

The Story of the Bible

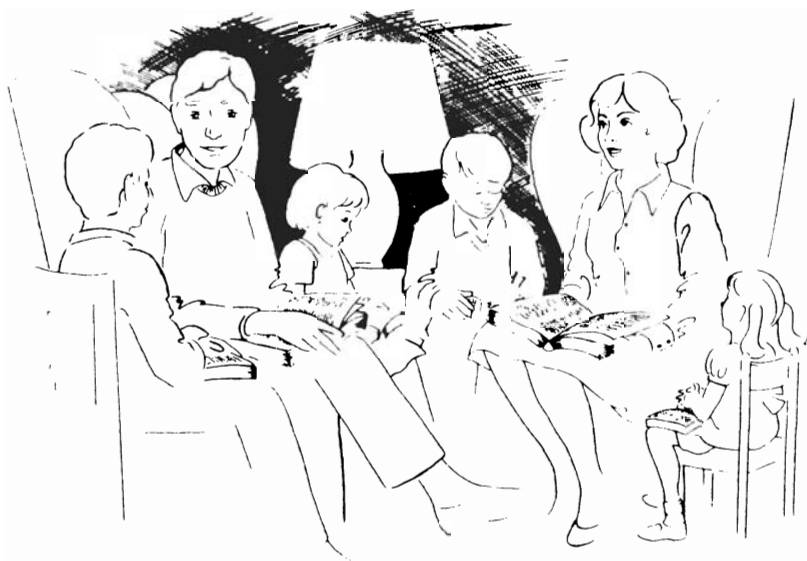
We wish to express our deep appreciation to volunteers who have rendered great help in proof reading the manuscripts in preparation for printing; and to Sis. D. Essex for the original drawings contained in this volume.

Printed for
LOGOS PUBLICATIONS, 9 WEST BEACH ROAD,
WEST BEACH, SA 5024
by
Eureka Press Pty. Ltd.
9 West Beach Road, West Beach, South Australia 5024.

The Story of the Bible



A detailed exposition of the Bible
discussed within the family circle.



**Mr and Mrs. Phillips settle down with their children for daily reading
of the Bible**



Introduction

The First volume of our *Story of the Bible* covered the 2,500 years of history that stretched from the creation of Adam and Eve to the time when God, through Moses, delivered the Children of Israel from Egyptian slavery and the wrath of Pharaoh, by opening for them a way of escape through the Red Sea.

In this second volume, our progress, in point of time, will be much slower, for God has recorded in much greater detail the things we will consider. He has done so because there are important lessons for us to learn in the incidents set down, and He desires that we should study them carefully with understanding.

Once Moses had led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, he may have expected that his worst troubles were over, and that from thenceforth he would spend his time in guiding and teaching a humbled and obedient people. Not so. Though the terrible oppressions that the Israelites had suffered in Egypt had caused them to turn to God and cry for help, now, as they were tested by trial and adversity in the wilderness, they showed how lacking they were in faith and loyalty towards Yahweh. Murmuring broke out among them. They turned on Moses (and on God), bitterly complaining of their lot, and claiming they were better off in Egypt. They forgot the goodness of Yahweh in de-

livering them from slavery, and did not pause to consider that their present troubles were only temporary until they reached the ease and plenty of the Promised Land. If only they had manifested the faith to keep their minds on that which God had promised in the land to which He was leading them, all would have been well. For in the prospects of the joy to come they would have seen beyond the difficulties of the moment. But they failed to do that, and, as their trials increased, their minds turned back to Egypt, instead of forward to their promised inheritance. This testimony of history reminds us that it is only "through much tribulation that we will enter the Kingdom of God"; but Israel did not learn that lesson. It is, of course, a hard lesson for any one to learn. Men are ever ready, with greedy hands, to grasp all that God has provided, without a thought for the Giver of all these things. They accept the beauty and benefits of creation, the food, the raiment, and shelter with which they are so bountifully supplied, particularly in this age of affluence, caring nothing for the Creator of it all. When times of drought or difficulty arise, they might pray for help (Isa. 26:16), but in times of plenty, they tend to forget Yahweh. Israel proved no different from the rest of humanity in that regard, for when God tested the people, He found them wanting.

Why did Yahweh extend Himself to deliver Israel from Egypt? It was to fulfil His promise to Abraham, of course. But it is important to bear in mind that in order to save the people, He had to make them worth saving. To do that He had to reveal His glory in them (Deut. 4:6-8; 28:9-10). They were called upon to build into their lives the divine qualities revealed in God's name. He desired them to be a holy people unto Him. He wanted them to so live as to cause other people and nations to be drawn to Him through them. Therefore He extended Himself to save them from Egypt, that they might be "unto Him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but (adds the prophet sorrowfully) they would not hear" (Jer. 13:11).

With that purpose in view, Yahweh chose the Children of Israel, separated them unto Himself, guided them, educated them, revealed His will unto them, in order that they might reflect His glory, and so pass on to others the message of His plan. But the tragedy of Israel's history is captured in the lament of the prophet: "They would not hear". Because of that, God punished them, and when they remained stubborn and disobedient, He scattered them among the nations, there to learn the folly of their ways, until the time came under their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, when they would become "a great nation" in the land (Gen. 12:1-2; Ezek. 36:22-27).

In the meanwhile, God has arranged for the message of His plan to be proclaimed among the Gentiles. Through His word, He is calling people to Him for the same purpose as when He called Israel out of Egypt. The Bible says that "God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). These people, like Israel, are expected to be so motivated by the Truth they have espoused that they reflect Yahweh's glory in their lives. Accordingly, when difficulties or trials arise they are exhorted to recall the lesson of Israel's failure, and in faith look beyond such things to "the joy set before them" (Heb. 12:1-2).

We shall see, in this volume of the *Story of the Bible*, that only a few in Israel remained truly loyal to their loving Heavenly Father, who had delivered them from slavery and death. The majority succumbed to the trials they experienced, and so perished in the wilderness. And because their trials typified those experienced by Gentile believers today it is important that such should try to understand this part of the Bible, that they may avoid similar mistakes.

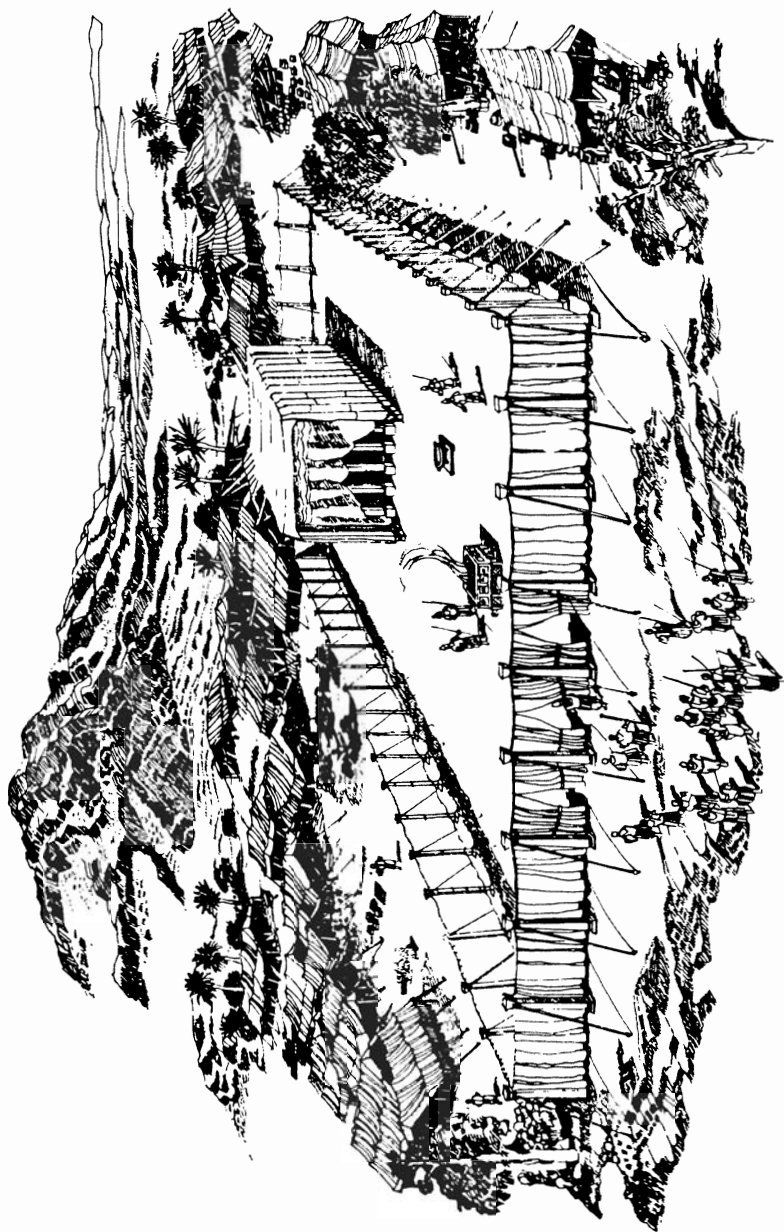
We invite you, therefore, to come with us to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips where these matters are under discussion. The evening meal has been concluded, and the four children are gathered with their Parents in the book-lined study to which Mr. Phillips loves to retire on such occasions.



The Israelites stumbled over broad areas of parched and cracked surfaces, during their years of wandering. Yet their raiment waxed not old, neither did their feet swell (Deut. 8:4), foreshadowing the durable clothing of Christ (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 6:15).

