refers to its inflammable character, being easily set in a blaze and rapidly burning.

The nobler Gideon and his worthy sons had declined the proffered kingdom, but this baseborn and vile Abimelech had accepted it and would prove like an irritating thorn bush to his subjects, and a fierce destroyer, his course ending like a burning thorn bush in his mutual reign of himself and them (Judges 9 : 16-20). The fire coming out of the bramble can refer to the fact that fire is often originated among dry bushes by the friction of the branches, thus forming an apt emblem of the war of passions which often destroys combinations of wicked men. The lessons are many, particularly to the self-seeking in our own day. We have to wait until the Lord says "come up higher" and not seek to leave our first estate.

Judges 9 : 14 "Then said all the trees." "All" is not in verses 8, 10, 12 ; for the bramble did not join the trees in offering the kingdom to the olive, the fig and the vine. But all the trees were unanimous in offering it to the bramble : not one of them all wished it for himself, except the bramble.

Judges 9 : 15 "And the bramble said unto the trees, if in truth (if in truth implying the bramble's delight at the unexpected offer, whereas the noble Gideon and his sons refused it, as we have already mentioned). Abimelech can scarcely believe it true. If ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow. What irony. The shadow of a bramble, which, if you were to lie under it and move hand or foot, would scratch, not shade you. "And if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon". Despicable as the bramble is, even it, if set on fire, as its only end is burning, can burn up the stately cedar (Exodus 22 : 5 ; Psalm 58 : 9 ;



Hebrews 6:8). The only man who found shade in the shadow of the bramble (Spica Christi) was the Lord Jesus Christ, and we know what suffering that presaged; that shade was thrust cruelly upon Him and it was of none of His own choosing or deserving. He did all in response to the Father's will and for our salvation. The hint of Jotham here is that a worthless man soon betrays the tyrant spirit. There is a saying, "Give him enough rope and he will hang himself". We remember Judas did. The Lord Jesus allowed him to be the financial adviser to the 'group': he held the bag, and it was for a meagre sum, 30 pieces of silver, that Judas sold his Lord and hanged himself (Matthew 26:14-16). Give Abimelech sufficient power and he will speedily show his true spirit. Jotham makes the bramble betray this in his first speech, accepting the kingdom. "If all my commands are not instantly obeyed, and you do not abjectly put yourselves under me, then let destruction from me come upon you, not merely the commonalty, but the noblest": this is what the words imply.

Turning to verse 16; Jotham here begins the interpretation, and appeals to the people's conscience to judge whether or not the bramble's view of 'truth' is right. "Now, therefore, if ye have done truly (Heb. as in verse 15, 'in truth') and sincerely in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands, for my father fought for you and adventured his life (Heb. cast his life before him) . . . , " and the idea behind the words is that Gideon had poured out his life for them with complete disregard of self. (Compare the reading 'paraboleusamenos', or 'thrown his life in front of him' in Philippians 2:30, and Isaiah 53:12 - "He hath poured out his soul unto death") . . . , "then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you." If their action was honourable their relationship with Abimelech would be mutually cordial, but if the situation was otherwise they could expect mutual destruction, a word that was grimly prophetic. Bramble and cedars would perish in the conflagration that would develop between the newly crowned king and his subjects.

Judges 9:20 So we read, "but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo, and from the house of Millo and devour Abimelech."

Before these telling words Jotham had further reminded them of their wickedness (Judges 9:18): "And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maid servant, king, because he is your brother." The term maid servant is intentionally contemptuous. It seems clear from ch.8:31 and 9:1 that she was not a slave, but even of high birth among the Canaanites.

The fable being ended and the forcible and bitter application being made, we have observed the simple reference to Gideon's great actions, and the juxtaposition of the base and bloody deed in which the men of Shechem and the men of the house of Millo had made themselves accomplices by choosing Abimelech for their king, formed an indictment which could not be answered. With lofty scorn and irony he wishes well to them if they had acted honourably, but if not we have seen that he has predicted the Nemesis of an alliance founded in bloodshed and treachery and wrong, viz. the mutual hatred and destruction of the contracting parties.

Observe how 'the house of Millo' is consistently spoken of as a separate community from 'the men of Shechem'. Having ended his biting message, Jotham took to his heels and fled.

Judges 9:21 "And Jotham ran away, and fled and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother." Being close to the top of Gerizim, Jotham had the open country before him. It would take the men of Shechem twenty minutes to ascend the hill: by that time, with his surprise tactics, he would have at least three

miles start on his pursuers.

The exact position of his personal 'City of Refuge' is uncertain as 'Beer' is the Hebrew for 'well'. How ironic and tragic it all is that these terrible events took place in one of the six cities appointed for refuge, Shechem in Mount Ephraim, and how once we have underlined the urge of Ephraim to govern, truly every man did what was right in his own eyes, how blind man in general really is; but, these men had heard or witnessed the power of Gideon, in having to bring peace to a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7), and that peace should be got only through the sword, and note, not of Gideon, but of the Lord: such was the damning conclusion of the divine mind. Treason, treacherous fratricide time after time, and critics say "You say these were the children of the chosen race." What can we answer? They were loved for their fathers' sake - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - but they refused to obey. 'All are born with a free will, to accept or refuse the divine behests; this generation of Israel and the remnants of Canaan at one time both blatantly ignored the divine commands. The incidents we are following were, or should have been, an example to turn back to the Lord: they stubbornly stiffened their necks, even as they do today, so we have to read these sickening details. This is what happens when divine discipline is thrust on one side, as it is today. The dreadful deeds that are done in Viet Nam, etc., have their parallel at least in violence and through disobedience to the divine voice.

Paul puts it quite clearly in Romans 1:18-32. Because men have chosen to reject God, then He will give them up to their own folly. Please read this quotation in connection with our dealings with Gideon, Abimelech, etc. You will see and appreciate, we hope, that man's unthankfulness and his greed for power has never altered. We could soon be Abimelechs at heart, and that "but by the grace of God." How long will this glory last? (Ironic). The prosperity of the wicked is but short and fickle. A stolen crown (though it may look fair) cannot be made of any but brittle stuff. All life is uncertain; but wickedness overruns nature.

Now let us marvel as we inquire into the very interesting way in which the further details of Jotham's parable now fall into history.

Judges 9:22-23 When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech. "Unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" - ? Three years is sufficient to prove enough rope for Abimelech to 'hang' himself, helped on by God by an evil spirit.

J. Hall comments here: "The evil spirit thrust itself into the plot of Abimelech's usurpation and murder, and wrought with the Shechemites for both; and now God sends the evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites to work the ruin of each other. The first could not have been without God; but in the second, God challenges a part. Revenge is His where the sin is ours. It had been a pity that the Shechemites should have been plagued by any other hand than Abimelech's. They raised him unjustly to the throne; they are the first that feel the weight of his sceptre. The foolish bird limes herself with that which grew from her own excretion. Who wonders to see the kind peasant stung with his own snake? (Quaint but very apt - AH).

"The breach begins at Shechem: his own countrymen fly off from their promised allegiance. Though all Israel should have fallen off from Abimelech, yet they of Shechem should have stuck close. It was their act: they ought to have made it good. How should good princes be honoured when even Abimelech, once settled, cannot be opposed with safety? Now they begin to revolt to the rest of Israel. Yet, if this had been done out of repentance, it had been praiseworthy; but to be done out of a treacherous inconstancy, was unworthy of Israelites. How could Abimelech hope

for fidelity of them, whom he had made and found traitors to his father's blood? No man knows how to be sure of him that is unconscionable. He that hath been unfaithful to one, knows the way to be perfidious, and is only fit for his trust that is worthy to be deceived; whereas faithfulness, besides the present good, lays a ground of further assurance. The friendship that is begun in evil cannot stand, wickedness both of its own nature, and through the curse of God is ever unsteady; and though there be not a disagreement in hell . . . (J. Hall further adds, 'being but the place of retribution, not of action' – the grave is indeed the place of retribution and not action; very aptly put, AH) . . . if the men of Shechem had abandoned their false god, with their false king, and out of a serious remorse, and desire of satisfaction for their idolatry and blood, and preferred Jotham to his throne, there might have been both warrant for their quarrel, and hope of success: but now, if Abimelech be a wicked usurper, yet the Shechemites are idolatrous traitors.

"How could they think that God would rather Abimelech's bloody intrusion by them than their treachery and idolatry by Abimelech? When the quarrel is betwixt God and Satan (i. e. the Adversary), there is no doubt of the issue; but when one devil (slanderer) fights with another, what certainty is there of victory? Though the cause of God had been good, yet it had been safe for them to look to themselves. The unworthiness of the agent many times curses a good enterprise."

In such trenchant words does our seventeenth century expositor describe the events in this, what should have been, a city of refuge.

#### Judges 9: 22-25 Friction between Abimelech and the Shechemites

Self-seeking opportunists and those capable of treacherous murder never make easy companions. Three years of Abimelech were sufficient to mark the bridge of treacherous Abimelech and the men of Shechem.

Perhaps it is of significance that Abimelech does not seem to have resided in the principal city of his domain, but delegated the oversight thereof to Zebul (verse 30). With regard to the nature of his rule, 'reigned' (AV) is too strong: the word is literally 'princed' ~~Yasar~~, from 'sur', not reigned. We must remember the Shechemites alone made him king. Probably only Northern Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh submitted to his usurped despotism or prince, of necessity, not of choice.

Then, Judges 9: 23, God sent an evil spirit (in judicial retribution (1 Samuel 16: 14-23; 18:10; 19:9). God (Elohim, as the God of Justice) sent it, not Yahweh (the Covenant God of His people). The quotation from 1 Samuel 16: 14 very strikingly shows the difference between the Spirit of the Lord which caused Saul to prophesy among the prophets in praising and worshipping Yahweh (1 Samuel 10: 9) and during which period of grace God had given to him another heart (or changed his whole outlook) and consequently blessed Saul; and this incident marks one of the highlights in Saul's sad life on the whole; whereas 1 Samuel 16: 23 gives the opposite emphasis. Verse 14 says, "But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit troubled him", (or disturbed him). David, through the idiom of music, is able to quieten the disturbed thoughts of Saul (1 Samuel 16: 23). This disturbing spirit, or frame of mind, turns out to be a psychotic, insane jealousy of David, most certainly not merited by the behaviour of David, who took great pains to avoid such outbursts. The whole history is well known to students of the word (cp 1 Samuel 18: 28). "And Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David and Saul became David's enemy continually. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by." It would appear from these incidents that the evil spirit of the Lord only exaggerated the normal characteristics of Saul, having by His foreknowledge envisaged

these happenings before the foundation of the world (Isaiah 42: 8, 9), and that the character of Saul was used to test David. After all, what does Romans 9: 9/33 say? Verse 21, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Compare also verse 17, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." So with the evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites, specially emphasised by God to show even amidst all this welter of bloodshed that His purpose still goes on. We think of the so-called 'exorcism' of our days, and of the recent propaganda put forth even in this very week (April 24th 1975). The present writer has been face to face with a very evil man, and although it is 40 years ago the memory lingers. Today they would have called it an 'evil spirit' that inhabited the person, whereas it was just the evil character of the man himself. We are not impressed with the black magic religions of the present moment. If one chooses to implement and unduly emphasise the evil side of one's character, then all the black art phenomena can be expressed. The divine angle is to be seen in Deuteronomy 18: 9-14: that some people do have this kind of sense scripture admits, and the recommendation is, do not meddle with it, because by coming thus into contact with this kind of experience we shall be turned aside from the ways of God. It is our personal opinion that the evil intentions between Abimelech and Shechem were thus exaggerated by God, bringing about the desired friction. Nothing is more unstable than popularity gained by wickedness. Think of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. The friendship of the wicked is a lie.

Judges 9: 24 "That the cruelty (chamas, the wrong or violence) done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother." (This does not exclude the possibility, as we have suggested, that Jotham only was 'righteous before Yahweh'. Again, it is Isaiah 10 being put into practice). The principle of this chapter is at the root of the question. Abimelech ought to have been their defender: an awful aggravation of the crime (Genesis 4: 8, 9). "... which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, who aided him", by supplying the money to hire murderers (Judges 9: 4, 5) in the killing of his brethren. (Compare 1 Kings 2: 5, 32, 33; Matthew 23: 35).

The point which precipitated the dispute was the action of the Shechemites in setting armed bands in ambush beside the trade routes in the vicinity of Shechem, thus depriving Abimelech of the dues which he would normally exact from the caravans in such a troubled area, thus emptying the pockets of Abimelech as well as hitting at his pride, for he could not guarantee safety of travel in his domain.

Judges 9: 25, 26 "And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the mountains (Ebal and Gerizim, between which Shechem lay), and robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech." So the protection racket, particularly of and since 1920, is not a new phenomenon: it's as old as the days of the Judges, when there was no true king and every man did what was right in his own eyes, thereby rendering administration of law impossible and bringing his government into contempt, brigandage preparing the way for open rebellion.

Now the plot is working. Abimelech is forced to move, his power is attacked. To add to the aggravation we find another character similar to Abimelech inciting the Shechemites to revolt over Abimelech, as he himself had done against his brethren.

Judges 9: 26-29 "And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him, and went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech and who is Shechem that we should serve him? Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? And Zebul his officer? Serve the men of

Hamor the father of Shechem : for why should we serve him? And would to God this people were under my hand! then ~~would~~ I remove Abimelech." "And he said to Abimelech, increase thine army and come out."

The prophecy of Jotham is having early fulfilment, and we discern the vindication of God's righteousness in the mutual punishment of the accomplices in guilt. For three years Abimelech seemed to reign with impunity and wickedness. But we read in Ecclesiastes 5:8, "If thou seest oppression and violent perverting of judgment, marvel not, for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they." The Lord reigneth, and has given three years of probation to the transgressor, but now there must be no longer delay of vengeance (Isaiah 16:14; Luke 13:7). Job said, "The triumphing of the wicked is short" (Job 20:5), yet to Job and to those who suffer under the misrule it seems an age. God has only to let loose men's bad passions, that evil men be the scourges of one another; and then "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21). Jealousy, the grand mischief maker, was permitted to sow his oats and bear fruit between the confederates in guilt, the Shechemites and the king of their own making.

- (1) The purpose of God was that thereby the blood of the innocent might come not only on Abimelech, but on the Shechemites who abetted him in murder. For they had shed blood and divine justice retributively will give them blood to drink, as it has been all down the ages of time from Cain downwards (Genesis 4:9-16; Revelation 16:6).
- (2) The Shechemites, with characteristic fickleness of the multitude, soon repented of their sin. But, of a truth, where there is no conscience, we must not expect consistency. Abimelech had taught them treachery towards his father and his father's sons; it was God's righteous retribution that he should be punished by their treachery to himself (Isaiah 33:1). "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword" (Revelation 13:10).
- (3) Look how retribution fosters in the very temple from which they had got the price of blood to make him king: they met to curse and contrive his death. Note by what means. Gaal, the Canaanite son of Ebed, whose very name means 'slave', was the one in whom they now put confidence to deliver them from Abimelech, the son of a Canaanite concubine, and Gaal means 'loathing'. They couldn't get much lower, could they? 'Loathing' the son of a 'slave'. It was indeed bramble in conflict with bramble, potsherd striving with potsherd. If they were renouncing Baal and their other sins for Yahweh, there would have been hope for them. But it is obvious that Satan cannot cast out Satan, and Gaal, whom they now trusted, was no less turbulent and ambitious than Abimelech whom they discarded.

Untaught by bitter experience, and pleasing themselves with their 'fools paradise', they were fast ripening for ruin. The world never changes. Egypt still expect to root out Israel; before long they are to experience a last conflict when once and for all Israel will finally be shown to be loved for their fathers' sake. Ishmael, again son of a bondmaid, will be made to see that he can neither reign, nor dwell with the free born son Isaac, but will be permitted after the reckoning to dwell at the East of his brethren (Genesis 17:12).

Gaal's swagger pleased them, whilst he poured contempt, not only on Abimelech, but on Abimelech's noble father, the Baal conqueror. "Is not he the son of Jerubbaal?" was his final scornful comment. Gaal's words convicted him as an evil speaker of dignities, the last one of all to be trusted because he too wanted to 'leave his first estate' (Jude 6).

Gaal's vauntings were soon dissipated when he was tested in action. Boasters are often forced to change their tone in action. How like the coming day now almost upon

us. The Shechemites, when they were promising to themselves 'peace and safety' (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) were overtaken with sudden destruction. Abimelech designed this destruction to be in vengeance for their rebellion against him, but God overruled it to be His avenging of the blood of Gideon's sons on them as the accomplices of Abimelech (Isaiah 10:6-7 once more).

One interesting point arises when Gaal appeals to them to serve the 'men of Hamor' the father of Shechem (rather than Abimelech). Hamor means 'ass', and W.F. Albright, archaeologist of note, claims that the expression 'the sons of Hamor' is equivalent to the 'sons of the treaty', since the sacrifice of an ass was an essential feature in the ratification of a treaty amongst the native Amorites in Israel.

There is, as we have seen, a probable further allusion in the name of the local deity of Shechem - Baal-berith'. Gaal thus set himself up as the upholder of the ancient faith and the old ways, a conservative appeal often made by demagogues like himself. Finally undermining their confidence in Abimelech he made his final bid for the take-over of power. The world today is full of such treachery: any moment a Sheikh may be assassinated; a German diplomat murdered. Violent men mean to vindicate their own honour - God uses them to vindicate His. The time key of history, amidst much that is dark, sad, and mysterious, is this - God reigning in righteousness by His secret and veiled Providence overruling men's crooked policy in spite of themselves to further God's purposes, and thereby giving an earnest of His coming judgment of the world in manifestly revealed equity. But, as J. Hall comments - "No sooner is a secret dislike kindled in any people against their governors, than there is a gale ready to blow the coals. It were a wonder, if any faction should want a head; as contrarily, never a man was so ill as not to have some favourers." Abimelech hath a Zebul in Shechem (MI5 - Secret Service in Ancient Shechem, as Hushai was for David, with Absalom. How intensely human this all is). Lightly all treasons are betrayed, even with some of their own. His intelligence brings the sword of Abimelech upon Shechem, who hath demolished the city, and sown it with salt. O the just successions of the revenges of God.

- (1) Gideon's ephod is punished with the blood of his sons (again may we emphasize that the sons of Gideon also brought their own destruction).
- (2) The blood of his sons is shed by the procurement of the Shechemites.
- (3) The blood of the Shechemites is shed by Abimelech.
- (4) The blood of Abimelech is spilt by a woman.
- (5) The retaliations of God are sure and just, and make a more due pedigree than descent of nature. Zebul = 'habitation', the same as the Z'bhul, 'habitation' Prefect of Shechem for Abimelech, from the root 'Zabhal' to inhabit, 'to dwell' vid. Zebulun (1 Kings 8:13). He appears to have been a great dissembler, and acted so perfectly under the mask, that when Gaal sought to be his friend, "his anger was kindled and he craftily (AV margin) sent messengers unto Abimelech saying, Behold Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and behold they come to fortify (or rather 'stir up' or 'excite' for Tzur) the city against thee." (Judges 9:30,31).

Whether Zebul perished with the rest of the Shechemites in the destruction of the city, or joined the party of his master, is not stated. His name appears to direct our attention to the burden bearing attitude of mind that Shechem signifies, which persists in holding to things as they appear; is content to abide in present seeming prevailing power, whatever it may be. This idea is always opposed to any change that would in any way disturb its settled ways: it is not progressive, excepting when it turns in his way. To say that such a person is devious is to beg the question. In one way he sits on the fence and, if he can manage it, always falls on the right side. His actions justify

the name given to him by his parents, and gives a strong highlight for inspiration. The deviousness of his character is further outlined as we progress down the chapter.

Judges 9: 32, 33 "Now therefore up (or literally march out) by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait (set up an ambush) in the field. And it shall be that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city, and behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then thou mayest do to them as thou shalt find occasion (or as you have opportunity)."

Today we should define this character as a quisling, or more latterly a Nixon, and so on.

Judges 9: 34 "And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies."

Here is the bramble fighting against the bramble. Jotham's parable was true - only evil can come out of this situation (apparently the whole affair began at the idolatrous feast of Baal-berith. Heretofore there had been secret plotting: Gaal develops it to open revolt. Once again murder in the name of religion, not unlike the Holy Wars of Islam down the centuries, and now boiling up for the final encounter in our day). So the whole 'deal' is set up. Gaal should have gone forth from Shechem to begin the campaign against Abimelech, or else simply to protect the people in the field (verses 27, 42), without a suspicion that the latter was so near; and when he was coming towards Abimelech who lay in wait, Abimelech should get between Gaal and the city and take it by surprise.

So Abimelech took the advice and laid wait against 'the City of Refuge'. What a mockery against divine advice and choice (flee into the city for protection). This was done in four companies (Heb. heads), forward, rear, and two flanks. By this method every possibility was taken care of, by which this nefarious scheme could be carried out successfully. It was temporarily aborted by Abimelech's impatience, as we read in -

Judges 9: 34-36 "And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him..."

"And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood at the entering of the gate of the city; and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait" (with the intention of stealthily advancing into the city when Gaal should have left it, but the intention failed in part, as we have said, owing to the impatience of Abimelech).

Verse 36 "And when Gaal saw the people he said to Zebul (who through fear had not dared to oppose Gaal, but temporised), Behold there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul (coming out to the gate with Gaal), said unto him (to deceive him and gain time for Abimelech's four companies to effect a junction): Thou seest the shadow of the mountains (as if they were) men."

Judges 9: 37 "And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle (Heb. navel, the elevated centre) of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim ('the Wizards' Oak' - the Hebrew is translated 'Observers of Times' in Deuteronomy 18:10,14)." Abimelech's idolatrous forces possibly observed omens here to augur the success of their expeditions, cp. v.6 above, and Genesis 35:4, a distinct oak. Stanley compares verse 6 and here as the same place as the Oak of the Pillar.

Judges 9: 38 Zebul now throws aside his mask and reveals his true colours. "Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? Is not this the people that thou hast despised? Go out I pray now, and fight with them." The taunt worked as verse 39 reveals. "And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech."

Verse 40 "And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown

and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate." Because of his untimely haste, Abimelech was unable to force an entrance into the city. Thus there were inside, two opposing factions, Zebul's and Gaal's, until the former drove out the latter. So the net narrows around the enemies of God. They will find that it is a very fine net and mightily strong: no one will escape, neither the sharks like Zebul and Gaal, nor Abimelech. So far the latter is outside, but shortly he will be drawn into it by the force of circumstances. We are reminded of the state of Yugoslavia and the other near eastern countries after the last war. Communist and Fascist were locked together in internal strife: in fact even today the factions are not at peace, and of course, among it all the politics of the Roman See interweave intrigue all the time. Where is all this leading us? We will try and determine this factor as we sum up shortly concerning this base born son of Jerubbaal. (As we revise the manuscript we have a similar struggle in Spain). Meanwhile Abimelech retired, or remained in Arumah.

Judges 9:41 "And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem."

Arumah means (Heb.) 'height', exalted, elevated, on high, and is very important. It signifies the lifting up of the personal will and desire for leadership (height, exalted), guided by a destructive tendency, without being directed by good judgment. Gideon, as we have defined, means a destroyer. He was a destroyer of error, and a deliverer of Israel. Abimelech, on the other hand, represents this destructive tendency with the good judgment that characterised his father Gideon. Therefore he destroyed his own brethren as well as some of Israel's enemies.

Judges 9:42 "And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech."

Verse 43 "And he took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field." This time Abimelech waited until he could see (in modern parlance) the whites of their eyes. "And he rose up against them and smote them." Abimelech's stratagem in the ~~former~~ instance was foiled by Gaal's caution and his own discretion. This time, by occupying the ground before the gate with one company, he was able to intercept their return after they were smitten by his two other companies.

Verse 44 "And the other two companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields and slew them."

Verse 45 "And Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he took the city. (City of Refuge indeed!), and slew the people that was therein and beat down the city, and sowed it (the site) with salt (symbolising his detestation and his dooming the ground never to be built upon, Micah 3:12), but to become perpetually a barren salt waste (margin Job 39:6; Psalm 107:34; Jeremiah 17:6). Salt injures vegetation and is the symbol of perpetuity.

Verse 46 "And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that, they entered into a hold (or fortified room) of the house of the god Berith." The burned Shechemites fly to the house of their god Berith: now they are safe: that place is a fort and a sanctuary. Whither should we fly in our distress, but to our God? God indeed is our refuge and strength and a very present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1-11). And they who know thy name shall put their trust in thee (Psalm 9:9,10). That is our God and Gideon's God, and the God of the righteous Jotham. But what is Berith to the Shechemites? Now this refuge shall teach them what a god they have served. Hard knowledge, and, unfortunately for the Shechemites, too late for them to change their mind. The jealous God, whom they had forsaken, hath them now where He would, and rejoices at once to be avenged of their god and them.



Had they not made the house of Baal their shelter, they had not died so fearfully. Now, according to the prophecy of Jotham, a fire goes out of the bramble and consumes these cedars, and the horrifying flames begin in the house of their Berith. The confusion of wicked men rises out of the false deities on which they have doted. Of all the conspirators against Gideon's sons, only Abimelech yet survives, and his day is fast approaching.

Judges 9:47 "And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together."

Did they vainly hope that Abimelech would remember the debt of gratitude he owed for the money he received out of that very temple and would spare them there, notwithstanding their having subsequently joined the Shechemites in revolt (9:4)? A man who will murder his whole kinsfolk will scarcely remember 70 pieces of silver, we fancy. When high ambition rides, the heart is not considered, so we read.

Judges 9:48 "And Abimelech gat him up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done."

Judges 9:49 "And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold (fortified room), and set the hold on fire upon them, so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women."

The word Zalmon means 'shady', 'black forest', from the unused root Tsalam, to be shady. In Psalm 68 in the English version, it is written 'Salmon', shady, or black forest in Psalm 68:14, where the sense is, the bright victory after the gloomy conflict was like the glittering snow which relieves all the blackness of Salmon's forests. The gloom of this conflict will soon be lightened with the garish glare of Shechem's tower burning.

Abimelech took 'the axes' – a certain number of axes was part of the armies' equipment for such purposes – in his hand, and cut a bough down from the tree. "What ye have seen me do, do as I have done." The son imitates his father's language in giving directions to his men (Judges 6:17,18). In the holocaust Jotham's parable was fulfilled to the letter (verse 20), and he had not to live long to see the fulfilment: a rather marvellous example of God's ways. Almost every prophet, so far as the writer has been able to discover, saw his short-term prophecies come to pass – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Micah and the rest. It may interest our readers to search them out and write in: we would be very happy to receive them. This formed part of the prophet's reward.

The Hebrew word for bough is 'sowkah' (Strong's Concordance), which does not mean a 'bundle of logs' as the Septuagint renders it. Abimelech merely wanted combustible materials. For a similar incident re setting the hold on fire, see 1 Kings 16:18, which relates how Zimri was burnt in the palace at Tirzah. 'Died' in verse 49 is rendered in the Vulgate as 'were killed with smoke and fire'.

Judges 9:50,51 "Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower."