Wandering in the Wilderness

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness.



FROM SINAI TO THE BORDERS OF THE PROMISED LAND

Chapter One

ISRAEL LEAVES SINAI

The family completed reading Numbers 10 and Mr. Phillips, with characteristic enthusiasm, outlined the chapter.

“We now commence our journey with the Children of Israel as they joyfully leave Mt. Sinai for the Promised Land” he declared. “They are a different nation from the one that left Egypt, for now they are at one with God, having entered into Covenant agreement to serve Him as His people. Having been accepted by Him as the nucleus of His Kingdom on earth, it was required that they submit to His requirements, and cheerfully bear with the problems of the way. But only a few days later we find the people complaining. They should have been filled with joy for the Land of Promise was immediately ahead, and they had access to a Power capable of conquering all their difficulties. Instead they began to murmur, bringing upon themselves the wrath of God. Complaining led some to compare the aridness of the wilderness to the good things they had left behind in Egypt. This added to their murmuring and the general dissatisfaction until even Moses became discouraged. The growing discontent involved even Moses’ own brother and sister so that they commenced to question his leadership (Num. 12). Little wonder it is, therefore, that when at last, the twelve tribes of Israel reached the Promised Land, and spies were sent forth to search it out, they returned with a discouraging report. In fact, grumbling had become habitual to the people, and they had become completely negative in their attitude. At last God’s patience came to an end, and He condemned the generation of murmuring, complaining, disobedient people to wander through the wilderness until death claimed them. This continued for thirty-eight years until all the adults

over twenty years of age when they left Egypt perished in the wilderness. But Yahweh's purpose did not fail, for the next generation did enter the Land".

"This is a very important section of the Bible" continued Mr. Phillips. "It reveals some of the evils of grumbling and complaining. We may look upon such evils as little sins, but in fact, they cause great sorrow of heart and loss of initiative. That was the case with Israel. Little by little the nation slipped back because of the sin of complaining. Grumbling is an evil thing, for it fails to take into account the blessings of life we receive. Some feel that they are badly treated, because of matters of no real importance, and moan to themselves until little difficulties appear great problems as difficult to surmount as mighty mountains. Consider Israel's spiritual decline as recorded in Numbers 10-14. Commencing with discontent through the difficulties of the way, they began to desire the way of life in Egypt from which they had been delivered with such difficulty. Then they began to despise God, speaking against His servants, provoking, tempting, doubting Him. Finally this resulted in rebellion and idolatry. All these frightful sins commenced with a little grumbling! Grumbling is contagious, and in this case soon swept through the whole nation until all sections of it were affected. In consequence that generation failed to enter the Land. But let us retrace their steps".

"A year and a month had elapsed since the children of Israel had left Egypt," continued Mr. Phillips as he outlined Numbers 10 to his family. "They had seen many wonderful miracles. Yahweh had divided the sea before them and saved them from Pharaoh. He had led them through the wilderness, feeding them with manna day after day, and providing them with water when it was needed. He had saved them when Amalek had attacked them, and had brought them to the foot of Mt. Horeb. There He had revealed Himself to them, giving them the law, and entering into covenant with them. Moses had then been instructed to build the Tabernacle, and shown the forms of worship which had to be followed. When this work was completed, on the 14th day of the first month of the second year, the Passover was celebrated again (Num. 9:5); and on the following month, a second passover was kept for those who were not able to keep the first (vv. 6-14). Now all was in readiness for the tribes to commence their journey to the Promised Land".

"What would prevent anybody keeping the Passover at the right time?" asked Graeham.

"Two reasons are given," explained his father. "If an Israelite were absent, away from home on a journey, he obviously could not keep it. But, also, if any had made contact with death in any

form at the time of Passover, he was not permitted to keep it, for death was considered defiling" (see Num. 9:10).

"What is the lesson in that?" inquired Peter.

"A most important one," replied Mr. Phillips enthusiastically. "It sets forth an amazing type that demonstrates that Yahweh knows the end from the beginning and reveals it unto His servants in many ways. First, let us recognise that this wonderful Book the Bible is written by the inspiration of God (Heb. 1:1), and through its means Yahweh reveals to His servants His will and purpose (Amos 3:7). That includes such incidents we are now considering. The Passover, as once celebrated by the people of Israel, is no longer kept. Believers eat bread and drink wine as a memorial of Christ their Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), whilst the Jewish people no longer slay a lamb, but celebrate the Passover with a meatless piece of bone on a plate! This is quite significant. They have denied themselves the true lamb, and now must be content with the dry bone. That is a symbol of their hope, seeing they have rejected Christ. Their state today was foreshadowed by the law of the Passover as given by Moses. They are not in a fit state to eat it, and therefore must wait until it is re-instituted for them, as it will be at Christ's return. For reasons that typed Israel's present state before God they are meanwhile denied the Passover."

"That may be clear to the others," remarked Peter, "but it is not clear to me! I understand that if an Israelite was not allowed to partake of the correct Passover, another one was provided a month later. That is clear, but what does it signify?"

"As I explained to Graeham, two things prevented an Israelite from partaking of the first Passover," explained his father, "contact with death, or absence from the Promised Land. This provision of the law comprised a prophetic type of the future. Israel, as a nation, made contact with death when its leaders demanded the crucifixion of Christ; and in consequence of that, the people were driven from the land. Therefore, in accordance with these instructions of Moses they are prohibited from partaking of the true Passover, and must await the time when it will be re-instituted for them. To do that, in accordance with the provisions of this Law, they must be restored to the land and cleansed from the moral defilement brought about by their sin in crucifying Jesus. This requires the forgiveness of their sins, which necessitates them embracing the Truth in Jesus Christ. We see both these requirements predicted by Micah 7:18-20".

"When will that be?" asked Ann.

"At the return of Christ," replied her father. "At that time the nation of Israel will be purified from its uncleanness" (Zech.

13:1), by receiving forgiveness of its sins, and will be brought into covenant relationship with God once again (Rom. 11:23,25-27). Then they shall again celebrate the passover (see Ezek. 45:21)."

"Such a celebration will mean much more to them than in the past," remarked Graeham.

"Indeed yes! Jeremiah explains that in chapters 16:14-15 and 31:27-37. They shall then celebrate the Passover with true meaning, as the basis of the new covenant made with them. They shall recognise in the Lamb a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be then reigning from Jerusalem. This will be the antitype of the Second Passover celebrated by Israel in Sinai."

"I see!"

"After celebrating the Passover," continued Mr. Phillips, "Moses was instructed to begin the journey to the Land of Promise. 'You have dwelt long enough in this mount', he was told by the Angel, 'Commence your journey; go in and possess the land' (Deut. 1:6-8). The people made preparation to leave, and on the 20th day of the second month (Num. 10:11), they commenced their journey. First of all the silver trumpets were blown. . ."

"What are the silver trumpets?" interrupted Joan.

"They were two trumpets beaten out of a single piece of silver," explained her father. "They were designed for special occasions, and were sounded by the Priests. They were used for calling the assembly together, or for the journeying of the tribes. In addition they were sounded at any time that Israel had to war against an enemy (Num. 10:9), and also over the sacrifices that were offered unto Yahweh (v. 10)".

"In that case, they were like a prayer," remarked Graeham slowly, as he studied the passage in Numbers 10.

"That is true," remarked his father. "Sometimes the sound of the silver trumpets represented the voice of the people in prayer; at other times, it represented the voice of Yahweh to the people."

"How do you make that out?" asked Peter.

"Notice that the sounding of the trumpets brought the princes of the people together," explained his father (Num. 10:3-7). "On those occasions they recognised in their sounding the voice of Yahweh summoning the people to Him. But the trumpets were also sounded by the priests in time of war (v.9), and in times of worship (v. 10); and on those occasions they represented the voice of the people raised in prayer. Notice that Moses instructed the people that they would be 'remembered before Yahweh' (v. 9) on such occasions, and that the sounding of the trumpets would ascend as a memorial before their God (v. 10). The voice of the trumpets, therefore, was like the voice of the Spirit."

"I do not know what you mean by that," interrupted Peter.

"God speaks to us through His word," explained his father. "And that word came through His spirit moving holy men so to write (2 Pet. 1:21). When we read the Bible, we read the spirit-word of God. Accordingly, Jesus declared: 'The words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life' (John 6:63). That is the only form in which the spirit of God is available to us today (see Eph. 6:17; 1 John 5:6). When we read that word, God speaks to us through His spirit-word; and when we respond in prayer, our requests and praise should reflect the influence of His teaching. Paul taught: 'Through him (Jesus Christ) we have access by one spirit (the spirit of truth) unto the Father' (Eph. 2:18). Therefore, the spirit-word guides us in what we should say (Rom. 8:26). When we study the Bible, we hear the trumpets sounding and calling us to Yahweh; when we pray unto Him, He hears the sound of the trumpet appealing for help. Therefore, the use of the silver trumpets taught the Israelites, and should teach us, that we should hear Him and speak with Him, that we should draw Him into our lives through reading His word and responding through prayer and acceptable worship".

"The words of v. 10 are very interesting," commented Graeham. "They state that when the trumpets sound over the sacrifices of the Israelites, they will be as a memorial before their God. Similar words are found in Acts 10:4 in relation to Cornelius when he was told by the angel, 'Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God'."