Thebez = brightness, from Yabhats, from the Arabic 'to shine'. J. Hall writes :-

"Of all the conspirators against Gideon's sons, only Abimelech yet survives, and his day is now coming. His success against Shechem hath filled his heart with thoughts of victory. He hath caged up the inhabitants of Thebez within their tower also; and what

for them but the same end, with their neighbours. And behold, while his hand is busy in putting fire to the door of their tower, which yet was not high (for then he could not have discerned a woman to be his executioner) a stone from a woman's hand strikes his head. His pain in dying was not so much as his indignation to know by whom he died (and rather will he die twice, than a woman should kill him). If God had not known his stomach so big (greedy for victories), he had not vexed him with the impotency of his victor. God finds a time to deal with wicked men, for all the arrears of their sins. Our sins are not more our debts to God, than His judgments are His debts to our sins, which at last he will be sure to pay home."

The text runs as follows:

Judges 9:52, 53 "And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull."

Many powerful enemies of God and of His people, after victorious acts of oppression, have been overthrown at the last by weak instruments, even by women. (1) Sisera by Deborah and Jael; (2) Haman by Esther, and finally (3) the ecclesia by the power of the seed of the woman, overcomes the world. A millstone (Heb. Reeb) literally the rider on the lower stone (Deuteronomy 24:6; 2 Samuel 11:21). The importance of this piece of homely use is stressed in Deuteronomy 24:6: "No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge." The sentence is just, for Abimelech by his thirst for power took the life of at least 1,070 people, accounted for by his brethren and the men of Shechem, so that which was used to preserve life shall be his doom. It is interesting to note a trinity of revenge in considering the death of Abimelech. "All to brake his skull"—wholly fractured his skull, or, as one ancient version puts it, "altogether brake his brain pan."

- (1) Jael drave the nail of the tent into the head of Sisera.
- (2) The woman of Thebez fractured the brain pan of Abimelech.
- (3) The seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head.

So Abimelech asked his armourbearer to thrust him through. The first two kings of Israel died by suicide at their own hand in the sense that they gave the command. How terribly sad, yet justly true.

Judges 9:54-56 "Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, a woman slew him. And the young man thrust him through and he died. And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place." But after all, they did say that a woman slew him, and it became a proverb of shame and reproach in Israel. "Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez?" (2 Samuel 11:21). So men's sins follow them even after death. So this vain wicked man did not escape this ignominy by an indirect suicide. He feared vain reproach from men, but had no AWE for the judgment of God. Could we say that he was a coward with regard to men and time, and foolhardy with respect to God and divine judgment? Such is the strange blindness and mysterious infatuation of sin. Compare the case of Saul (1 Samuel 31:4) and of Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23). The vanity of life and the whole conclusions of Ecclesiastes come before us as we close our comments on this wild and turbulent character. Where now lies the greatness of Abimelech? Upon one stone had he slain his seventy brethren - save one. And now a stone slays him. His head had stolen the crown of Israel, and now his head is smitten. And what is Abimelech better that he was a king? What difference is there between him and any of those 69 brethren whom he murdered, save only in guiltiness?

They bear but their own blood: he the weight of all theirs. How happy a thing it is to live well (was, but now we live in 1975), that our death, as it is certain, may be comfortable. We wonder today, if the Lord remains away it is certain, but ~~we~~ never know what a day may bring forth. What a vanity it is to exult in the death of them whom we must follow the same way. The tyrant hath his payment and that which he should have bestowed in calling for mercy to God and washing his conscience with the last tears of contrition, he vainly spends in deprecating an idle reproach: "Kill me, that it may not be said he died by a woman" - a fit conclusion for such a life.

On a summary of the history of Abimelech we close with these words by Wordsworth:

"The history of Abimelech is a true one, to be interpreted literally, and is full of practical instruction, especially to rulers and states (and Ecclesias, AH.) But it had also a prophetic character.

"The book of Judges is reckoned by the Jews among the 'Former Prophets', and all the ancient expositors who have commented on this Book recognize in it typical foreshadowing of events in the Church of God, and in the foregoing portion of the book we have seen reason to acknowledge the correctness and importance of this view. (See Part 1, pp. 21-23).

"The acts of Gideon, as the ancient interpreters agree, represent the work of Christ in the visible church, not altogether free from blemishes, but yet contending against idolatry, unbelief, and sin, and maintaining the true faith. But under Abimelech the aspect is changed. Gideon had refused the crown when offered to him. 'I will not reign over you', he said, 'neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall reign over you' (Judges 8:23). Yet Abimelech, the son of Gideon, by his concubine, in defiance of this declaration, usurped the kingdom. He set up himself as king in the very sanctuary of Yahweh (Judges 9:6). He was crowned instead of Yahweh; Yahweh was dethroned, that Abimelech might be king.

"Abimelech may be rightly regarded as a type and a precursor of AntiChrist (even Bede, and those before his time, realised this aspect). Abimelech slew his 70 (69) brethren that he might have no rivals; and it is twice noted that he did this 'upon one stone' (9:5, 18).

"May we not perhaps venture to say that he prefigured a special degenerate form of Christianity? (All the ancient interpreters held this view, AH.) Therefore perhaps we need not hesitate to say that a form of corrupt religion has arisen which bears a striking resemblance to the character of Abimelech. Abimelech, by his Hebrew name, signifies Father-King.

"Legitimate monarchy itself is a good thing; but that monarchy which God forbade, and which set itself up in the place of God and against God, was an impious thing. And Christ has forbidden the assumption of supremacy over His Ecclesia. He is the supreme head, and all His apostles are brethren (Judges 8:22 and Matthew 16:18).

"But, notwithstanding this, there has arisen One Person (in the medieval Nominal Church (not Ecclesia, AH.) who usurped lordship over his brethren. There was one person in his church who claimed, and still does, such a supremacy. He would not allow any bishop to be a bishop except by his leave. He will not, even today, allow any bishop who may become an archbishop, to exercise even episcopal functions without his permission, and without suing humbly for the pallium from him. All bishops of Christ's church are to be bishops only 'by grace of the Apostolic See', as he calls the See of Rome. Thus he claims power not only to give, but to revoke all apostolic authority throughout the world. In a word, he has destroyed, as far as in him lies, the life and independence of all episcopal and sacerdotal authority: he has done this, and still does it, on the plea that he himself is the Rock - the foundation stone of the Church. What is this but to make himself another Abimelech? Some might even be disposed to see a resemblance in the very name - Abimelech - Father-King - Papa - Rex - Pope. (See Judges 8:31, 9:6).

Has he not destroyed his brother bishops by his claim to be 'The Rock, Stone' of the church? Has he not, as it were, 'slain his brethren' as Abimelech did, on 'ONE STONE' (Judges 9:5). Has he not also claimed and exercised the power of dethroning princes, giving away their dominions, of releasing their subjects from their allegiance? (As Revelation 13:13,14). And does he not set himself up as King of Kings in the House of God (nominally speaking, of course)? Is he not styled at his coronation in St. Peter's at Rome, Pater Regum et Principum, Rector Orbis?

"Has he not given countenance to the idolatry of a Baal-Berith, and is he not supported thereby? Does he not cause himself to be invested with his usurped powers in the sanctuary of another Shechem? When he is inaugurated as Supreme Pontiff, is he not enthroned on the very Altar of God? Does he not there sit in the Temple of God, and are not his feet, which trample on God's Altar, kissed by cardinals kneeling before him? Have we not here, not a direct quote, but a very pointed allusion to that use by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9?"

We have traced this comparison through to show the evil of the papacy and her Papa, and what he will yet do in the days to come. Will that antichrist who is against all religion prove to be the Pope after all? The Jews say that it will be another Jew like Abimelech. Who knows? Let us await the event and keep true to our colours in Christ, separated to Him in truth, and not charge down Whitehall in the manner of Billy Graham. Personal dedication is what is required, now and at all times.

(We have a very useful Exposé of the Catholic religion by Boetner. Only a small quantity is left).

It is to be understood that in primitive times this supremacy of the Roman See was not acknowledged. But in the lapse of ages the 'Faithful City' became an harlot (Isaiah 1:21), and as the literal Israel became the children of the bondslave of unbelief (Galatians 4:25); and as God did not hesitate to describe His own people Israel when they had fallen away from the pure faith as 'sons of the sorceress and the seed of the adulterer and the whore' (Isaiah 57:3), so likewise has the church of Rome debased the things of God by defection, fraud and confidence trickery. This Luther found to be true in his days, and strongly fought against it. We need not trace the parallel further, but suggest the reader pursues the subject through Dr. Thomas's "Eureka" and other writers, e.g. Avro Manhattan, "The Vatican Billions".

Judges 9:56,57 "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal." Jotham lived to see the revenge of Yahweh on his wicked base-born brother. So perish all the enemies of Yahweh. So Abimelech perished by the 'pelah rekeb' (Heb.) - 'the stone of riding' (lit.), probably the upper millstone, normally about two or three inches thick and eighteen inches in diameter, with a hole in the centre. Less likely is the suggestion that it was the roller used for re-plastering the mud roof. Has the modern idea of rolling pin, used by the wife or her spouse any bearing on it? Apparently this woman in her desperation had brought up this upper millstone as a defensive weapon, for grinding was not normally done on the roof.

In verses 56 and 57 the moral of the incident is pressed home. The Hebrews overlooked what might be called secondary causes and saw in these events what they truly were, the direct action of God, the evidence of His sovereignty within history, in the judgment upon Abimelech and the fulfilment of the curse of Jotham on the Shechemites.

In Gaal we see the eloquence of scriptural characterization. Gaal, as we saw, meant 'the loathing son of a slave', strongly suggestive of pride and poverty: a man who could not see anyone wiser or better than himself. Through his 'loathing' eyes he

saw others as through a coloured glass (don't we all at times?). True, Abimelech was a murderer (Judges 9:5), but it is not God's way to overcome evil with evil, but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:2). This is true but there are exceptions, as Habakkuk found.

(1) Habakkuk 1:4, where he says, "Why does God permit injustice?" with such complaints as verse 2 - "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save." Verse 3 - "Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me . . ."

(2) God's use of the Chaldeans, 1:5-11, who were more wicked in his estimation than Israel (were they not dogs of the Gentiles?)

(3) Why should God use the wicked (1:12 - 2:1). Verse 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil . . ." Yet God used the Chaldeans to punish Israel, (Isaiah 10 once again). As we have said, this chapter is the key to understanding why and how God works in this way.

(4) The righteous live by faith - 2:2-4. Not in one single place is Israel mentioned in the prophecy, and in the three places in the New Testament where it is quoted, the emphasis is on the individual and not the nation. (A) The just shall live by his faith (personal) : (B) not the nation shall live by its faith (national) : Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38. How true. No one will enter because he has been born a Jew. Entry into the Kingdom is only by faith and acceptance by the Lord Jesus. The context then will reveal by which means the will of God has been performed, either evil or good. This by the way. It most certainly was done by evil in the bramble king's controversy in Judges 9.

The whole sequence can be helpful, and it shows how hopeless it is to trust in Gaal, or Godless effort.

#### (A) Hopeful start

(1) He had a hopeful start: he was trusted. "The men of Shechem put their confidence in him" (9:26). The men of Shechem were as blind to true moral greatness as Gaal himself. But doubtless his self-confidence would be considerably augmented by this expression of their faith. Whatever helps to puff us up helps us to our ruin as workers for the Lord Jesus.

(2) Feasted "They did eat and drink and cursed Abimelech" (Judges 9:27). Carnal delights make a poor preparation for the service of God. Gideon's men were tested and sifted before the conflict, but Gaal's men were rested and feasted. Instead of praying they cursed. The gladness of the Lord in the heart is greater than that begotten by corn and wine (Psalm 4:7). Material wealth does not always mean spiritual prosperity.

#### (B) Courageous stand

(1) Gaal was defiant. "And Gaal said, Who is Abimelech and who is Shechem that we should serve him?" (9:28). This sounds like the clarion note of a God-raised reformer, but it was nothing but the vain wind of a self-conceited bigot. It is easy even for the brother or sister to talk defiantly of the forces opposing the progress of the truth, but everything depends on the ground of our boasting (1 Samuel 14:6).

(2) Self-confident "Would that this people were under my hand, then would I remove Abimelech" (9:27). O these mighty my's and I's - the progeny of pride and self-confidence. How often have we heard of brethren going to a particular meeting, and boasting that they would alter it drastically. Sometime those alterations have been worse because, as Gaal, they were self-confident. How would it look to put this

language in a more logical form. "Would to God that I were God." We are horrified, we naturally shrink from this; but self-confidence is a denial of God, and the forerunner of destruction (2 Samuel 15:4). "Pride goeth before a fall."

(C) (1) The utter defeat Abimelech chased him, and he fled; and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren. (9:40-44). That his defeat was an ignominious failure need not be wondered at, when we consider the God-dishonouring motives that constrained him. Be sure your secret sin will find you out in public defeat. Remember Absalom and David (2 Samuel 18 etc.) It was not the cause espoused by Gaal and his compatriots that was bad, quite the reverse, but that he undertook it in his own name, without the call of God. Jephthah and Gideon accomplished great deliverances because God was with them. The secret of Gaal's failure is still the secret of the failure of many of the Lord's professed servants. If it be according to His will should be foremost always in our mind.

(2) No acknowledgment of God If we would have His blessing on our work, it must be done in His name. The self-satisfied opinion of Gaal had no room for God. It was so different with Moses, David and Gideon. Would it be true to say that at times we are afraid, honestly so, to acknowledge God lest He should put His foot in our plans and purposes? We say this in a reverent sense, of course. We remember that time when we omitted to give thanks for our food when an unbeliever stepped in. This has happened in Christadelphian homes. May it never happen to us. Let us seek the blessing of the Father in everything.