"Yes," agreed his father. "The prayers of Cornelius ascending to heaven were like the silvery notes of a trumpet, appealing for help; and as that chapter reveals, help was extended to him in his need. In Israel, the sounding of the trumpets reminded the people that God was with them, and they were under His direction. So the silver trumpets marshalled the people together in preparation for their long and difficult journey.

"On the twentieth day of the second month (Num. 10:11), they commenced to move. In order to prepare the way, and to search out a camping place for the nation, the Ark of the Covenant, was first taken on a three days' journey into the wilderness to search out a resting place for them."

"What was the purpose of that?" enquired Graeham.

"In that section of the Sinaitic Peninsula the country is divided into a confusion of deep valleys, that run in various directions, over-shadowed by high, granite mountains. Not far from their camping place the Amalekites had attacked them on an earlier occasion, so that naturally the people would have been rather nervous of the possibility of further attack. And so, on this occa-

sion, the Ark was used to seek out a safe route. This contrasted with its normal position when it was carried in the centre of the marching tribes.

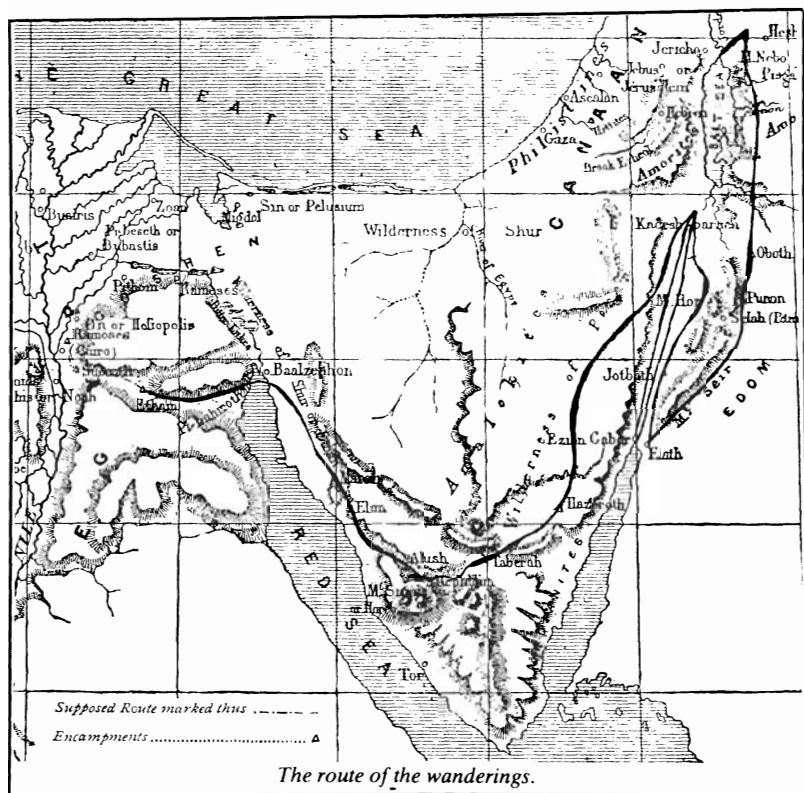
Before leaving on its search and after returning, prayers were uttered as recorded in Num. 10:35-36: 'And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, 'Rise up, Yahweh, and let Thine enemies be scattered: and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee' And when it rested, he said, 'Return, O Yahweh, unto the many thousands of Israel'."

"That is rather interesting," remarked Ann. "It means that at the beginning of their march to the Promised Land, the Ark went first to search out a place, and at the end of the journey, when the people crossed the Jordan, it also went first" (Josh. 3:15-16).

"That is a very good observation," remarked her father.

"Yes, where did you read it?" asked Peter.

"I did not read it," replied his sister. "We had the lesson at Sunday School, of Joshua entering the land and I just remembered it."



"That is very good," commented Mr. Phillips.

"I see that the Ark was led by the cloud," remarked Graeham, (Num. 10:11).

"Yes," answered his father. "A cloud was the symbol of divine presence and guidance. All plans, all routes, all camping, all marching, was subject to the restriction of '*if the lord will*' (James 4:15). To watch the guiding pillar of cloud was all that was required of the Israelites. On that guidance the people were entirely dependent; and by following that guidance they were absolutely safe. We must do likewise. Our eye must ever be towards God whose eyes are constantly upon us (Psalm 32:8).

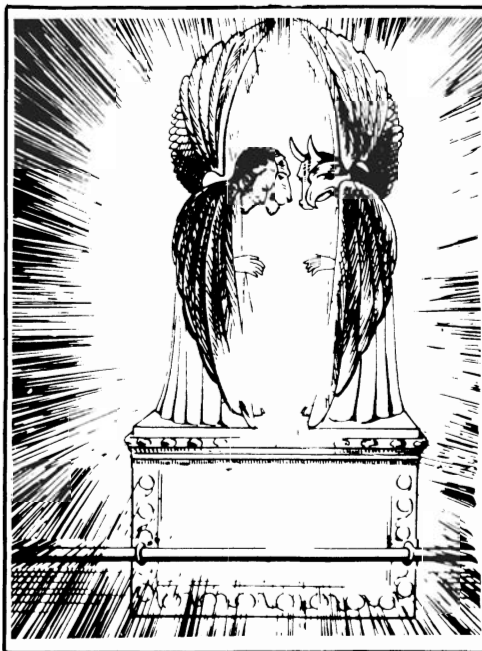
"For a short time the area around Mt. Sinai echoed to the sound of the marching feet of thousands of Israelites, as they slowly wended their way down the barren, rocky valleys, led by the soft white pillar of cloud. Then silence again settled upon this lonely spot that had been the scene of activity for over a year. As evening drew on, and darkness took over, the people saw the white cloud gradually change into a flame of fire. This flame of fire gave light in darkness. It symbolised the presence and protection of Yahweh. Then as dawn broke, and the sun shone again, the pillar of fire changed again to a cloud that sheltered them from heat (Psa. 105:39). So God was constantly with them. His symbol was the cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

"The Israelites marched according to a set order. First came Judah, followed by Isaachar and Zebulun. Stationed on the eastern side of the camp when the people rested, they led the way through the rocky passes of the Sinaitic wilderness. At their head could be seen the standard depicting the Lion of Judah. Then came a division of the Levites, the descendants of Gershon and Merari, with the boards and coverings of the Tabernacle, ready to erect it at the place appointed. These heavy portions were carried on carts provided for the purpose. Then followed the Reubenites leading the tribes of Simeon and Gad as they moved from the southern part of the camp. Over them was the banner of Reuben depicting the figure of a man. As they disappeared down the long winding valley, their place was taken by a second division of the Levites: the family of Kohath, bearing the sanctuary with its sacred vessels, exercising the greatest care lest any hands but those of Aaron and his assistants should touch a single part; for it was death to anyone who did so. Accordingly, they carried the ark on poles so that it did not come into contact with the bearers. Then came the tribe of Ephraim advancing from the western side of the camp with its standard showing a Bullock, and followed by Manasseh and Benjamin. Last of all came the tribe of

Dan, bearing a banner showing an Eagle and followed by Asher and Naphtali.

“The marching columns of Israel, therefore, were divided into four sections, under the leadership of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan; and at the head of each division went the standards, or banners, of these four leading tribes: The *Lion* for Judah, the *Man* for Reuben, the *Ox* or bullock for Ephraim, and the *Eagle* for Dan.

“These four symbols were the same as the faces of the Cherubim in the Most Holy Place (Ezek. 1:10). The tawny lion, so well known for its speed in attack, was considered to represent Light; the powerful Ox or Bull with its curling locks and great strength was used as a symbol for Fire; the soaring eagle, silently and swiftly speeding through the air, was likened to the Spirit. Light, Fire and Spirit, were all used to manifest God’s power and glory. In the symbols of the marching tribes they were associated with the Man of Reuben. Man is the highest form of God’s creation, His crowning achievement, made in the ‘image and likeness’ of his Creator (Gen. 1:26), and therefore given a mind able to reflect Divine impressions and to manifest them in a character honouring to God. The Man illustrated to all Israelites what they should aspire to, but it also pointed forward to ‘the man Christ



The standards of the four divisions of the Israelitish tribes reproduced the four faces of the Cherubim that overshadowed the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place. This taught that Israel was selected as a nation to manifest the Divine characteristics of goodness and severity as expressed in Exod. 34:5-7 (see Rom. 11:22).



The Lion was the standard of Judah as Leader and Ruler.



The Ox was the standard of Ephraim. As a worker it points to the labour of faith that Israelites should attempt.

STANDARDS OF THE TRIBES



The Eagle was the standard of Dan; its soaring power and keen eyes representing Spirit power.



The Man was the standard of Reuben. Man represents the highest form of creation with a mind capable of the Divine impress.

Jesus' in whom all the excellencies of Divine glory were and are revealed.

“As the marching tribes of Israel displayed these banners, the true Israel of God (the followers of the Lord Jesus, Gal. 6:16) need to manifest the Divine qualities they symbolised. They can do this by striving to live after the example of their Lord. The names of the principal tribes taught that lesson. Judah means *Praise*; Reuben means *See a Son*; Ephraim means *Double Fruit*; and Dan means *Judgment*. These combine together to form a sentence spelling out the following exhortation: Give *Praise* as you *See the Son*, and you will receive *Double Fruit* at the *Judgment*.

“At first the marching tribes of Israel moved forward in faith, putting their trust in God, and looking forward to the hope He had set before them. They started off bravely enough, but they soon began to tire of the difficult and monotonous route. For three long days the journey continued. The people marched all day slowly traversing the harsh, barren wilderness, shut in by winding valleys that seemed to have no ending, until they were tired out (Num. 10:35). Then, on the fourth day they rested, for that was a sabbath day,” concluded Mr. Phillips.



Barren wastes spread out before the people as they made their way towards the Land of Promise.

Chapter Two

COMPLAINING IN THE WILDERNESS

**The People
Murmur At
Taberah
Num. 11:1-3**

“The monotonous, tiring march became very wearisome to the people. It was not like a pleasant walk in the countryside, or along the seashore, when one can stop and rest if one desires, but a continuous, steady tramp all day long. The scenery was barren and desolate, and seemed to worsen the further the people went. There was no rest, for they had to follow the cloud that kept ever moving at the head of the long, marching columns, that spread into the distance.

Gradually they tired of it. In their irritation, they forgot the message of God proclaimed to them through Moses; ‘Go and possess the Land which I have given you’, and were oppressed and depressed with the cheerless appearance of the way. Everything seemed dull and monotonous. Each night as they arrived hot, dusty and tired at their camping place, they had the work of setting up their tents, preparing meals, tending to their tired and complaining families, knowing that the routine had to be repeated the following day.

And their meals were also monotonous, because they were limited to the manna they had to collect every day before their journey.

Under those extremely difficult circumstances, the greatest faith was necessary. This required that they keep constantly in mind the promise of God and set their desires on attaining it. But they failed to do so. They forgot the love and mercy of God, and the hope of the Promised Land. Their minds became obsessed with their present difficulties. Therefore, three days after leaving Mt. Sinai found them distressed, tired and very irritable with their lot. They grumbled at the wearisome, dusty walk they had to complete each day. They complained at the monotony of the way. They forgot the terrible warning lessons taught by the death of the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, when they defied God, and the fire from the altar had leapt out and consumed them. Instead, each day found them more outspoken concerning their difficulties and more critical of Moses and God. At last it became clear that something had to be done, or else the whole journey would end in complete disaster.

“Life is like that”, explained Mr. Phillips as he discussed these things with his family. “Those who murmur without cause, are

soon given cause to murmur! Israel had the power to conquer. They had received the invitation of Yahweh to enter the land, and faith should have taught them that He would bring them to it, conquering every difficulty, if they remained obedient. But instead of keeping their eyes firmly fixed on the future glory and promised inheritance, they permitted present difficulties to obscure their vision. In Numbers 11 which we read this evening, we learnt how grumbling led to complaining and found the people comparing their condition in Egypt with the hard way of life in the wilderness (v. 1) so that finally even Moses was discouraged. We need to bear these things in mind. As I mentioned before, grumbling is looked upon as a little sin of no great moment, but it can become most discouraging to others, and can contribute largely to failure in life. That is the lesson we must learn from Israel's experiences."

"The children of Israel certainly forgot that lesson," remarked Ann. "The chapter we read states that they complained, and it displeased Yahweh."

"Yes indeed" remarked Mr. Phillips. "At last God acted. His anger rose against this complaining people, so forgetful of all the good He had done for them, so short-sighted that they could not see the benefits of enduring a moment of trouble that they might inherit a great and eternal joy. As the people were complaining in their tents, grumbling at the trials they had to endure, a fierce flame of fire flared forth, raging with great fury. When the people saw this manifestation of Yahweh's anger, they were afraid and trembled exceedingly. They turned to Moses pleading for help. Nor did they do so in vain. That grand leader of faith turned instantly to Yahweh, praying that His anger might be restrained. And in response to this prayer, the fire ceased. The experience left the people trembling with fear. They called the name of that place *Taberah*, which means, *The place of burning*. The warning flame taught that God's anger will be manifested against those of His people who murmur at the difficulties of His way, through lacking the faith to see beyond them to the great hope of their calling.

**How Discontent
Led To Terrible
Punishment —
Num. 11:4-35**

"After *Taberah*," continued Mr. Phillips, "the white cloud led the people of Israel further and further into the wilderness. They had no idea where they were going. Food became short, and they had to rely more and more on the manna which God sent every morning, and which the people gathered, ground to powder, and baked into cakes. As we discussed previously, this manna was a

type of Christ. As, today, some of the Lord's people tire of His way, and desire something more exciting, not knowing what is best for them, so the Children of Israel became discontented at the monotonous diet. Their discontent increased until it erupted in a terrible tragedy which brought death and mourning to many families in Israel."

"You would have thought they would have learned a lesson", remarked Ann.

"Yes, indeed!" replied Mr. Phillips. "Unfortunately, human nature is forgetful, and has to learn the same lessons time and again. That was the case with the Children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness. The further tragedy recorded in Numbers 11, also commenced with a little complaining on the part of certain ones, showing how important it is that we should try to avoid that sin. Nothing is more discouraging, than the grumbling of people who complain of things they cannot alter, and forget how greatly they have been blessed. Moaning is contagious. It discourages others, and weakens the hands of those who would be strong. Instead of giving way to such things, let us learn to count our blessings. Let us aim to be cheerful at all times, putting our trust and confidence in God. If we as a family do that, we will help one another to shoulder life's burdens, and will assist each other to do what is right in the sight of God.

"Now let me outline to you what happened, as recorded in Numbers 11. Among the Children of Israel, there were a number of Gentiles who had joined with Israel when they left Egypt (Exod. 12:38). They lacked the faith to endure the hardness of the way. As they wandered in the dry and dusty wilderness, they remembered the lovely, green fields of Egypt, and the wide variety of food they had then enjoyed. As they longingly recalled it to mind, and spoke about it one with the other, they became more and more dissatisfied with the manna. Their discontent affected others, until it spread throughout the whole camp. People, began complaining about the manna, and expressing their desire for a change of diet. The sullen faces of the people, the grumbling and complaining to which they constantly gave voice, affected even Moses, What am I to do about this people? he asked God. The heavy burden of leading them tired him, and their lack of appreciation discouraged him. He became so discouraged that he too, complained to God, stating that he would rather die than continue to live under such conditions (11-15). Moses was eighty-two years of age, and his depression is understandable. It stemmed from the weakness of the flesh and had to be overcome. Yahweh had further work for Moses to do. The time for his death had not yet come. So he was urged to face up to the issues in faith

and courage. As for the people's complaints, God told Moses that He would send enough flesh for them to eat for a whole month, till they tired of it. Moses listened to that promise with wonder. He believed that God was exaggerating. Such a miracle as that, in the barren wilderness, was surely impossible! So Moses thought as he wondered whether he had heard aright! But God answered his doubts: 'Is My hand waxed short?' He asked Moses. 'You will see that My word is true what I say!'

"But God also saw that Moses needed help in his heavy work. The burden of the people was most difficult and discouraging. He therefore, recommended him to select seventy men out of Israel for that purpose. All but two of these men were brought to the Tabernacle in the sight of the people, and there God caused His spirit to come upon them, as it had upon Moses.

"Then followed an incident that showed how completely selfless was Moses. For some reason not stated, the two men missing were not able to attend the Tabernacle, and so had to remain in the camp. But the spirit of God had rested upon them as it had on the others, and they had commenced to prophesy in the camp. To 'prophesy' does not mean only to foretell the future, but also to exhort the people to obey God (1 Cor. 14:3). It was in that way the term was used in regard to this incident. The two men went among the people, urging them to cease their murmurings and to cheerfully serve God. Hearing this, and believing that they were usurping the position of their leader, a young man hastened to tell Moses of it. Joshua was present when this happened and was moved to indignation at what he heard. He became jealous that others should do a work that he thought should be left only to Moses. 'My Lord Moses, forbid them!' he urged upon his leader.

"But Moses' reply showed what a truly great man he was. His one desire was that Yahweh's way should prevail, and he was only too pleased for others to work with him to that end. 'Do not be jealous on my account,' he said to Joshua, 'I would that all the people were prophets, and that Yahweh's spirit was on them all'.

"Next day the miracle promised by God took place. A strong wind sprang up driving flocks of migratory quails off their course (Psalm 78:27). All that day, all that night and all the next day, the wind continued. It was the time of the year when quails normally migrate from Europe to Africa. They do so in huge numbers. On this occasion the strong wind drove them towards the camp of Israel. They came in vast numbers, until the sky was darkened with them. They came flying low, only about three feet above the ground (Num. 11:31), so that they were easily caught by the Israelites. So great were the numbers of birds, that the people were able to catch sufficient to have flesh to eat in abundance. Many

stayed up all night, catching them. God's promise to Moses was fulfilled to the letter.

"Yet, despite this wonderful miracle, the people refused to honour the great God who had so liberally satisfied their desires. Instead of waiting to thank Him for His goodness, they thought of only one thing: to cook the birds and consume them, so satisfying their fleshly appetites! Eagerly they did this, and greedily they commenced to eat without a thought to the Giver of this food. Again the anger of God rose against such thoughtless people. As a result, even as they were eating, many of them were stricken with a terrible illness that brought death to large numbers. Now the greedy pleasure of the people was turned to sorrow. Those who had been loudest in their complaints and most greedy in their eating of the flesh suffered more (Psa. 78:31), so that their pleasure was turned into dismay. As many were stricken with death, the place became dotted with the graves of those who had given themselves up so completely to their own greedy desires or lusts. The name of the place was therefore called Kib-roth-hataavah, which means *The Graves of Lust* or *The Graves of the Greedy*. The people had lusted for meat, but in satisfying their desire, had forgotten God, even though He had supplied their wants as well as their needs.