(D) Revelation from God

It is not easy continually to recognise God in our work, if from the Word of God we have not found a necessary recognition of that particular work. Gaal had no message from the Lord burning in his heart, only a devouring lust for power, and the destruction of Abimelech. Like Absalom he was self-ordained, and God deposed him. Where there is no vision there is no "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Where there is no voice from heaven there is no "What wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:1-18. Our beloved brother Paul's experience no doubt became ours in a small way when we were converted.

(E) No inspiration by God

The Spirit of the Lord clothed both Gideon and Jephthah (Judges 6:34; 11:29). The one is from above, the other from beneath. The one is of life, the other of death. There is no revelation as to how much may be of the Lord; no inspiration. That comes from the scriptures, not from the pagan belief of Holy Spirit possession today. See "The Holy Spirit. A Biblical Study demonstrating that the theory of the Present Possession of the Holy Spirit is a Myth adopted from Paganism", by A. Crawford. We find the evidence therein overwhelming in its truth, and firmly agree with his findings.

To some curses we say Amen (i.e. Jotham's). They vindicate themselves. We cannot do other than concur in some judgments. We may revolt from them, turn aside with great feelings of sorrow; yet there have been cases in which parents have been obliged to concur in the sentence which doomed their son to death. This is the view we shall be made to take in the great summing up of things. Christ is mighty to save, and none shall be taken out of his hand but the son of waste - the man of whom nothing can be made, the man who is indeed a suicide, not killing the body, but slaying the self, the inner conscience that made him a man. Let us so read history as to take warning from its bad men, and encouragement from its good men; and let us learn that there is but one place of safety, the True Shechem and City of Refuge extraordinary, the Lord Jesus Christ himself unchanging, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (Hebrews 13:8).

Let us take the warning when electing leaders, of the lesson of the trees and the bramble king. It could destroy the largest and strongest tree, the cedar of Lebanon. The name of the game is either rule or ruin: there is no in-between. What is a bramble but a mere fruitless thing that instead of giving its energy, sap and vigour to bearing fruit, has shrivelled up and turned in upon itself? Just as the thorn, it is the curse of the earth, an abortive branch. That which might have, if it had opened out, been a branch and borne much fruit, has shrunk up and centred upon itself. So the bramble, nothing but a thorn bush, figure of a self-seeking, self-desiring man, becomes now a ruler: the rule of that character which says "You must bow to me, or be burnt, no matter who you may be." The use for discipline is fast being lost in our world, and we are afraid in our ecclesias.

We would commend this dark stern 9th chapter of Judges to your prayerful study. It is just here where rule or discipline goes to pieces. We shall find it reasserts itself with a much sterner hand in Jephthah, at whom we shall look in Part 3, God willing. We shall find that it fails more disastrously under Samson, and finally crumbles into nothingness at the close of the book.

Take this 9th chapter of Judges, and see how this spirit of succession must rule or ruin. It must rule at all costs. Here we find selfwill in the things of God, and see how it brings in anarchy and strife and confusion. It does happen today and we have all viewed the disastrous ruin resulting. Let us learn this one lesson, obvious as it may seem: that we all have to bow to the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Ecclesia. He is the Lord of His Ecclesia, as well as the Head of it; Lord over all; and whoever is near enough to Him to have His word, we bow to that word, brethren and sisters, and we acknowledge Christ's authority in His house. There must be a walk with God. Nothing can take the place of that, and where there is that, there will be the fullest rule, the freest exercise of all, and Christ will be all one then in nature and glory - the Lord made Spirit.

So ends the man Abimelech who values reputation among men more highly than innocence in the sight of God. Abimelech is more concerned with what will be said of him: he is not troubled about what he is. Even when dying after a most wicked life, he has no thought about his evil nature and vile misdeeds, but only anxiety about his fame. After our death it matters nothing to us what men may say, but everything turns on what God will do. A man's future state will depend not on the splendour of the fame which he leaves behind in this world, but on the character of the revelation which will be made when the Lord appears. None of us has an open passport into the Kingdom of God, because only in that day will it be proved whose children we are.

No tower of human strength can save the Shechemites - (1) they perish in their own tower before Abimelech, (2) then Abimelech perished before another tower, (3) but the Name of Yahweh is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe (Proverbs 18:10). (4) With Abimelech expired the first abortive attempt at monarchy. The true King of Israel is still far in the distance. (Stanley).

We are reminded of what the historian recorded of Boniface VIII, the Pope of Rome. "He came in like a fox, reigned like a lion, and died as a dog." Men's own wickedness becomes at the last their scourge. Bloodshed can never be a lasting cement (we are reminded of the constant danger of certain elements in our own day), and alliances based on conspiracy for evil come to an end the moment that self-interest comes in the way (see 2 Samuel 13:3, 15, 32, 33), conspirators in evil are made their own mutual executioners.

The peace of Israel was restored after this awful episode of usurpation and civil conflict, and the contrasted histories of Gideon and Abimelech at once give a foretaste

of the coming universal judgment, and prove that even now "verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Psalm 68:11).

Judges 9:56,57 Thus these impressive verses give the explanation of the whole narrative. They are inserted to show that God punishes both individual and national crimes, and that men's pleasant vices are made the instruments to scourge them. The murderer of his brothers 'on one stone' is slain by a stone flung on his head, and the treacherous idolators are treacherously burnt in the temple of their idol. Is it not ironic that Abimelech, after seeking to become the destroyer of seventy of his brethren, should become the 70th himself to fall? Let us take notice, and wonder.

Seventy elders furnished Israel's great Tribunal (Exodus 24:1). The number ~~was~~ made up of spiritual perfection and ordinal perfection: a fitting conclusion to this tragic episode in which divine judgment overtook the evil usurper Abimelech and the treacherous counterparts in Shechem, the City of Refuge. Only one man escaped - Jotham, the little one, the righteous.

So much for the hectic years of treachery, plotting and genocide, years of unrest and revenge.

What do the following two Judges teach us? - ~~to~~ complete the final section of Part 2.

Years of tranquillity and peace? Shall we turn to them?



## CHAPTER 10

And after Abimelech. Observe the contrast.

Judges 10:1 The two next Judges who defended Israel, Tola and Jair, are said to have died and also to have been buried (verses 2-5). It is also recorded of each of the five next Judges, Jephthah (12:7), Ibzan (12:10), Elon (12:12), Abdon (12:15), Samson (16:31), that they were buried. But this is nowhere said of Abimelech, the fratricide and usurper. The Judges named had hope in their death and were buried in peace and in assurance of a future resurrection, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were. Not so Abimelech. So from this story we learn that even in this life ingratitude, treachery and cruelty are visited with retributive justice. The exultation at Abimelech's succession was far exceeded by Israel's joy at his death.

We are, of course, within the 5th cycle of seven sequences which extend from ch. 8 v.32 – 10:5. One can hear the critics saying: "How about your numerology now? Five, as you insist, means 'grace': it is hardly found within our studies so far in this section. The usurpation of Abimelech's 3 years, where is the sign of grace here?" Very much so, we would reply. Jotham, who alone stood in the 'righteousness of God', found grace in the eyes of the Lord, a delightful throwback to Genesis 6:8, where Noah alone found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Grace, then, is found in this terrible period of Israel's history; one man alone in this particular sequence finding grace before God.

However, we have still to finish the exposition of the remaining verses from ch.10 vv.1-5. Here we shall find grace in abundance among what has been classified as 'the minor Judges of Israel', who commenced with Shamgar, from whom we learned the lesson of discipline (the ox goad and grace where the Lord gave him the victory). We were reminded of the words of the wise, which are like ox goads, pricking and piercing the conscience like nails fastened by the master of the assemblies, or ecclesias - the Lord Jesus Himself (Revelation 1:13), in very plain words, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Shepherd of Israel, who to us is wisdom, as Paul advances (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Grace is very dominant among the 'minor Judges'; they are only described as minor because of the lack of detail in their history; very much like the minor prophets who are in the same category for the same reason. One could list the epistles in this way too, as the scholars have: the only comfort we can possibly find is that they are aids to memory. They are minor in no other respects: the Holy Spirit content is self-evident to all who carefully and prayerfully enquire, and grace abounding is there for the finding for everyone who will diligently search.

- (1) The Judges were Tola and Jair, succeeding one the other. The very brevity of their rule shows the simplicity of it. Have you ever noticed it is the Abimelechs largely who make the long chapters in the Bible.
- (2) Could it be that it is the history of selfwill God has to break down and humble, that makes many details necessary to be dwelt upon; but when there is divine blessing, when there is a real work of God, it can frequently be described in a few words.
- (3) Take the most short, yet fraught with melancholy thought, intense feeling and tragedy, verse in the scripture - John 11:35. "Jesus wept". Why? The whole history of redemption, frustration and spiritual teaching is contained in this statement. Quite an exercise; we recommend it to our readers for their own spiritual welfare.
- (4) We remember, too, the disciples, of whom we know very little. Yet what is advanced about their home towns and the names along with the tribal locale is very heart searching indeed (see *The Lord's Men*, by Debir Press). Sometimes silence

is not only golden, but at the same time pregnant with undiscovered 'gems of Bible love'. The two Judges Tola and Jair are no exception as we shall see.

Before studying the ~~first~~ five verses of chapter 10 of Judges, let us remind ourselves of the chronology. The list runs as follows:

Years of Servitude		Years of Rest	
Judges 3:8	8 years	Judges 3:11	40
3:14	18	3:30	80
4:3	20	5:31	40
6:1	7	8:28	40
10:8	18	10:2	23
13:1	<u>40</u>	10:3	22
Total	111	12:7	6
		12:9	7
9:22	3 Abimelech's usurpation	12:11	10
		12:14	8
		1 Samuel 4:18	40 Eli
		7:2	<u>20</u>
		Total	336

Total number of years of the Judges ..... 111 + 3 + 336 = 450 years

Now we will seek a little help from the Archaeological Research Department of (dare we say it?) Manchester University. Really the evidence is from an Australian authority, Dr. C. Urquhart, in *The Bible Triumphant*, whose father wrote a masterly treatise on Inspiration, and a seven volumed Biblical Guide, among other works highly prized by Bible students. The subject is the Chronology of the Judges, and it gives us some very helpful statistics. We quote from pages 102-105:

It will be helpful, as we proceed to consider the period of the Judges, first of all to set forth the chronological data. (We have already advanced the general details to do with the actual length of this period. AH.) However, before we do this, we would remind our readers that, while the facts as to the Bible dates have been available all along, it is only since 1927 (this book was written in 1937) that we have been able with certainty to ascertain the corresponding dates for this period of Egyptian history. Various friends of the Bible have tried to manipulate the Scripture chronology in order to make it harmonise with the dates formerly assumed for certain Pharaohs, but now that the true facts are becoming known, it is seen that there is no need for any such manipulation. The facts may conveniently be set out as follows.

#### The History of Israel

BC 1546 Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan

1516 The death of Joshua

1500-1492 Oppression by Chushan-Rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia

1492-1452 40 years of prosperity due to godliness

1452-1434 Oppression by Eglon, King of Moab

#### Kings of Egypt

BC 1586-1533 Thutmose 3rd whose Syrian Campaigns ceased in 1545

1533-1508 Amenhotep 2nd

1508-1499 Thutmose 4th who married a sister of Tushratta

1499-1463 Amenhotep 3rd who married a daughter of Tushratta

1463-1447 Aknaton who married a daughter of Tushratta

## The History of Israel (continued)

1434-1354 80 years of prosperity  
due to godliness

1354-1334 Oppression by Jabin  
King of Canaan and Sise-Ra

1294-1287 Oppression by the  
Midianites

1199-1159 Oppression of S. W. Israel  
by the Philistines; and also

1199-1181 Oppression of N. E. Israel  
by the Ammonites

## Kings of Egypt (continued)

1447-1445 Smenekkere

1445-1438 Tutankhamen

1438-1434 Ay

1434-1410 Horemheb

1410-1409 Rameses I

1409-1387 Seti I, who made conquests  
in Syria

1387-1320 Rameses II, who subdued  
Syria

Here we find "Exact Historical Harmony". A study of the above facts and dates reveals a number of most interesting correspondences.

- (1) Thutmose 3rd found it advisable to cease his Syrian expeditions as soon as Israel entered Canaan.
- (2) Shortly after the death of Joshua, Egypt began a long-continued alliance with the kingdom of Mitanni, Israel's northern enemy and identical with the 'Syria of the two rivers' of Judges 3: 8. Chushan was doubtless incited and abetted by his marriage relations of Egypt in his attack upon Israel.
- (3) The famous Tel-el-Amarna letters form part of a considerable correspondence between the kinglets of Canaan and the two Pharaohs Amenhotep 3rd and Akhnaton. From the foregoing table it will be seen that just at this time Israel was enjoying forty years of prosperity due to godliness, and was therefore able to go on subjugating the Canaanites. Now these letters contain many appeals to Egypt by the kinglets of Canaan, for help against mighty enemies called the Khabiri - Hebrews. We give one example. 'The hostility of the Hebrews waxes mighty against the land, and against The Gods'. Further, the Khabiri, though so mighty, 'have no king over them', exactly as was the case with the Hebrews at that time.
- (4) During that 40 years the Canaanites were so thoroughly subdued that the next oppression of Israel came not from them, but from Moab, whose king reoccupied Jericho. After the deliverance wrought by Ehud, Israel 'had rest for 80 years.'
- (5) Consequent upon the Syrian conquests of Rameses II, we find, instead a number of Canaanite kinglets, 'Jabin, king of (all) Canaan', an appointee of the Pharaohs, who took care to place over this king's army an Egyptian general named SISE-RA, furnishing him with an equipment of 900 iron chariots. Sir Flinders Petrie remarks concerning recent (1920) excavations in Israel, 'When iron furnaces and massive tools are unearthed, the 900 chariots of Jabin's become real to us.'