"What an important lesson this incident teaches us! The tragedy came from the sin of discontent, an attitude that led to forgetfulness. How important it is to avoid grumbling and discontent, and to remember God in all our ways so that 'In every thing



we give thanks'. Paul wrote that 'This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you' (1 Thess. 5:18). We need to keep in mind the goodness of God to us, and thank Him for it. The graves of the greedy remind us of the awful results of people satisfying themselves without a thought to Him who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Let us never forget that important lesson.

"And notice how that in the incidents of travel, recorded in Numbers, important lessons are pressed upon us. Lessons teaching us that it is in the little things of life we can learn to please or displease Almighty God."

Envy At Headquarters

"The discontent and complaining of the people affected even Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother" stated Mr. Phillips. "Instead of setting an example of faithfulness to God, and loyalty to their brother by supporting him in the heavy work he was doing in leading the people, they allowed the sin of envy and jealousy to get the better of them. They turned on Moses with a very foolish complaint. 'Hath Yahweh indeed spoken only by Moses?' they asked. 'Hath He not spoken also by us?'"

"There was some truth in what they said," remarked Mr. Phillips as he explained the story to his children. "There usually is in such cases, but jealous people are never satisfied with their position. They must pretend that they are more important than other people. That, indeed, is the cause of jealousy. It usually brings great trouble in its train as it did Miriam on this occasion. As we shall see, she was the ring leader in this."

"Why do you say that there was some truth in what she said?" asked Joan.

"Well consider the circumstances," replied her father. "God had selected Moses, Aaron and Miriam as leaders of the people (Micah 6:4). He had appointed Aaron as spokesman for Moses (Exod. 4:15; 7:1-2), and Miriam was recognised as a prophetess among the women (Exod. 15:20). But both Aaron and Miriam were under Moses, and should have respected and honoured him on every occasion. Usually they did that, but this time they allowed envy to get the better of them. Casting about in their minds for a cause to challenge Moses, they selected the matter of Zipporah, his wife. The Bible records concerning Miriam and Aaron, that they spoke against Moses because of his wife."

"Just a moment," interrupted Graeham. "The Bible says nothing about Zipporah; it merely refers to an Ethiopian woman whom Moses had married".

"That is true", answered his father, "But though this verse

speaks of Moses' wife as an Ethiopian woman, I still believe it concerns Zipporah. Moses had only one wife. In Exodus 2:21 she is described as the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian. But Midian was either in, or close to Cushite territory, that so the two places are linked together in Habakkuk 3:7. From Genesis 25:3 and 1 Chronicles 1:9, it appears that Sheba and Dedan were descendants of both Abraham and Cush, so that Arabia (the site of Sheba and Dedan) can be justly termed Cushite (Ethiopian) territory. Zipporah could therefore be described as both a Cushite (Ethiopian) and as a Midianitish woman, thus reconciling this verse with the statement in Exodus. The Bible treats with three territories called Ethiopia or Cush. One is in the north and is mentioned in Genesis 2:13; another is in Arabia and is referred to in Habakkuk 3:7; and one is in the South, or north Arabia, where we have modern Ethiopia. That site is mentioned in Daniel 11:43. Miriam attempted to heap scorn on Zipporah and to irritate Moses by referring to his wife as an Ethiopian or Cushite woman."

"That was not very nice of them," commented Ann.

"No", agreed her father. "But as you children should know, such tiffs do take place in families! And often over the silliest matters! Evidently Miriam had become jealous of Zipporah when she was brought back to Moses by her father. Perhaps she thought that her position as leader among the women would be jeopardized by the presence of the wife of Moses. Whatever was the real cause, her jealousy increased day by day. She spoke to Aaron about it, and worried him so much, that finally she won him over to her side, and dragged him into the quarrel. It was stupid of Aaron to be so involved, but again these things happen. Together they approached Moses with the foolish statement that they were leaders equally with him."

"What did Moses do?" asked Joan.

"He did nothing to refute their claim," replied her father. "He had enough troubles on his hands without being bothered about such petty claims. He went quickly about his work without even answering them, leaving it to God to vindicate his cause. That is the best thing to do in such a case. The Bible says: 'The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth' (Num. 12:3). Usually leaders of nations are far from meek, but Moses received his power and position from God, and he knew that God would uphold him if necessary.

"But what a wonderful witness to the Godly character of Moses that the record should state this of him," continued Mr. Phillips enthusiastically. "There is even more in it than appears on the surface. Learned men tell us that there are two Hebrew

words very similar to each other, both of which can be translated "meek" in the English language. They are the words *anath* and *anav*.

"What is the point?" asked Graeham as his father paused.

"*Anath* describes the sort of meekness that endures with patience that which is imposed on one unnecessarily and unfairly," explained his father. "*Anav*, on the other hand, denotes the patient bearing with that which cannot be avoided, such as illness or accident. Both are good qualities, but the harder thing to do is the first, and it is certainly greater than the second. It is hard for us to bear with patience that which is unfairly imposed on us, and usually, we attempt to escape from such trials even though others may be hurt in the process. We claim that it is not our fault. But that was not Moses' way. The word used to describe his meekness is the first word, *anath*. The great leader heard the foolish statement of Miriam and Aaron, and he could easily have replied to them, and forced them to take back all they had said. But to do so would have caused more trouble and argument in Israel, and he wanted to avoid the sight of members of his own family quarrelling among themselves before all the people, and thus setting a bad example. Because of that he bore patiently the hurt they gave him.

"In this he foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ (Deut. 18:15, 18-19), who likewise was 'meek above all men'; who also 'when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously' (1 Pet. 2:24). And God is the avenger of all such (Ps. 76:9). He has told us that if we are prepared to be meek as Moses and the Lord Jesus were, He will see that we lose nothing by it. 'Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath', He has commanded. 'For vengeance is Mine, I will repay' (Rom. 12:19).

"Miriam and Aaron soon learned the truth of this, and the folly of their ways. Suddenly, in the midst of the argument, the Voice of Yahweh was heard speaking to Moses, instructing him to bring Miriam and Aaron with him to the Tabernacle (Num. 12:4). When they came into the court of the Tabernacle which stood in the very centre of the camp of Israel, they saw the Divine Glory manifested in the cloud, standing at the door of the Holy Place. They heard, too, the Voice of the Angel calling Miriam and Aaron to stand forth. Fear filled the hearts of Miriam and Aaron as they began to realise the extent of their foolishness.

"Again they heard the Voice of God.

" 'Hearken unto Me,' God said unto them. 'To any ordinary prophet among you, I make Myself known by visions, or talk to him in dreams. But I do not do this with Moses, who is faithful in

My House. He is above all other prophets. I speak to him directly, face to face, and show to him My glory. Why, then, were you not afraid to attack My servant Moses?"

"As the Angel spake, the cloud quivered with Divine light, which then blazed forth fiercely. This manifestation of Divine anger filled Aaron and Miriam with fear. They forgot their jealousy of their brother. Then as the cloud departed from the Tabernacle, to the horror of all present, it was seen that Miriam had been afflicted with the dreadful disease of leprosy. This defiled her so that nobody dared go near her. To whom could Aaron and Miriam now turn for help? There was but one. The brother whom they had previously despised. 'O my lord,' said Aaron to Moses, his younger brother, 'Let us not bear the penalty of this wicked folly we have done! Let her not turn into one like dead!'

"Moses, too, was horrified at the change in his sister. 'Heal her! Pray heal her!' he beseeched God.

"But the Angel replied: 'If her father had but spit on her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that let her be received again.'

"What does that mean?" asked Peter.

"To spit in the face of anybody was a mark of extreme contempt, (Job 30:10; Isa. 50:6; Mark 14:65)", explained his father. "A father would do it only to a most disobedient and obstinate child. Miriam had been such towards her heavenly Father. She had set a bad example in Israel, and it was necessary that she should be publicly disgraced that all might see the results of such folly, and so avoid such action.

"Miriam was treated like any other leper would be. She was put outside the camp for seven days in a separate place. She was shut off from all contact with the Tabernacle, and as she remained lonely and isolated from the rest of the busy camp, she learned to regret her foolish action. After seven days, however, she was conducted back to the camp, a much wiser and humbler woman.

"In this incident, we have another wonderful example of Moses as a type of the Lord Jesus. It is seen in his meekness (Num. 12:3), his position as leader (v. 7), his great privilege of having direct access to God (v. 8), his care for his brother and sister, and his office as mediator helping them in their petitions (v. 13).

"During the time that Miriam was shut out from the Camp as a leper, the people were delayed in their progress to the Land. The site was named *Hazereth* or *The Place where she was separated*,



and here they stopped for seven days. Afterwards, as the cloud led them they moved on again.

"The Israelites were now in the wilderness of Paran. This is a barren and desolate area of burning desert wastes. They found little to eat or drink in such a dry and arid wilderness (Deut. 1:19; 8:15; Jer. 2:6), and suffered much discomfort. But as they moved towards the southern part of Canaan, the countryside and scenery gradually changed. Ultimately they arrived at Kadesh (Num. 13:26). Here a dramatic change of scenery met their eyes, completely different from the desert through which they had trudged. Kadesh was noted for its wells of water (its original name was En-mishpat, meaning *Well of Judgment* — Gen. 14:7); and as they approached it the Israelites saw the welcome sight of ample growth. Fig trees, shrubs and verdure of all kinds grew in the shelter of the hills, providing a scene of beauty, peace and plenty.