It is also noteworthy that Thutmose 3rd boasts, in an inscription about one of his campaigns in Canaan and Syria, that he brought back from Migdol 900 chariots, 'not only of iron, but many plated with gold and silver'.

- (6) From Judges 4: 24 we see that after the defeat and death of Sise-Ra, King Jabin held out for some time against Israel, but was finally destroyed. No doubt he sent urgent appeals to Rameses II for help; but he received none. This is in exact

accord with the policy of Egypt, just then, whose resources had been disastrously and permanently weakened by the costly victory over the great Hittite confederacy at Kadesh in BC 1567.

So it is with assurance of faith, and secure in the bedrock of fact, that we press on with our exposition of the Judges of Israel, when they had no visible king, and every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21 : 25).

What can these minor Judges, or Saviours, tell us? The scriptural data is very brief, but from our angle, very telling. Judges 10:1-5 : just five brief verses, and the result is equally startling – PEACE 45 years, as a result, so what happened in this brief span to justify our appreciation?

No.5 represents Divine Grace in Scripture, as we have been at pains to point out in other pages (Bible Jewels etc.), which is bound up in (1) divine strength, and (4) human weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9 - "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" or  $1 + 4 = 5$ . 'He charis', for grace has a gematria of 725 etc. "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Most commentators leave this period well alone: in fact, J.Hall omits them altogether; another simply puts them in this category, 'Jephthah and his predecessors and successors'. The lesson to be learned is that of grace, brethren and sisters; indeed, 'amazing grace', as the five verses imply, in the AV translation, of course. Shall we look into the lessons attentively.

The last part of the 9th chapter gave us the account of what is the inevitable result of a course of self-will and high-handed authority, such as that seen in the character and course of Abimelech. As we saw, he himself in his rise, progress and downfall, is a fitting illustration of the rule of the bramble as contrasted with the service and ministry of the fruit bearing trees. "By their fruits you shall know them" Jesus said.

Once again we would commend the lesson of the parable of Jotham to your careful and prayerful attention. It seems to be one of the characteristic lessons of the entire book of Judges, when we come to the relation of the people to one another. The lessons previously gathered were largely in connection with the relation of the people to their foes; those of Abimelech are their relations to one another; and if a corporate testimony is to be maintained for God in these days, it must be on the lines of those principles which are laid down to us in connection with the parable of Jotham.

There is a very striking contrast in what we have next, at the beginning of the 10th chapter. There are two brief portions, and their brevity it seems to me is suggestive. Remember 45 years of peace and prosperity followed as a result of these days: the longest time of peace in the remaining portion of the Judges.  $45 = 9 \times 5$ : grace meets us once more, and found with the 9 of finality, as 9 is the last of the digits (Part I, Judges p.13). The lessons to be found are indeed beautiful and full of grace in this brief period, as indicated. What is the scriptural indication?

Judges 10:1-2 "And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and dwelt in Shamir in Mount Ephraim. And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir."

These 45 years of the judgeships of Tola and Jair represent the quiet period in those turbulent days. After Abimelech note the contrast. The two next Judges, Tola and Jair, are said to have died and also to have been buried (10:2,5). It is also recorded of each of the five next Judges (1) Jephthah (12:7), (2) Ibzan (12:10), (3) Elon (12:12), (4) Abdon (12:15), (5) Samson (16:31), that they were buried. But this is nowhere said of

Abimelech, the fratricide and usurper. They had hope in their death, and were buried in peace and in the faith of a certain resurrection, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were. Not so Abimelech. Is it not also singular that Thebez was the place from which Joab sent to David that his ruse concerning Uriah the Hittite had worked, and as the millstone cracked the 'brainpan' of Abimelech, so the death of Uriah brought a millstone around the neck of David all his life afterwards, for which he repented and was forgiven by God; yet the only thing mentioned against David in 1 Chronicles was the sin of Bathsheba. As we look back the connection and warning is plain and uncomplicated, but with David in the heat of passion and in the leisure of indolence, the connection apparently was not made. One can always be wise after the event, and David was and still is the Beloved of Yah. The further interesting lines in this kind of thought will be made plain in a moment.

No act is recorded as done by Tola, and yet he judged Israel for 23 years, and Jair judged Israel for 22 years. How is this to be explained? Some may say, some do say, that these judges did nothing (Keil, etc.) But this is impossible. Israel was beset by enemies on all sides, ready to spring upon them (as they are today, when Jacob's 'day of trouble' is about to dawn). Others may say that the sacred writer knew nothing about them: but they wrote under divine inspiration, so this talk is nonsense. They ask, is it probable that the writer should have known and reported so many minute particulars concerning the earlier judges, and have known nothing at all of what was done by later ones, in forty-five years? May we not reverently believe that there is a design here? that there is inspiration in his silence?

Scroggie wrote concerning Tola and Jair:

These two men judged Israel, one for 23 years and the other for 22 years, after the death of Abimelech. They are types of the undistinguished and unsung people who do their duty, die, and are buried. They who make the most noise in the world are not necessarily the greatest people. There can be fame without notoriety; the fame, not of exploits, but of honesty.

And is not this the story of our little existence, not only in the world, but also in the purpose of God; and if we can do our duty, have our greatest fame (if one can use such a word) in knowing the Name and purpose of Yahweh, and in honesty and in truth in these dark days, maybe like Tola and Jair, and the nameless people of the Lord, who have come down history, unsung and unknown, quietly waiting, and witnessing for the Lord, then we shall have done our work, personal work of witness, no matter what 1975-1976 bring forward.

Returning then to 'inspiration even in silence'. There seems to be an analogy between the Judges who succeeded Joshua, and the Apostles who followed Christ. It will have been noted that in the Acts of the Apostles we have a mention of the 'names of all the disciples' (Acts 1:15), but have only a record of the acts of two or three of them, especially Peter and Paul; most assuredly the Holy Spirit which inspired the writer (Luke) could certainly have enabled Luke to give an account of all; but it was not thought fit to do so. Why, may we ask? Because the Acts of those two or three Apostles are to be taken as specimens of what God did, by means of the rest, and possibly the Father would teach us not to dwell too much on earthly renown, but that we should all seek for the true glory that comes from God only, and to labour and pray that our names may be found in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8, 17:8). This undoubtedly is the design in the Book of Judges. The heroic deeds of some of them are recounted as specimens of what God was pleased to work by them, and as intimations also of what he wrought by the rest, whose acts are not recorded, and whose names only are mentioned by the writer (Samuel?), such as Tola, Jair,

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12: 8-15). The time in which they judged Israel amounted to 70 years, but not one single act is recorded of having been done by them. We can say faithfully and without doubt, that there is a heavenly chronicle which is written with indelible characters in the memory, or ever-present mind of God Himself, and is ever open to His divine eye. We shall find that even silence in the divine narrative is wonderfully eloquent.

So Israel were preserved and saved from internal conspirators like Abimelech, and external foes like Midian, and above all from the apostacy and idolatry which had so often provoked God to send such executioners of His wrath against Israel.

- (1) That Tola kept Israel from idols appears from the fact that, when he and Jair were dead, Israel relapsed into idolatry.
- (2) It must be emphasised that Tola did this for 23 years.
- (3) Jair followed suit by 22 years. This is no mean feat in itself.
- (4) It would appear that Tola judged the northern and eastern tribes, not the southern tribes, Judah, Benjamin and Simeon, which had no share in Gideon's victory, and had not come under Abimelech's usurpation.
- (5) Tola was the son of Puah. Both bore names the same as the original founders of families in Issachar (Genesis 46: 13; Numbers 26: 23). It is interesting to note that Job of the same book came from this section of Israel according to the above chapter (Genesis 46: 13), and according to the present writer's opinion, is the Job who suffered so greatly, and is an interesting type - in fact both Jobs are - of the Lord Jesus Christ: and of course Tola (in a moment!) Puah is written also Pua and Phuvah: he was the son of Dodo (not 'his uncle' as the Septuagint translates it, but a proper name (2 Samuel 23: 9; 1 Chronicles 11: 12) - "a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in Mount Ephraim" (Tola apparently resided here, rather than in his own tribe Issachar, as being a more convenient centre of government(?)).
- (6) Judges 10: 3 "And after him arose Jair," a Gileadite (of course, not the same as Jair the Manassite, who in the time of Moses gave the name Havoth-Jair to the towns of Bashan which he had conquered (Numbers 32: 41). This name was brought into use again by the sons of the Judge Jair.

The earlier Jair took Argob, or Trachonitis, and called from his own name certain villages or groups of dwellings, 23 in number originally, which afterwards the sons of the Judge Jair increased to 30: they probably also fortified and enlarged the towns. Havoth means 'dwelling-places', from Havah - 'Life', as the German Leben: life is a termination of many names of towns; so Eisleben. The total number of such villages of Jair in Argob was sixty, of which 37 were conquered by Nobah (a family of sons of Machir related to Jair) and 23 by Jair (Joshua 3: 30; 1 Kings 4: 13; 1 Chronicles 2: 22-25). As Nobah was of a subordinate branch of the Jair family, Moses comprehends the whole sixty under Jair's name, Havoth-Jair.

Og's sixty fenced cities, Moses observes as a marvellous monument of God's grace to Israel, are become even 'unto this day' (the day when he wrote) Havoth-Jair, the dwelling of Jair (Deuteronomy 3: 14), and he judged Israel 22 years (10: 4). And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts (a sign of high rank). The Oriental ass is a superior animal: Israel had not yet imported horses. Moreover the ass was used in times of peace: horses for war (5: 10; 1 Kings 10: 28; Zechariah 9: 9), and they had thirty cities. There is a verbal connection not discernible in the normal English text. Judges 10: 4 says there were "30 sons, that sat on 30 ass colts, and they had 30 cities." There is a verbal similarity of sound in the original. Their father's name(1) was Jair or Yair, (2) the word for colts is ayarim, and also for cities ayarim. There is a similar alliteration in the Septuagint here: Polous (colts) and Poleis (cities).

We will return shortly to the application as we proceed with the teaching of the names in this section. Matthew Henry says "In the land of Gilead, these villages are cities to a contented mind". Such were the cities of Havoth-Jair. Joseph Parker says,

We have had much excitement in many of the pages through which we have inquiringly passed. We now come to a period of extreme quietness. For five and forty years nothing occurred in Israel worth naming in detail. Tola and Jair, though judges in Israel, lived and died in the utmost quietness. They occupy about four lines each in the history of their people. Quietness has no history. Events are recorded; stories, anecdotes, incidents – these claim the attention of the historical pen; but peace, quietness, industry, patience, inoffensiveness, these have no historian, a line or two will do for them – the war must have chapter after chapter. The popular proverb is, Blessed are the people who have no annals.

- Within a narrow sense that is true; the sense is very narrow. Are the first four verses of Judges 10 dull reading? Of what tribe was the man 'Issachar'? Has Issachar any fame? Let us bethink ourselves. Who can remember anything said in the Bible about Issachar?
- (1) Yes, Judges 5:15 narrates how he came as a tribe to help Deborah. "And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar and also Barak."
- (2) Issachar was also Jacob's 5th son by Leah (Genesis 30:17,18). Therefore he represented a child of grace, did he not, in keeping with the sentiments of our context at the moment? Other points may be found by the diligent student: all are priceless jewels (Gems . . . A.Hall).

We have remembered a few important things about Issachar: let us return to the text of J. Parker's remarks. "The individual man may have no great repute, but he may belong to a tribe of some virtue." This is the important thing: that we belong to the people who excel and perform the virtue of God, biblically speaking. Cp. Isaiah 4:2; 2 Peter 1:17; Psalm 50:23.

We mark the words of scripture. "The children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Then Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, belonged to a tribe of statesmen. Heaven preserve us today from this kind of 'animal'. Britain is most certainly going down the slide. We live in a society which does not know either what to do or remain constant. They have no knowledge of God, nor His purpose, generally speaking. We know what to do, but do we try to systematically do it? As the days grow darker, the light of the Truth grows brighter. We know the way: let us walk in it in Truth. So Issachar was a tribe of pioneers in politics. It was nothing to them to propound great schemes, work out great reforms, propose wholesome ameliorations: great things came naturally in their way. If only a Gideon, or a Tola or Jair for that matter, could stand up today, what a harvest for their skills there could be. If a little tribe had attempted any one of the reforms proposed and executed by Issachar, he would have become famous. A very short pedestal would make a giant of a dwarf. But the men of Issachar were accustomed to statesmanship: they were famed for their sagacity: they had the piercing eyes that could see through all surfaces, veilings, sophisms – that could read the necessity of the age, the temper and desire of the heart of Israel. O that such an Issachar could arise and lead the ecclesias today.

The lesson we read in all these details is a very simple but profound one. We must not pass over what seem to be negative characters as if they were really nothing. A touch of their hand might be equal to the stroke of a powerful instrument. One word spoken by a man with the capacity of Issachar might have in it a volume of wisdom. For many years, when progressing through his apprenticeship in Christ, the present writer had the privilege to know at least five such men. Three have fallen asleep, but

two remain, and their wisdom and counsel is still sweet to the palate. So we must not measure men by the lines which the historian spends upon them. There is family history, household training, sagacity that makes no noise, farsightedness that disappoints the immediate ambition, but that prepares for the discipline and schooling of a lifetime.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the success of Tola lay in these very foundations of character and discipline. He certainly was not afraid of work, for his name means to be 'given for an hire'. Let us then, who largely spend our lives in the shadow, think of these things: it may be that after all we may have a fame distinctly our own, not noisy, tempestuous, tumultuous, but profound, healthful and lasting, in that we quietly work and wait for the coming of the Lord. Then it will be revealed by fire. Blessed are they who have the renown of wisdom, the fame of understanding; that will endure when a vaporous reputation has been exalted, forgotten. The men of Issachar were wise men who put things together (and did not tear them apart); men of solid thought and clear intention, and of a comprehensive vision. They were not fretted and chafed by the incidents of the passing day. They saw the meaning that underlay the event, and 'they knew what Israel ought to do'. We can but bless God for good leadership. It is sadly lacking in our sorry world. Such leaders are required in the State, in business, in the family, and of course in the ecclesias: everywhere they are required, and as we see from Tola, the greater it is, the more silent it may sometimes be.

Think of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rose in the beauty of holiness from the womb of death, and retains still the dew of His youth, and was declared to be the Son of God, with power (Romans 1:4) according to the Spirit of Holiness by the resurrection from the dead. The most mighty event the world has ever seen, and for ourselves the most momentous, because this took place in the garden outside Jerusalem. Then we can hope in that day, when He will not be ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 1:10,11: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Hebrews 10:10: "By the which will we are sanctified (or set apart) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." That the offering of the body and the resurrection to life is inclusive is proved by Hebrews 10:14.

What then have we to look for or anticipate as we investigate Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, of the tribe of Issachar and the city of Shamir in Mount Ephraim, in which he lived and was buried, and hoped for the advent of the Messiah to come?

- (1) The first thing that we look for is grace, as the fifth son of Jacob by Leah; that is the tribe of Issachar, of course, and being found within the first five verses of chapter 10.
- (2) This spiritual virtue will be seen in sparkling outline as we proceed.
- (3) We shall search for wisdom, sagacity, understanding, and the blessing of wisdom, all of which were found in his tribal outline. Comprehensive discipline, clear vision - a great man with solid spiritual roots. All those character jewels of the Bible treasury will emerge as we embark on a detailed study of these names.
- (4) Tola, the first of the minor judges, is seen in direct contrast to Abimelech with his selfwill, his inflamed desire for power and revenge on his unfortunate birthright. We have said before that it is the Abimelechs largely who make the long chapters in the Bible, and it is the history of selfwill which God has to break down and humble that makes many details necessary to be dwelt upon. But when there is divine blessing, when there is co-operation with God, it can be frequently described in a few words; for we know that God worketh all things with them for good, even them that love God, who are called



according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 RV). That which is dull and dreary to historians from our personal angle is far more exciting.

Divine grace is seen to be active in the very name of Tola the Judge, (1) grace in the fact that he lived in times which were eras of quietness and prosperity; (2) to be seen in his very name. Tola = Heb. meaning 'Little Worm' (vermiculus Jerome), same as the appell. Tola, a worm, scarlet colour. Exodus 16:20, Lamentations 4:5. These worms are so called from being of a scarlet colour, from the root to be clothed in scarlet (Nehemiah 2:4). (3) The first born son of Issachar, whom he so called because of his poor, weak and scarlet appearance when he was born. But he was the founder of a noble house in Israel, namely the Toláy (Numbers 26:23), Tolaites who, in the days of David, numbered two and twenty thousand and six hundred valiant men (22,600 men all told). (Occurs Genesis 46:13, Numbers 26:23, 1 Chronicles 7:1,2). Bagsters. Metaphysical Dict. Tola, Heb. licking, swallowing a worm, Coccus Worm, coccus colour crimson, scarlet, very red, crimson cloth. Cochineal etc. Life activity on a seemingly low plane, but in process of unfoldment to higher and greater expressions.

How true these statistics are can be judged in the other ramifications, i.e. Psalm 22:6, of Job, David and more particularly the Lord Jesus himself: to Israel in general he was 'a worm'. Tolahanee, a crimson worm, from which the scarlet dye was taken for the tabernacle curtains. Jesus was 'a worm and no man' in Israel because he never married or left an issue, at least naturally, yet because this was so, as the Tola name indicates, his crucifixion was but a stage in a higher expansion, in the fact that "He shall see his seed and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11); and this 'through the travail of his soul', i.e. the method in which the coccus or cochineal insect is processed - subjection to heat, crushing and grinding which eventually produced the beautiful scarlet dye. Today it is used for the decoration of cakes etc. So with Tola we are introduced to the amazing grace of God (see The Song of Songs pp 83-88, Debir Press) where you will find a full exposition of this name Tola, with the other scriptural usages, notably "The lips of the bride are scarlet" etc., Tamor, Rahab and so on).

Tola then reveals to us the first work of the Lord Jesus Christ, at his first advent, as sacrifice and leader in humble service and obedience before the Father.

What a striking contrast - 'a worm' - a worm to judge Israel. Abimelech said as his name implies, "My father is king", so here in Tola you have that which corrects and contradicts that very thought, the very opposite of self-assertion, of pride. Jesus could say in truth that His Father is King, but not in pride or self-assertion, just the opposite, because His Father was the King over all things. He was fully obedient in all things, even to emptying himself, etc. Philippians 2:3-9 gives the Tola characteristics found in the Lord Jesus. "Let nothing be done through strife" (nor yet murdering 70 brethren) "or vain glory", which it was in Abimelech's case, "but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This was the attitude of Tola, and for the conditions that produce peace and tranquillity. This is the soft answer that turns away wrath, commencing at God downwards; these indeed are Tola conditions of judgeship.

Philippians 2:4 continued, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others". This can have several interpretations: (1) to put oneself lowest of all in regard to others; (2) in our day the opposite seems to have been stressed, viz. the Poulson racket and the Watergate scandal. (3) Our way is to follow that of Tola, Jesus and Paul. Philippians 2:5 indicates, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

These words place the matter in no doubt concerning our position as indicated above. Philippians 2:6 - "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with

God." So Jesus can rightly say, "My Father is King", could He not? But did he? "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men." Philippians 2:8. "We have the mind of Jesus, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death., even the death of the cross." Or, in Old Testament language, of what we are considering at the moment. A worm, Tola, no man, but as the exposition has shown, by so doing (Philippians 2:9) "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" - the greater Shem or Melchisedec, whose name means the Name of Renown.

Such are a few indications to be grouped around this minor judge, Tola. We have seen that his great antitype humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death. Well, Issachar speaks very much of this aspect - 'given for an hire'. Issachar is the strong ass couching down between two burdens, and as the elders pressed down the animal's head to the ground, a symbol of the weight and enormity of sin, so our Lord bore the heavy load of our sins (Genesis 49:14). So, as we read in John 1:29, our Lord Jesus was the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Issachar was the fifth son of Jacob by Leah. Hebrews 2:9 reads, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." No.5, or grace, is the dominating factor of all these proceedings.

So our critics pass Tola by, do they? We are not of their persuasion. Who was his father? Puah (Judges 10:1) or Phuvah, meaning 'mouth', as the Arabic vid. also Phichol, is written in Heb. Phuvah, and in the English version Puah and Pua. Hence the genitive N. Puniy, Punites, Numbers 26:23, occurs Genesis 46:13, Numbers 26:23, 1 Chronicles 7:1 etc. Bagsters Names.

Meta. Dict. Puvah, Heb. mouth, orifice, aperture, puff, breath, blast, utterance, command. Other authorities give 'speech', which is quite possible from those quoted.

The father of Tola, whose name is Puah: what does this remind us of? 'Speech' or utterance is from a root meaning, as we have seen, 'to breathe', amongst other ideas surrounding the root word, and by this we are reminded of the Spirit of God which had 'clothed itself' with Gideon. Tola had a godly father on whose guidance and help he undoubtedly leaned. The word represents the love of God as the source from whence all flows, and when one realizes that he is the object of that love, 'speech' is not wanting to give the expression of thanks back again to the Father. Each one of us has received the blessings of the Father in times of undue stress and when laid upon beds of sickness, as well as when we abound, and as our apostle said, "We know how to abound and how to be in want" (Philippians 4:12). So our thanks ascend in paeans of praise to the Father for His loving kindness towards us, in this way which we believe the name of Puah has to teach us.

Tola's third generation back takes us to Dodo, which means 'his beloved'. Dodo should read Dodai, 'beloved of the Lord', doth, beloved (David), and Yodth, the sign of the divine name, Yahweh. Bagster's Names. Metaphysical Dict. gives amatory, loving. What a wonderful name to have, especially with its larger environs. (1) There was a man of Bethlehem whose son Elhanan was one of David's thirty valiant men (2 Samuel 23:24). (2) The father of Eleazar the Ahohite who was one of David's three mightiest men (1 Chronicles 11:12). (3) This man is called Dodai, Beloved of Yahweh in 2 Samuel 23:9. These men must be reckoned as the truly mighty in God's eyes, because each one was valiant, hazarding his life for God. Eleazar, 'whom God helps', hazarded his life alongside two other mighties, we believe, to fetch David (the beloved of the Lord) a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem. They broke through the host of the Philistines to do so, and had to make their way back to him with the precious liquid. So precious was it in the Beloved's sight,

that David poured it out to God as a drink offering, as it represented the lives, or blood, of his mighties, which had been hazarded, like Gideon, thrown in front of them, towards the enemy. Of such is the stock of the Dodoites. "Precious shall their blood be in His sight" so it is said of the Lord Jesus, at his glorious return (Psalm 72:14). A book of remembrance has been written and from Eleazar the son of Dodai, or rather, back to Dodo the grandfather of Tola, they will be remembered for good at that time, because they trusted in the Lord God, the God of Israel (Psalm 72:14,18,19). So many thoughts leap into the mind as we think on these worthies of whom the world is not worthy.

There is yet another avenue of thought we might pursue with regard to this striking spiritual genealogy, found, you may think, in a very unusual place in scripture - Song of Songs 7:8. We are informed by a person called Henry Ainsworth who lived his life, studied his Hebrew and Greek, and had to flee across the Channel for his beliefs. The Church of England in those days had a breakaway known as the Brownists, the details of which need not detain us, with the exception to note that Ainsworth was reckoned to be the greatest scholar amongst them, and Joseph Hall in the normal English section, the two opposites are wonderful in their application to the scriptures.

H. Ainsworth notes at Song 7:13, "The mandrakes Dudaim (which the Greek also called Mandragores (or mandrakes)) have allusion in name to Dodaim loves, and Dod, that is beloved, as she after calleth Christ." So here is the link up taken to its highest pinnacle. Not only does the Lord Jesus call his people Dodim, but they to have the privilege to call Him Dod. For other thoughts on this theme see Song of Songs (Debir Press) on 7:13. It does mean that our love or esteem is to give pleasure and odour of grace in the sight of the Father and the Son our Lord Jesus.

The perfect genealogy as prefigured in Dodo, Puah and Tola, is one of pristine beauty, and all the following generation, as we have observed in Elhanan and Eleazar follow in concert. "Elhanan" means, and fittingly lives up to the spiritual content of our theme, 'whom God graciously gave', a comp. of El (God), and the root 'khanan', to give graciously, vid. Baal-hanan, and widens the scope for us yet further.

- (1) One of the heroes of David, who slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, in the battle of Gob. In the first occurrence of his name he is called Jaare-oregim, and in the second, the son of Jair (2 Samuel 21:19; 1 Chronicles 20:5).
- (2) A son of Dodo, a Bethlehemite, as we have mentioned. Could these be the same person? or from the same stock, which is most likely. Both came from Bethlehem, and both heroes under David.

Whatever the answer to this question may be (and we invite our readers to investigate), it all began in the days of the Judges, when God graciously gave Elhanan his Dodo or Beloved, as a future prophecy, to be the future Well Beloved, and His Bride Dodaim (multiple) gave her mandrakes for his love and approval. This was possible because in him was Phuvah or Puah; the mouth or breathing of God (or rather Yahweh), reminding us that in Jesus was the Spirit without measure, and that for him "All things were of God, and to God, and for God". He knew what was required of Him, even at the age of 12 years: He manifestly showed that He knew that He was the future Messiah, which came to pass when He was anointed at Jordan - the first stage, having His Father's approval (Matthew 3:17): the well known phrase announcing this, which followed every critical stage of His life. We see the finality of this sequence on the cross, when the Jews taunted Him about this very saying (Matthew 27:43), "He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him, if He will have him, for He said, I am the Son of God." The final thrust came when the thieves who were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth. Absolute rejection and dereliction one would have thought. Tola, the lowly cochineal insect, crushed and bleeding, the crimson tide ran down His face and streamed over

His body. Yet he was not alone in his death, for presently one of them saw the Old Testament coming to life before his dying eyes - Isaiah 53 in actual fulfilment. He castigated the other felon, saying that they richly deserved their punishment, but not Jesus. "He hath done nothing amiss." "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom" and he got that promise of life after death a certainty, "This day I say unto thee, thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). The hour of darkness fell on Golgotha (reminiscent of Abraham in Genesis 15:12); it was the 6th hour, the hour that belonged to man, and it continued until the 9th hour, just as the Lord was three days and nights in the tomb (Jewish reckoning). And again, as Gideon was seen to come up before the sun on the 3rd day with his spoils, so death had been conquered, the shades had been torn apart and eternal life through belief in the name of Jesus had become a certainty. This we see in the lowly Tola, the worm and no man. Students may like to follow this thought through Psalms 22, 23, 24, a perfection of scriptural trilogy.

So for the lowly worm is a glorious future. The place where Tola lived and died will give us the answer. Rather surprisingly he lived and died, not in Issachar territory, but in Shamir in Mount Ephraim. These are the operative words, Shamir and Mount Ephraim. Not in the place of his humility and travail, Issachar, but in Mount Ephraim (Heb. doubly fruitful, very fruitful, productive). Shamir as Shamyra, a sharp point, a guard, from the root Shamir, to guard, vid. Ishmerai.

In lowliness Tola leaves the thought of recompense, not serving for a reward, but fruitfulness, and that of a firstborn's reward (Ephraim), and that which would be found in the fruitfulness of a self-surrendered life. A Tola in Ephraim is not in danger of the pride to which that tribe is particularly exposed (and to which we have referred earlier).