"Travellers describe Kadesh as a place of unexpected beauty at the edge of a region of barren desert. We can therefore appreciate the wonderment and joy that the people felt as they saw, for the first time, a glimpse of the kind of Land that God had promised them."



Triumph Turns To Tragedy — Miriam who led the triumphal dancing at the Crossing of the Red Sea is set aside as a leper when she, in envy, opposed her brother, Moses whom she previously helped and applauded.



"Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married" (Num. 12:1). This woman of Cush (see margin) can be identified with Zipporah of Midian.

Chapter Three

THE FAITHLESS SPIES

Spies Are Sent To View the Land — Num. 13

“These chapters are among the saddest in the Bible” remarked Mr. Phillips, as Joan completed the reading of Numbers 13 and 14.

“Well, that is a change, anyhow!” remarked Peter, somewhat frivolously. “Usually each chapter is the ‘most remarkable,’ or the ‘most dramatic’ in the Bible according to Dad!”

“I agree with you, Daddy,” said Ann, loyally. “These two chapters do make sad reading.”

“That is true,” agreed Mr. Phillips. “The events recorded therein show that Israel was not ready for the great purpose that Yahweh had in store for the nation. Later He declared through the Psalmist: ‘My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust, and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries’ (Psa. 81:11-14). God had promised that the Children of Israel would inherit the land, but instead of faithfully putting their trust in Him and courageously entering into their inheritance, they requested that spies should go ahead of them to first search it out. In other words, they were not prepared to walk by faith, but wanted to walk by sight.”

“I think you have made a mistake there,” interrupted Graeham. “The Bible does not say the people wanted the spies to go before them, but that Yahweh commanded it (Num. 13:1-3).”

“Yahweh commanded it only in the sense that He permitted it,” explained his father. “In the Bible you often have two or more accounts of one incident, and it is necessary to combine these in order to obtain the true picture. In Deuteronomy 1:22 we are given additional information. God had already invited the people to go in and possess the land, but they had then sent a deputation to Moses asking that spies should first go and search it out to report on its conditions, and the strength of its inhabitants. Though Yahweh permitted them to do this, it does not mean that He was pleased with their request, anymore than when He later agreed with the demand of the people that they should have a king (cp. 1 Sam. 8:6,22 with Hos. 13:11). He had, Himself, already spied out the land of Promised for them (Ezek. 20:6), and they should have gone forward in faith, nothing doubting. But

they were not prepared to trust Him, and so demanded the sight of their eyes.”

“Did the people select the spies?”

“No! God gave Moses careful instructions regarding this. He was told to select the most notable men in Israel. ‘Every tribe shall send a man (the word ‘man’ in Hebrew is *‘ish*,’ and means a ‘great man’ in contrast to ordinary men), every one a ruler among them, heads of the children of Israel’ (Num. 13:2-3). The leaders of Israel were chosen for this purpose, and therefore, they were responsible for leading the people astray by their faithless, discouraging report. These chapters show the great responsibility that rests on those who assume authority over Yahweh’s people, as well as the duty of the people to make sure that the instructions received are in accordance with God’s will.”

“The spies certainly found the country to be as God had described it,” said Ann.

“Yes,” agreed her father. “Ascending from the south into the gradually rising mountains of Palestine, they saw a glorious country of well-watered hills and valleys. Smiling fields, and well-wooded mountains, with ample feed for flocks and fruit and grain for people, showed that this was, indeed, a land ‘flowing with milk and honey.’ They moved throughout the land, from the harsh wilderness of Zin in the south, where among the shifting sands little can grow, to Rehob in the north. This was the main route that led to Hamath, the northern fortress of Syria (v. 21). Their journey brought them into contact with all kinds of scenery throughout the land, from glorious fertile plains, to majestic mountains standing like giant sentinels overshadowing the plains and valleys. It was ‘the time of the first ripe grapes’ (v. 20); that is, about July, and as they were forty days viewing the land (v. 25), they returned to the camp about August.”

“Nothing of importance seemed to happen to them,” remarked Peter.

“No, but there is one very important part of the land to where God led them,” replied his father. “He brought them to Hebron (v. 22), and they were amazed at the huge bunches of grapes they saw growing in the nearby valley of Eshcol. They cut one, and tying it to a staff so that it would not bruise or come to harm, the marching spies carried it with them.”

“What is so notable about that?” asked Peter.

“You don’t usually find clusters of grapes that big!” retorted Ann.

“I read somewhere that Hebron is claimed by some to be the original home of grapes,” said Graeham. “It is said that bunches weighing **seven** pounds or more are quite common, whilst one

traveller mentions a bunch he saw that was a yard long!”

“That is true,” remarked his father. “But it is not the large bunches of grapes that I have in mind.”

“What is it then?”

“I think God took them to Hebron and Eshcol to remind them that faith and courage were necessary if they were to gain the land”.

“How did it teach them that lesson?” asked Graeham, somewhat impatiently.

“Don’t get impatient, Graeham,” said Ann, sympathetically. “This is only Daddy’s way of drawing you out. We will hear the great mystery explained in due course!”

“Don’t you know who Eshcol was?” asked Mr. Phillips.

“I know that the word means *Grapecluster*,” replied Graeham, “but I do not know anything more about it.”

“Eshcol was an Amorite chieftain, who joined himself to God in the days of Abraham,” explained his father. “He is referred to in Genesis 14:13. The record says that he was ‘confederate with Abram,’ but the Hebrew signifies *he possessed the covenant of Abram*. He assisted Abram in defeating the combined forces of the kings who invaded the land of Palestine from the north. These kings had defeated all the mighty warriors of Palestine, and, in course of doing so, had taken Lot captive. Then Abram with Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, and a handful of men, attacked the victorious army from the north and defeated it. I believe that God brought these faithless spies to the site of this notable victory of faith that they might meditate upon the lesson that this incident in the history of Abram reveals. What thoughts it must have stimulated in men like Joshua and Caleb! If God could give such a victory to Abram, He could certainly overthrow the present inhabitants of the land. No wonder Caleb said later on: ‘We are well able to overcome them’ (v. 30). Perhaps he had the victory of Abraham and Eshcol in mind.”

“That is very interesting,” remarked Graeham.

“The chapter is full of lessons that we can take to ourselves,” said Mr. Phillips. “There is even a lesson to be learnt from the fruits of the land that they took back with them to Kadesh — the grapes, pomegranates and figs (v. 23).”

“What lesson do they teach?”

“All the fruits mentioned had a special meaning to Israel. The nation is likened to a vine (Psa. 80; Ezek. 17), and Christ declared that he was the ‘true vine’ (Jhn. 15:1). The vine is only of use if it produces fruit; apart from which it might as well be destroyed. That is true also of God’s people. Pomegranates were largely used in the Temple worship; the red juice and seed-

packed fruit pointed forward to a multitudinous seed in one, united by the blood of the sacrifice (Gal. 3:26-29). The fig tree is frequently used to represent Israel (Joel 1:7). Its fruit is sweet and nourishing, typing the spiritual fruit that Israel should have produced. Next to bread, figs were the common support of life in the East, and in Judges 9:11 they are styled *good fruit*. The three fruits gathered by the spies, were parabolic of what God requires of all who would serve Him. Firstly, He wants them to become engrafted into the true vine; next He desires them to worship Him united by the blood of the covenant suggested by the seed-packed, red juice pomegranate; finally, He requires a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (the antitype of the fig), referred to in Galatians 5:22, as 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith'.

**The Spies
Discourage
The People**

"But though the spies saw and admired the beauty of the land," continued Mr. Phillips, "they also observed and feared the difficulties that would face them if they tried to invade it. They saw cities with strong, powerful walls that reached high into heaven; they saw heavily armed soldiers of great stature so that they appeared in comparison as grasshoppers; they saw mighty nations dominating the most fertile parts of the country. This evidence of fleshly power troubled them. It destroyed their confidence as it emphasised their physical weak-



The spies fearfully saw cities as walled up to heaven.

ness. Their lack of faith created moral cowardice. As they moved towards Kadesh they expressed their fears one to the other, as they prepared the report they would submit to the people. Ten of them decided that the invasion of the land was beyond the ability of the nation. Caleb and Joshua remembered the mighty works of God in the past, and had the faith to claim they could confidently inherit it. But they were outnumbered by the general opposition.

“On returning to Kadesh the spies were brought before the people in order to present their report. They described the glorious fertile hills and valleys of Canaan how blessed in rainfall and natural beauty; how productive of all those things they had lacked during their march through the wilderness; how pleasant its climate. Moreover they displayed the fruit they had brought back so that the people could admire it. The more the people heard and saw, the greater they rejoiced; but then the spies added words that brought a chill of fear to all the faint-hearted. ‘Nevertheless,’ they added, ‘the inhabitants of the land are too strong for us to overthrow, the cities are heavily fortified, and we saw the giant children of Anak there.’ These dismal tidings brought consternation, dismay and fear to the people. Murmurs broke out among them. They searched about for a scapegoat upon which to vent their anger. As usual, they found one in Moses. Bitterly they turned on him, and angrily they reproached him. How could they successfully war with the dreaded giants of Canaan! What would happen to them and to their children!! The cowardly fear of the spies infected the people. They threatened to revolt. The valiant Caleb (his name means *Wholehearted*), boldly opposed them. With courage born of faith he refused the faithless report of the other spies, and called upon the people to follow Moses and conquer the Land of Promise. ‘We are well able to gain the victory,’ he claimed.

“But the other spies had not the faith of Caleb. ‘We are not able to go up against the people,’ they replied, ‘for they are stronger than we. We saw the warlike children of Anak there; we saw mighty men of great stature; we saw great cities walled up to heaven; we saw the Amalekites, the Hittites and the giants of the land’ (vv. 28, 32, 33). It is remarkable how much they saw with the eye of flesh, and how completely blinded they were to the vision of faith! They allowed the sight of their eyes to blind them to the will and purpose of God, and in so doing, they ‘brought a slander on the land’ (Num. 14:36). The *Book of Proverbs* teaches that ‘where there is no vision the people perish’ (Prov. 29:18). That generation of Israelites lacked vision and perished in the wilderness.”

“Were there really giants in the land?” asked Peter, as his father paused.

“There were men of great stature there as the findings of archaeologists show,” replied Mr. Phillips. “In recent years the ruins of ancient cities have been discovered that show how powerfully they were fortified. These same discoveries have indicated that the men living in them were tall and well-built. On the other hand, the Egyptians were generally of smaller stature, and it may have been that the long years of slavery the Israelites had endured in Egypt resulted in them becoming physically weaker than most other nations. In any case, they allowed present difficulties to dim their vision of faith. As the Psalmist said: ‘Israel *despised* the pleasant land, they *believed not* Yahweh’s word’ (Cp. Deut. 1:8; with Psa. 106:24-25).”

“What a pity!” said Ann, thoughtfully.

“Yes,” agreed her father. “It has been well said that whilst it took only forty hours to take Israel out of Egypt, it took forty years to take Egypt out of Israel! As we read of these things, we need to apply the lesson unto ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, the Apostle Paul says that they are recorded as examples to us. He adds the warning, ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall’. We can make the same mistakes as Israel. We can let the little problems of life so worry us that we forget the power of God to help; we can become so busy and absorbed with everyday matters that we neglect to read the Bible, to think upon the things of God, or give time in prayer to Him. If we do that we are falling into a similar error as did Israel, and we too, will fail. We need to exercise care. In other words, let us not waste time in condemning Israel but learn the lesson of their example and avoid the pitfalls that brought about their disgrace and failure.



Chapter Four

THE DOOMED GENERATION

The People

Rebel —

Numbers 14

“The people were dismayed and filled with fear at the report of the spies,” continued Mr. Phillips, in his outline of the readings from the Bible. “What a change they now revealed from the attitude they previously manifested when they stood triumphant on the other side of the Red Sea, and saw evidence of Pharaoh’s defeated and destroyed army before them! At that time they *sang* with joy and relief (Exod. 15:1); now they *cried* in utter disappointment and despair (Num. 14:1). They saw before them the lush, green surroundings of Kadesh, a glorious oasis on the edge of the wilderness as a hint of the fertility of the Land of Promise, but they had not the faith to see that God would give them the power to conquer, if they placed their trust in Him.

“That night, in their tents, the people of Israel discussed the events of the day. The more they considered their plight, the more depressed they became. The land before them was dominated by powerful and ruthless enemies; that behind them was an arid and awful wilderness. The future appeared hopeless. A sleepless night spent in tears over the prospect of what seemed certain destruction caused them, next morning, to march in a body to Moses and Aaron, complaining: ‘Would God we had died in the land of Egypt, or in the wilderness! Why has God brought us to this land so that we, our wives, and our children should be killed by our enemies!’ They reproached God, saying, ‘Because Yahweh hated us, He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us’.”

“Where is that found?” asked Graeham.

“In Deuteronomy 1:27,” replied his father. “As I told you before, you have to combine the two accounts to obtain the full picture.”

“That was a terrible thing to say after all the love and care that God had bestowed upon Israel,” remarked Ann.

“It was indeed!” agreed Mr. Phillips. “But not content with that, the people boldly and angrily said: ‘Let us choose a captain instead of Moses and go back into Egypt’ (Num. 14:4). They were beginning to panic, and Moses feared what they might do next. He had pleaded with them to have faith. Be not afraid of the Canaanites, he urged. Remember that Yahweh will lead you, and fight for you (Deut. 1:29). But they refused to heed.

Now, in fear of God's anger, Moses and Aaron prostrated themselves to the ground in prayer. Caleb and Joshua also tried to change the minds of the people. They rent their clothes and pleaded with them to show faith, claiming that Yahweh would help them, if they put their trust in Him. But this only irritated the people more. Angrily they rushed upon Caleb and Joshua to stone them, when God suddenly interrupted . . .”

“Before you go on,” interrupted Peter, who was carefully going over the verses in Numbers 14 as his father spoke, “I would like to ask a question. In verse 9, Joshua and Caleb are reported as saying, ‘Rebel not against Yahweh, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defence is departed from them . . .’ What does that mean?”

“According to the Hebrew, from whence our Bible is translated, Joshua's words were, ‘They are like our bread, their shadow hath turned aside from off them,’ his father replied. “Israel's bread was the manna, and when the sun arose upon it, it melted (Exod. 16:21). The Jews knew that, and Joshua was supporting his plea with an illustration familiar to them, claiming that when the divine heat is turned on Israel's enemies they would melt as did the manna when left to the heat of the sun. Yahweh is likened to the Sun (Psa. 84:11), so that the illustration is apt”.

“I see.”

“However the people were in no mood to listen” continued Mr. Phillips. “They rushed upon Caleb and Joshua with murder in their hearts, but God saved them. Suddenly the blinding light of the Glory of Yahweh appeared over the tabernacle in the sight of the angry people. This fearful sign caused them to halt, and in the hush, the Voice of Yahweh was heard. The great and terrible God, Who had revealed His love to Israel in His care for them many times, was now provoked to wrath by the faithlessness of His people. He threatened to destroy them utterly with pestilence, and make of Moses a nation greater and mightier than they. But as before, their faithful and unselfish leader, stood in the breach, as mediator, and earnestly pleaded on their behalf. His prayer is given in Numbers 14:13-19, and is as eloquent in expression as it is simple in request. It breathes his ardent desire that Yahweh's Name should be everywhere honoured, and pleads that He Who had revealed Himself as ‘longsuffering, of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, though by no means clearing the guilty,’ should overlook the wilfulness of Israel and reveal in the nation His great purpose. And God, Who is ever merciful, accepted the prayer of His servant. The guilty were destroyed. The ten faithless spies died immediately by

plague; all that generation were condemned to perish in the wilderness; but Yahweh promised that their 'little ones' whom they said would die (v. 3), would inherit the land their parents had despised (v. 31)."

"How did those who were to be destroyed in the wilderness die?" asked Joan.

"They died gradually, as men do in the city. Israel was condemned to wander in the wilderness until forty years had passed by. As two years had already elapsed since leaving Egypt, this meant they would continue in the wilderness for another thirty-eight years (Deuteronomy 2:14)."

"I notice that the word 'wander' in v. 33 is given as 'feed' in the margin of my Bible," remarked Graeham. "Is there any significance in that?"

"There is great meaning in it," answered his father, "and it serves to illustrate the love and mercy of God. The word rendered 'wander' is *pasture* or *feed* in the Hebrew. It expresses the goodness of God, for although He condemned the people to remain in the wilderness, He promised that He would continue to feed them as before."

"What does verse 34 mean?" asked Peter. "It reads: 'Ye shall know my breach of promise!'"

"Some versions render that phrase as *vengeance*," explained Mr. Phillips, "although I think that the expression, as it appears in your Bible it is quite clear. Though Israel had accepted Yahweh's covenant as we read in Exodus 24:3, the people had completely broken it, and were, in consequence, banished into the wilderness. As they had broken their word, or 'breached their promise', Yahweh declared that He would not keep His side of the contract."

"I understand."

"After listening to Moses' rebuke, the people were moved by self-pity. Another sleepless night was spent by many, which caused a further change of heart. Next morning they arose and approached Moses saying that they were now ready to undertake the work of invasion which they had refused to do at first. But it was too late. Moses warned them not to attempt to do so, for God would not now help them, and they would suffer defeat at the hands of their enemies. Those disobedient people, however, rejected the warning of Moses, and issued forth from the camp in military array to make an attack upon the steep and difficult pass leading to southern Palestine. But the Amalekites and Amorites came against them; the Israelites were easily defeated, and were soon fleeing before their enemies as men run from a swarm of bees (Deut. 1:44). The army fled east towards the land of Edom,

to a place called Hormah (Num. 14:45), which means *Destruction*. Against the commandment of God they had left Kadesh (Numbers 13:26), which means *The Sanctuary*, and now had been driven by their enemies to Hormah or *Destruction*. The meaning of these two names provides a parable of the spiritual state of Israel at that time," said Mr. Phillips.

"I want you to mark a very important verse in this chapter we are considering," he continued. "It is Numbers 14:21. Read it for me please, Joan."

Joan read: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh."

"Why do you think God made that proclamation, at that particular time?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"Because it is His purpose to do this," replied Ann. "He will send Jesus Christ back to this earth (Acts 1:11), to set up His kingdom upon it (Daniel 2:44), that all mankind might obey him (Isaiah 60:12; Psalm 72:7,8,17). Then 'righteousness and praise shall spring forth before all the nations' (Isaiah 61:11), and instead of all the wickedness and evil that is seen in the world now, God's name will be everywhere honored, and men will live as He would have them do."