Tola in Ephraim. Could this be prophetic, we wonder. John 11:54 - "Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim. It is remarkable how close this analogy is. Jesus has been openly condemned to death, as 11:53 reveals. "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death." Here is the little worm Tola and Jesus (Psalm 22) having come near to the end of the life of humility and burden bearing, knowing that all things being accomplished, the Jewish authorities' decision only requiring a few more days to accomplish their fiendish ambition to take his life, although literally Jesus gave his own life as we know. Jesus, having been refused the kingship of Jewry and been cast out by Judah, goes to the place of the firstborn Ephraim, it being an open prophecy that though he would be condemned as a felon and be crucified, yet He would rise from the dead, and be "the firstborn among many brethren" (Colossians 1:12-22). Tola's connection then (although in Issachar was his tribal lot) dwelt in Mount Ephraim at Shamir, not far from the ancestral lot given to Joshua. Having fulfilled the little worm aspect, Tola went in triumph to receive the position of the firstborn in Israel, and the saviour of the whole world (Joseph, Genesis 41:43). Among different translations of Zaphnath-paaneah (the Egyptian name given to Joseph) one is significant - the Saviour of the World.

So then, Jesus in Ephraim not only becomes the firstborn of Israel, but indeed "the firstborn of every creature in the family" (Colossians 1:12-22).

Tola's emigration to Mount Ephraim then is eminently auspicious and full of spiritual grace as a prophecy of the Greater Tola.

Shamir was the appointed choice of dwelling, not to the bowing down as seen in Issachar, but as the word means - a guard, and vigilance. This thought develops the idea of watchfulness and diligent discipline of rulership, and is a necessary element of 'a ruler that ruleth with diligence.' Steadfastness and unchangeableness are indicated in this. Death, as we might say, made no change in the principles for which he stood. That this

did so for the greater Tola, we have abundantly seen, and it will be patently clear to all who love the Truth and the principles upon which this is founded. Full inspiration, the unity of God, the promises to Abraham, etc., must be guarded by us at all cost.

Tola has given us the way in which the government (if we can use this word) must be undertaken, just the opposite to that of self-assertiveness, which will rule or ruin, and which would crush anything that does not bend to its own ambition. Tola ruled in his quietness, apparently without any conflict (although this is a very moot point) either with foes without, or the people within. In the quietest life these elements are fully operative. Jesus Himself is the standard, because those elements are "the chastening from the Lord", and unless these elements come into our lives, "then are we bastards and not sons" (Hebrews 12:10, 11). This then is the personal characteristic of a son of God, and Tola was such, beyond doubt.

So we are back to the old principle that God reveals sufficient to us for our salvation. Enlightenment on other matters we must leave, and should the Lord look kindly on us at his appearing, then our questions can take their place in that glorious day when there will be time no longer, and with immortal minds and bodies we may find the perfection of satisfaction in the endless days of fellowship with these worthies of yesterday, and sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus in glory.

Tola then, so far as has been revealed, judging the people in his quietness, finally dies at the close of his long and peaceful life, having dealt with sagacity and defended Israel stoutly, and was a saviour to them. There was real work, and most effectual. So it will always be. The work of Tola and his ancestors was to reveal the Lord Jesus in His sacrificial work, and the glorious aftermath of the abundant fulfilment of the inheritance.

We have laid the various guide lines through which the exposition would run, and we pray that our readers will give them extended cogitation, for the expanse is always wider and longer than the mere guiding thoughts of any subject. We have been struck over the years of study and fascination for these 'minor Judges', by the spiritual satisfaction, particularly regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, which shows more distinctly than in any portion of the book, types of our Lord Jesus. This is true as seen in the brevity of the narrative and what spiritual details we have been able to gather: far more can be found by the earnest and prayerful seeker. We know that no man apart from the Lord Jesus was flawless. There is much in Jephthah for instance, just as there is much in Gideon and the others, which we could not ascribe to our Lord; but here we have so very little, that the very position and name seem to suggest Him.

In Psalm 22:6 Jesus is spoken of as "a worm and no man". He who had the highest place of glory (in the divine mind of the Father) humbled himself, made himself of no reputation; and thus we see the character of one who truly rises to save the people, whether it be Israel or His Ecclesia. It is the one who takes his place in humiliation who can judge his people and gather them, as we see in the latter half of Psalm 22:27-31. This aspect could not have been fulfilled unless the Lord Jesus had voluntarily undertaken to be the 'little worm', subjected to the ignominy of verses 7 and 8. Study this section slowly, patiently and again prayerfully: none must be neglected if we desire the utmost benefit from our deliberations. Never neglect the discipline of prayer, brethren and sisters, because the days are fast coming upon us, of which Jesus said, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith, ~~He?~~ The faith, the Truth as a whole, yes; but the faith which humbly seeks God in prayer? Let it not be said of us.

But having taken his place as 'a worm and no man', and thus died on the tree, Jesus rose from the dead and is the centre of blessing of his brethren and the remnant of Israel, that will survive the day of Jacob's trouble, for the great congregation of the whole nation,

and finally all the kindreds of the earth shall flock to hear Him for blessing (Psalm 72).

Thus it is the greater Tola who will be a centre for all blessing: and the proof of it? What are these wounds in thy hands and feet? The scar will remain for ever, and all the world, and particularly His Jewish brethren, will realise that though His lowliness brought him to the cross, it will be through Him who was the crucified (Gk.) that their deliverance has arisen.

What, however, is the continuing thought that linked Tola with Jair who followed on with 22 years of success and prosperity the 23 years of previous quietness and ~~assurance~~ of peace under the lowly Tola?

Judges 10: 3-5 "And after him arose Jair a Gileadite and judged Israel 22 years, and he had 30 sons that rode on 30 ass colts, and they had 30 cities, which are called Havoth-Jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead. And Jair died and was buried in Camon."

This is all the information given of Jair, and we have commented upon the relevant details in the genealogy. On page 138 for instance, we outlined the rather interesting words for Jair or Yair (Heb.). The word for colts is Ayarim and for cities also Ayarim: a trilogy of name, ass and the cities, a multiple of 3 x 10 or 6 x 5.

3 is the number of completion and 10 ordinal perfection.

6 is the number of man, and 5 of divine grace.

The suggestion is then that we shall find 3 completion and 10 ordinal perfection in the number of these asses, sons and cities, and this all brought about by divine grace given to men. Is this so, and why does this pattern emerge from our studies?

(1) What we are told of Jair is that he had successors, the 30 sons that were rulers, and we notice that they are not claimants of rule, but are practically rulers; not perhaps in a very wide sense, but each in his own circle of influence has a place of power and authority over a city, no doubt in his own city or inheritance given to him by his father Jair, and these cities are named after the father Havoth-Jair = the lives of Jair. That is, his sons carried on the life of Jair, as it were, even after his death: he lived after his death. It is clear then that the 30 cities etc. point to the succession of grace which Jair gave to his sons, and 30 (3 x 10) gives the completion (3) of ordinal perfection (10) which the sons shared in true judgment, as they rode about on ass colts, a mark of rank; the ass being the kingly beast (cp. 2 Kings 4: 22, Zechariah 9: 9; particularly Matthew 21: 1-10; Mark 11: 7 which proves that Jesus rode on the colt of the ass, ostensibly because the colt had had to be redeemed; the ass symbolised Jerusalem, upon whom had come the yoke of the Law, the colt redeemed having reference to the Gentile whom Jesus had redeemed; so Jesus will ride into Jerusalem on the Gentile beast, in which activity, we pray, you and myself will take part. (Exodus 34: 30, Galatians 3: 22-29, 4: 21-28, 5: 14 etc.)

(2) It is particularly apt, because this took place on the east of Jordan - Gilead, where the cities of Jair were situated, although it belongs to the Jew, yet the territory is mainly Gentile, and what was significant, when the command was given to Joshua to pass over Jordan, regarding the tribes who were to have their inheritance towards the sunrising (that is, on the east side of Jordan), the command was (Joshua 1: 13): "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land, Your wives, your little ones and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed" (or, go into the land first - Zondervan Bible). So the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh had to show sterling faith to win their inheritance, (a) going in the van of Israel, setting first step (of the fighting men) into the covenant land over Jordan, (b) by doing

so they were assured of returning home, each man in triumph and in peace.

(3) It is interesting to note, their cities were either adjacent to, or in Gilead, the land of testimony and witness. This being so, they manifested faith in Yahweh and His promise to them, and by their actions, spoke the gospel to the Gileadites. It was a time of testing and trial, but even the youngest of the warriors had spent some time in the wilderness, and seen the arm of the Lord revealed, principally in the entry over Jordan and the fall of Jericho.

(4) Is it not significant that the law of female inheritance is demonstrated the first time at this place, or rather "in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho" (Numbers 36)? Numbers 36:1 : "And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel". And the laws relating to the female inheritance were ordained. We find it rather singular that they were delivered in the place of witness and testimony. Gilead = Mound of Witness, massive witness, enduring rock, rock of time, great endurance (Meta Dictionary), the mountain where Jacob encamped when he fled from his father-in-law Laban. It was there that Laban overtook him and that the Mizpah covenant between them was made. Just the opposite contract to what is meant today - "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from the other", i.e. make sure you, Jacob, nor you, Laban, come to work evil, the one or the other (Genesis 31:21, 23-55).

We remember the caravan of the Ishmaelites to whom Joseph was sold by his brothers was from Gilead (Genesis 37:25). It was on this mountain, too, that Gideon chose the men who went with him to defeat the Midianites (Judges 7:3), as we have seen. Elijah later came from Gilead, and returned there with Elisha before his translation (2 Kings 2:11 etc.)

What has emerged from the meanings of Gilead? Give credence to Bagsters findings on the subject - 'Perpetual fountain' of Gal vid Galeed, and aeth - for ever, vid. Amad. Gilead all down the Bible history has been a perpetual fountain constantly bubbling up, witness to the Being and Truth of Yahweh regarding the things that He has sworn to do, down the ages of time, and will do in the future.

Returning to the female law of inheritance, one would think that this law was made for one female in particular - Mary the mother of Jesus, making it possible for a woman in her seemingly impossible circumstances, to have a seed - the seed indeed of the woman, and have an inheritance in Israel at the same time. So it happened that Jesus himself began to be about 30 years of age (another 30 comes into our reckoning) being "as was supposed" the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli . . . (Luke 3:23). Again, it is truly significant that this genealogy when compared with Matthew's, shows that Gentile blood was in the strain, and also Levitical blood. Cp. Luke 3:32 with Matthew 1:5 etc. Exodus 6:23 - "And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife" - Naashon apparently came from the line of Judah. Other analogies we leave to our readers to 'fathom' or find out. When we look at this law in this way, we see how truly wonderful are God's ways of truth.

So the land where Jair ruled was approximately 12 miles south-east of the Sea of Galilee. Jair exercised his authority, supported by his 30 sons, who rode on 30 ass colts. Compare the similar reference to the sons and grandsons of Abdon (Judges 12:14). It was a mark of prestige as well as a sign of prosperity, prestige and prosperity based upon that which has been before. Tola, a worm, humility and lowliness. In lowliness Tola leaves the thought of recompense, not serving for a reward, but in the fruitfulness of a self surrendered life, just as centuries later the greater

Tola lived a life of absolute self surrender, therefore as we read from Philippians 2:9 earlier on, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name", and the recompense (Philippians 2:10,11), "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The absolute apex of praise and fulfilment of a fully surrendered life Tola exemplified. So now our attention can be given to his worthy successor, Jair the Gileadite.

Judges 10:3 Jair is from Heb. Yaiyr, "He will enlighten", or "diffuse light", from the fut. Hiph, of the root Ur. Bagster's Names.

Jair, whom He (God) enlightens; He will make light, He will illuminate; enlightenment, instruction, prosperity, happiness, he shall shine. Meta Dictionary. The amount of success achieved can be judged from the region whence he established his cities (that is the former Jair). The latter took them again and doubled their number, as we have seen, to 60 cities, although only 30 are mentioned here. The particular region was Argob (Heb. for hard and stony), and he called them Havoth Jair - the lives of Jair. The faculty of Manasseh (understanding) in the individual, receiving spiritual instruction, consequently illumination and enlightenment from God. When we allow the Spirit word to work on our stony hearts, the aspects of our human reasonings are transformed into Havoth Jair, and our thoughts and actions are richly endowed in the process.

Jairus (Mark 5:22) comes before us in the Greek adaptation, meaning as before, 'whom He (God) enlightens', he will illuminate, he shall shine, etc. This ruler sought out Jesus as we all know, even at mealtime in the feast at Matthew's house (9:9-26), and the Master immediately rose up and followed him. The record in Mark 5:22-43 is most illuminating, the raising of the ruler's daughter being analogous to the raising of Israel from the slumber of apostasy and idolatry in Isaiah 51:17. "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury." Verse 18, "Neither is there any that taketh her by the hand." Here is that application of the analogy. Mark 5:41, "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." The daughter of Jairus represented Israel who had fallen into the slumber of idolatry and apostasy, and who had at the least One Son who had the capacity to raise her from her iniquitous sleeping. Jesus used the incident as a parable as to what should happen at his return and when he is accepted of his brethren.

The incident is clearly marked by Mark, the writer of Peter's gospel, by the indication 'which is, being interpreted': observation by Kay. Isaiah 51:17. In verse 17 and in ch. 52 v.2, the Hebrew for 'arise' is the word recorded by Mark 5:41, to have been used by our Lord when He 'took the damsel by the hand and said unto her arise (cumi).' He alone could lift Jerusalem out of her deadly sleep. None among all the sons, none of these - king, prophet or righteous man - could guide or (Isaiah 40:11) 'gently lead' her back to comfort and peace. Isaiah had shown centuries before who would do it - Messiah alone.

Jairus certainly by this never to be forgotten experience, was enlightened by God. He had been privileged to view at first hand the raising of his daughter: he could well apply to himself Isaiah 9:2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them (upon himself and his household) hath the light shined. The land of death - shade - (Romans 5:14), which had existed for 4,000 years, since the death of Abel (Genesis 4:7,9), had been visited by the 'dayspring from on high' (Luke 1:78,79).

Jesus, then, our illumination, our dayspring from on high, hath truly interpreted Jair to us. We see then Jair as the 'light giver', we have witnessed thought, in Tola



of our Lord's humiliation unto death: through this process we have in Jair the thought of his giving light to his people, and in these 30 cities we have growth through the truth perpetuated to his descendants, or in our case to His friends (John 15:15). This is a blessed truth to each one of us; we are not called 'bondslaves' (Gk.) by Jesus, but friends: the use of the Gk. *phileo* here had reference to the court of Ptolemy, whose friends were those of his own personal household, and state secrets; hence the obvious application of the words to the bride in Song of Solomon 1:7,8: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions." To stray into the flocks or encampment of another shepherd usually meant violation to a shepherdess in those days, and in many places today the result is similar: to know precisely where her loved one rested his flock in the heat of the noon sun was absolutely critical for her. Note the answer from her or our Shepherd: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." John 15:15 covers the situation completely. "If you know not", have not had my confidence, or you haven't taken the trouble to follow my steps carefully (1 Peter 2:21), "You are none of mine and you can follow your own paths." We all (verse 25) "were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Such is the vast gulf between a bondslave who only does as he is told, and the 'phileo' friend who is in the confidence of his Lord, who knows the working of his ways, and travels with the King as part of the retinue or court.

We have seen then the blessing of Jair 'the light giver' in growth through the Truth being perpetuated to his descendants and friends. We find this very simple and quiet, no clash of arms about it, no noise as there was with the apostate fratricide Abimelech, but how blessed it is to remember that after all, when we see our loved ones fade away in the midst of a world of ruin and decay, we too shall join them, should the Lord delay His coming. It is blessed, we say, that if there is going to be any measure of recovery for God, if there is to be any restoration from the chaos which Abimelech brings in, it has to be through the quiet and peaceable rule of humility; the rule of lowliness, that rule which is more effective because it has been abased into the very dust. The King who reigns is the one who reigns from the dust. The power that sways the people of God is the power of feebleness resting on Almighty Strength (this indeed is grace); where one has low thoughts of himself and is often despised by others, even like Tola and Jair, hardly worthy of a line in expositors' thoughts. Let us then, brethren and sisters, try, in true lowliness, to take our place beside the Man of Sorrows in humiliation (although this is really a contradiction of terms, because the lowliness of Christ is really our highest glory). How can we possibly descend to that sublime quality as exemplified in our Lord Jesus? It is very high and yet very deep, in reality beyond our powers of comprehension. Let us, then, strive our hardest to find it: we shall still be seeking the quality at His return, and we are confident that the Lord knows our frame, our qualities, our aspirations, and if they are really worthy, we shall find it in Him, then glorified, but He still is The Lamb that was slain (Revelation 5:12). If we can be found in Him at that day, we shall find humility glorified, and true lowliness exalted to the highest heaven, and our pilgrimage will have its glorious fulfilment.

Today then in the sight of God (not man) the place of lowliness and humiliation is the key to Ecclesial peace, with each one acknowledging his brother better than himself. When one was young in the truth this was easy: as the years roll by and experience widens, problems loom, and one has to become a true soldier for the Truth. The quality of humility is not so easy to retain, but retained it must be if we are to be found among those who sing in Revelation 5 etc. We have here the key to power and authority among the ecclesias in our day. We elders must lead the way as is our duty. If we can

manage such a uniform attitude then we shall find peace in our midst.

We have an example in the 45 years of ~~peace~~ and tranquillity of Tola and Jair, of the example set in motion by Tola, and the fruitfulness of Jair: the people followed the example and then enjoyed the enlargement that followed. These are the elements of character, in both individuals, and in the nation, to bring forth these foundations of peace with one another, resulting finally in the peace of God. And growing out of that comes the knowledge of divine characterisation, and when it is present it effects a growth and progress which is most delightful to experience. Here we saw in Tola and Jair just this effect, and as a result, not much noise and trouble, just quietness and assurance (which, when Jesus comes, will be for ever). No notoriety, just quiet service, efficient and dedicated to God. It is very interesting to see this taking place in Gilead, which is on the wilderness side of Jordan. Where we live now, we must take the 'witnessing' of Gilead to our hearts, and give our testimony here, where we live, in the sense that our light shineth as a candle in the homestead, giving the testimony of the Truth to those who live under our roof, and to our family in general, either (1) if they do not belong to the Truth, our efforts must be directed to the task of opening their eyes to the wonder of God's Law and ways, or (2) if they happen to belong to the household of the saints, in that however old we may be, we must follow the rule of Paul to the Thessalonians (1:12-16), "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore . . . ." (see exposition of these two Epistles of Paul, by Debir Press). If we can follow out this Pauline formula, we are sure that the Tola/Jair blessings will automatically follow.

On the east side of Jordan is the very place where the enemy comes in first. Our place of witness and testimony is not in marches in London etc., but in Barnoldswick, or Nelson or Heywood, or Coventry: in our own place this combined testimony is far more concentrated in intensity, in our own family or familiar surroundings. We have to make our homes the Havoth-Jair, the lives of Jair. This is the message of Jair. Enlightenment in our own villages or towns or cities. We have to maintain a testimony and we have to grow with that testimony so as to make it stand, after the fashion of the Greater ~~Jair~~: a testimony in flesh, the Truth of God centred in me, and you; after all it is the life that is the true witness in the eyes of the world. These cities of Jair, though small, no doubt, in their circumference, and their power limited, yet as each ecclesia is established and maintained, the knowledge of God is spread and upheld.

Let us take heart once again from the Thessalonians who, after establishing their ecclesia for only 18 months, by their efforts made the effect felt throughout the whole Roman world. These were not the days of jet travel and tele- and radio communication. Their faith had gone forth like a trumpet blast which will pierce any orchestra, notwithstanding the size. Paul said, "We had no need to say have you heard about the Thessalonians". "They tell us". That witness was one within their own city, and the good news of the Gospel was spread in Havoth-Jair fashion in the life of the ecclesia in Thessalonica, where death stalked them from the authorities: some had died, not in Jesus, although this was true, but through Jesus, for His testimony. All the world got to know. Maybe our own personal witness may have to be sealed yet in similar fashion, then it will be patently clear whether or not we are Havoth-Jair testimony or not.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 separates the chaff from among the wheat in the day of

the Lord's coming "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." Paul and his companions gave a Havoth Jair testimony to Thessalonica, and they responded with their personal lights, or lives, which gained an honest hearing, among their contemporaries. Consequently it brought about the deep spiritual comments from Paul, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12. "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ" - a fitting epitaph to the work of all such 'lives' that are dedicated to God and His Truth.

The world cannot deny conduct (although it doesn't agree with it), it cannot deny spiritual growth. It may deny profession, it might make a mockery of mere talk, but the world, although it hates it, because this is of God. It is our testimony to God, and His, in that we belong to Him in sanctification.

(1) We have noticed that growth here is in connection with government, for the allusion to riding on asses' colts means that. Deborah alludes to the custom in her song (Judges 5:10).  
 (2) Our Lord (as we have seen) was saluted as King riding into Jerusalem (the Gentile redeemed colt). In the east it was the sign of the governor or ruler. A further thought on the spiritual matter to be gathered on this section. The colt of the ass, an emblem of peace, is contrasted with the war horse, the emblem of battle, and has been ennobled (as we have seen) by the act of the Lord Jesus (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5), and most certainly in John 12:14, in which Zechariah 3 has been used to show that this aspect really belongs to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus, when He comes to dwell in the midst of Israel as the mighty conqueror, the true Saviour, Judge and King: and at that very same season, as future Judge of Israel, delivering a parable in which He revealed Himself as setting His favourite children one over 10 cities, and another over 5 cities (Luke 19:17-19). We have noted the spiritual significance of these numbers elsewhere.

At that time the Lord Jesus was riding into His own city, Jerusalem, the City of Peace, and the type of that most glorious entry: we pray that all those whom we have known, and all the others who love His appearing, will be in that train of followers who will be with Him, and be found on white horses in the cavalcade He himself on his white horse will lead (Revelation 19:11-14). Wordsworth comments: "May we not say, that the children of the True Judge of Israel, that is, the children of Jesus Christ (the true Jair, whose name is derived from 'light') must follow Him in His meekness, if they would enter into His glory: that they must ride after Him now on the foal of the ass, each in their own appointed city: that is, they must do their own appointed duty, with lowliness and gentleness, in their own calling, if they would follow Him riding upon white horses in the age to come (Revelation 19:11-14)."

We must remember that it is not said that any of these cities received this name for the first time now: some of them were so called from another Jair (which we have pointed out before). As Isaac re-opened the wells by his father and called them by the same names, so probably this Jair recovered the cities of the former Jair, and restored their ancient name. We have already noted that the work of the second Jair was not only one of revival, but of extension. It is notable that the cities of their father Jair retained their father's name. So the ecclesias of Christ are called by His name, and with the addition of His brethren's name - Christadelphians. Let us hold fast to the foundations of the Truth once revealed until the day of our Lord's appearing.

What a vast gulf separates Tola and Jair, in length of time dispensationally, but  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years actually, from the commencement of the 'worm' sequence when Christ our Lord commenced, about 30 years of age, to show Himself to Israel, to His death when the crimson flood flowed, the bruised and tortured and crushed little worm Tola, to the light giver Jair, with vast expansion of his government and spiritual growth. Genesis 38:13-30 gives the order centuries before either Tola or Jair was conceived in the strange yet beautiful way in which the firstborn of Judah received the sign of this significance. Although the firstborn means, as Jair, the 'bringer of light', the scarlet thread placed around the wrist of Zarah was drawn back into the womb, as Jesus, 'the Light of Yah', shines but for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, and was refused because the people 'loved darkness rather than light'. So Pharez became in reality the 'breaker forth' out of the womb; then in resurrection life he would become the 'bringer of light', and illumination not only to Israel, but to the whole world. See 'The Song of Solomon', Debir Press pp. 83-88, on "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet" etc.

In such an intricate way, but ever beautiful, does our God plan His purpose, and the revealing is left for us who search diligently for those things which have been left for us even as was said of Ruth, "Leave her handfuls of purpose." These are our heritage, let us pursue them diligently.

With regard to these revelations of what was, is now, and is to come; let us seek with contrite hearts and minds, the death of this great man Jair - (1) where he was buried, (2) the significance attached to it. Jair died and was buried at Camon. This gives us the final thought, and the most earnest pledge for our future (that is, if it be God's will). Different meanings are given to this word, though its derivation from a root 'to rise' is evident.

- (1) 'Abounding in stalks', or 'standing corn', the same as ~~gamah~~ ~~gamah~~, standing corn, Exodus 22:5, from the root ~~gum~~ ~~gum~~, to rise up, to set up, Genesis 37:7, Numbers 7:1 (Bagster's Names):
- (2) 'Abounding in stalks', pr. root of a town in Gilead. Ges. 734 A.

The translation is important and is significant - 'a place of grain' - and the whole picture is covered by John 12:23,24. And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." In fact it is abundant in fruit as Camon indicates, and it is the result of a 'rising up', as we know, in resurrection. The apostle Paul put the same issue in other words, just as potent, in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; 1 Corinthians 15:35-37 etc. - the whole chapter from here. These are the results of the death of our Greater Jair in Camon in Gilead, the 'light bringer', whose death implies a harvest of wheat: one would think that the harvest is already 'white unto harvest'. May the Lord of the harvest come to gather in His corn. This is well, but let us remember in every harvest there is darnel whose presence is not detected until the harvest time, when it turns black (Matthew 13:25-30). May it be that our portion will be good grain, ready and fit for our Lord's garnering. Only then will it be declared whether we represent the lives of Jair. How many are to be found in our ecclesia, one wonders. Remember both wheat and tares grow together. Which are we?

Finally on Jair, there is another person by the same name, whose name means 'he will embroider', Yaiyr, belonging to the family of Jair whom we have considered. The name can most certainly be applied to Jesus. He has most certainly embroidered His vesture, white coat, and His Father's tabernacle, with the embroidery of the Spirit. Might we be found as such (only by God's grace) we might be certain.

We hope that we have produced sufficient evidence to prove that both Tola and Jair, far from being minor, are both in the major key. So the lesson remains for each Bible

student to follow. These 45 years (5 x 9) were in one sense a finality of grace, of peace.

- (1) It was a 'peace' of God. The hand of Yahweh was seen.
- (2) Its character. Undistinguished by great individual exploits. The solid monuments of the lowliness of Tola, and the people's industry and foresight (the cities of the Circle of Jair remained.)
- (3) Its import. God's punishments and judgments are intended to prepare for peace. None of us can ever say we have no room for repentance.
- (4) Quiet times. The best men are not always known. Cp what we know of Abimelech - 57 verses, one whole chapter; but only 5 verses of Tola and Jair.
- (5) Quiet times are happy times. Israel was now experiencing the happiness of dull times, when annals have very little to record.
- (6) Quiet times are often healthful times. There is a quietness which betokens the stagnation of death, there is a condition of ease which favours indolence, luxury and vice. But there is also a quietness of healthy life (Isaiah 30:15).
- (7) Quiet times are more frequent than we commonly suppose, and there is 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding.' May it be ours - at all times!

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