"That is a very good answer, Ann," said her father, "but not quite what I want. Why should God tell Moses this at that particular time? To give you a lead, why did God bring Israel out of Egypt?"

"To save them from slavery," replied Peter.

"That is only part of His purpose," answered Mr. Phillips. "Something else was required. We are told what that was in Jeremiah 13:11. There God says: 'I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel that they might be unto Me for a people, for a name, for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.' In Deuteronomy 28:9-10 Moses also reminded the people that God had called them that they might be unto Him 'a holy people,' that 'all people of the earth might see that they were called by the name of Yahweh,' and that the nations might say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people, for what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them' (Deuteronomy 4:6-7). The nations would hardly say that concerning the people that murmured and complained their way through the wilderness, or were chased as men before bees, by the Canaanites because they disobeyed God! We have seen, in our reading and discussions on the Bible, how Yahweh chose the people of Israel, guided, educated, and showed His purpose to them. He did that in order that they might reflect His glory, and that they might pass on to other nations the message of His plan,

Kadesh-Barnea



Incidents of Travel. The children of Israel arrived at the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea just south of the borders of the Promised Land. But because of their faithlessness they were not permitted to enter therein, but were condemned to wander in the wilderness for thirty-eight years until the old generation had perished. Towards the end of that time, Aaron was conducted to the summit of Mount Hor by Moses and Eleazar, and having transferred his robes of office to his son and successor, he died upon that mountain before which was spread out the wilderness where most of the wanderings had taken place. Mount Hor is west of the Arabah, not east of it as is sometimes taught.

Mount Hor



but as Jeremiah says, and as we have seen in our reading from Numbers 15, 'they would not hear'."

"Does that mean that God's purpose failed?" asked Ann.

"No," replied her father. "His purpose was only delayed by the folly of the people that came out of Egypt. No mortal can defeat God's purpose, and that is the meaning of Numbers 14:21, which I asked Joan to read. The word *but* at the beginning of the verse is important. It is as though Yahweh said, 'Though Israel has failed Me, My plan will yet succeed. My glory will be manifested, not limited to one small nation, but revealed in all the earth.' Now tell me, how could God's glory be revealed in Israel?"

"You already told us that when you quoted Deuteronomy 28:9 and 4:6-7," replied Graeham. "If Israel had listened to God, and obeyed His laws, it would have been to His glory, and He would have brought them into the Land of Promise."

"That is true," agreed Mr. Phillips. "We also can reflect the glory of God when we read His word and obey what we find contained therein. People will then see that we live different lives from those of others, and will understand why we do so: because we read God's Word and reverence His Name. That reflects credit to God. Now imagine if all the people in the earth lived like that! There would be no more crime, no war, no evil as we see it today; but peace and happiness would prevail. That is Yahweh's purpose (see Isa. 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14; Psalms 72:19), and to that end He will send Jesus Christ to this earth (Acts 3:19-21). What He proposes to do in Israel, He will accomplish in all the world. We are told what this is in Jeremiah 33:7-9, which reads: 'I will cause the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.'"



Chapter Five

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS WITHOUT HOPE IN THE WILDERNESS

Instructions for the Next Generation

The disobedient army of Israel had been defeated by the Canaanites and driven to Hormah. There the scattered remnants of their forces regrouped and returned to the camp of Kadesh. The people pleaded with God to forgive their sin and grant them occupation of the Land of Promise (Deut. 1:45). But repeated failures on their part had proved them unsuited for His purpose, and He turned a deaf ear to their pleading. That generation of Israelites, like the unwise virgins of the parable (Matthew 25:11-12; 7:23) found the door now closed to them. They were condemned to remain in the wilderness without hope. They stayed close to Kadesh “for many days”, wandering from place to place in the wilderness. Only a few incidents emerge from this dismal sojourn in the harsh and barren wastes of Paran.

However it is significant that immediately Yahweh had told one generation of Israelites that they were to die in the wilderness, He set down instructions for those who would enter the land. The very next chapter commences with the words: “When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you . . .” Thus the wickedness of man did not defeat the purpose of God, and will not today. Numbers 15 contains instructions for the people who would enter the land. They were warned to avoid the mistakes of their fathers; to perform the vows they offer before Yahweh, and to be careful not to commit the sin of presumption — for this was the very thing that had brought disaster to those who had come out of Egypt. Anybody guilty of such wickedness was to be put to death (vv. 30-32).

These instructions show that Yahweh had not completely cut off the nation. As He promised the people, He not only continued to teach them through Moses (Num. 15:1,17,35), but fed them with manna, supplied them with water, and provided them with raiment (Deut. 8:2-6; 29:5-6).

But the older generation that came out of Egypt had not responded to these acts of love. The rite of circumcision was discontinued (Joshua 5:4-8), and the celebration of Passover omitted. Perhaps the people felt they were cut off from the Covenant of Promise, and that there was no advantage in continuing these ordinances.

Only a few incidents of this time are recorded. The first is described in Numbers 15:32-36. A man was found openly breaking the Sabbath Law. This was a case of "despising the word of Yahweh". It was rebellion, and as such had to be severely punished in case others followed his example. Therefore, by command of God, this man was put to death for his sin, representatives of all Israel stoning him with stones. An important lesson was impressed upon the people. They could not sin against God without suffering for it.

Following this incident, God commanded that the Israelites should make a fringe of blue on the borders of their garments. They were taught that when they looked upon this fringe of blue, they should remember the God of heaven, and obey the commandments that He set them to do. This distinctive clothing reminded Israelites that they were expected to be different from all other peoples, for they were called out of the nations, to "be holy unto God" (Num. 15:40). Blue is the colour of heaven, and therefore of God-manifestation. As a people they should aim to glorify God.

Fringes Of Blue

The word (*tsisith*) is said to be more correctly rendered as "tassels". They were associated with "twisted threads" (Heb. *gedhillim*), worn on the four corners of the outer garment known as the mantle or the "cloak". The Hebrews were commanded to "make . . . fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations . . . (that they may) remember all the commandments of Yahweh" (Num. 15:38-39; Deut. 22:12). These fringes did not go continuously around the edge of the mantle but were gathered in tassels at the four corners. The tassels were simply twisted threads attached to the garment with blue thread: the blue reminding Israelites of their heavenly origin, and what is required of their daily conduct.

Such tassels were still worn in New Testament times; the Pharisees enlarging them for vain show (Matt. 23:5). It is probable that the Lord himself also had tassels attached to his own mantle, for the hem of his garment was regarded as of spiritual significance (Matt. 9:20; 14:36). In modern times Orthodox Jews still wear prayer shawls, known as the *tallith*, to which tassels are attached. A smaller *tallith*, worn as an undergarment over the chest and upper back, also has tassels.

**A Plot to
Overthrow Moses
— Numbers 16**

Against the advice of God, and without the support of Moses, the Israelites tried to force their way into the Promised Land.

They were beaten back by the enemy with great loss of life (Num. 14:45). The warriors returned to Kadesh dejected and angry, and unreasonably blamed Moses for the failure of their venture. They now realised that they were condemned to march up and down the wilderness, amid the naked rocks and barren sands of the desert, until death claimed them.

It was, therefore, a complaining, bitter nation that left Kadesh to wander without hope for thirty-eight years (Deut. 2:14). Where there is complaining and bitterness there are always agitators ready to stir up trouble and revolt. On this occasion it was Korah, a prince of the tribe of Levi. He saw in the general disappointment an opportunity to seize the priesthood from Aaron. He was sure that the failure of Israel lay in the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and believed that he could do better himself. Korah was a leader among the Levites, a descendant of Kohath, one of the sons of Levi. He was first cousin to Moses and Aaron (Exod. 6:18-21; 1 Chron. 6:2-3), and according to Josephus, the Jewish historian, he was very wealthy, and a most eloquent public speaker. He envied Moses and Aaron because of the positions they held (Psalm 106:16), and planned to wrest the power from them.

Moreover, he readily received support from a number of other Levites; and, in addition, he sought the help of others outside his own tribe. He received it from disgruntled members of the tribe of Reuben. Reuben was firstborn of the sons of Jacob, and because of that the tribe normally should have been granted the preeminence over the other tribes. But, because of Reuben's shocking sin, that position had been given to Judah. This caused jealousy among some leaders of Reubenites, so that Korah found among their number some willing to join him in his plot. He promised that if the revolt succeeded, whilst he and his fellow Levites should have the priesthood, the princes of Reuben would be given the civil control of the nation. With that in mind, Dathan, Abiram and On, princes of the tribe of Reuben, joined the conspiracy (Num. 16:1). Their tents were close to those of Korah, for the tents of the Kohathites were set up on the side of the Tabernacle where those of the tribe of Reuben were also placed.

No less than two hundred and fifty Levitical princes, men of high repute in Israel, joined Korah's revolt. They, too, blamed Moses and Aaron for the failure of the nation to reach the Promised Land. The more they discussed this among themselves, the

more certain they became that right was on their side so that Korah soon found himself at the head of a numerous following. This not only convinced him that his cause was just, but also that he had sufficient help to openly attack Moses and Aaron with every prospect of success. The time was ripe, and placing himself at the head of the Levites supporting him, he approached Moses and Aaron accusing them of taking to themselves positions that God had never granted them. "You take too much upon yourselves," he boldly claimed. "All the congregation is holy. Why, then, do you think you should lift up yourselves above the rest of us?"

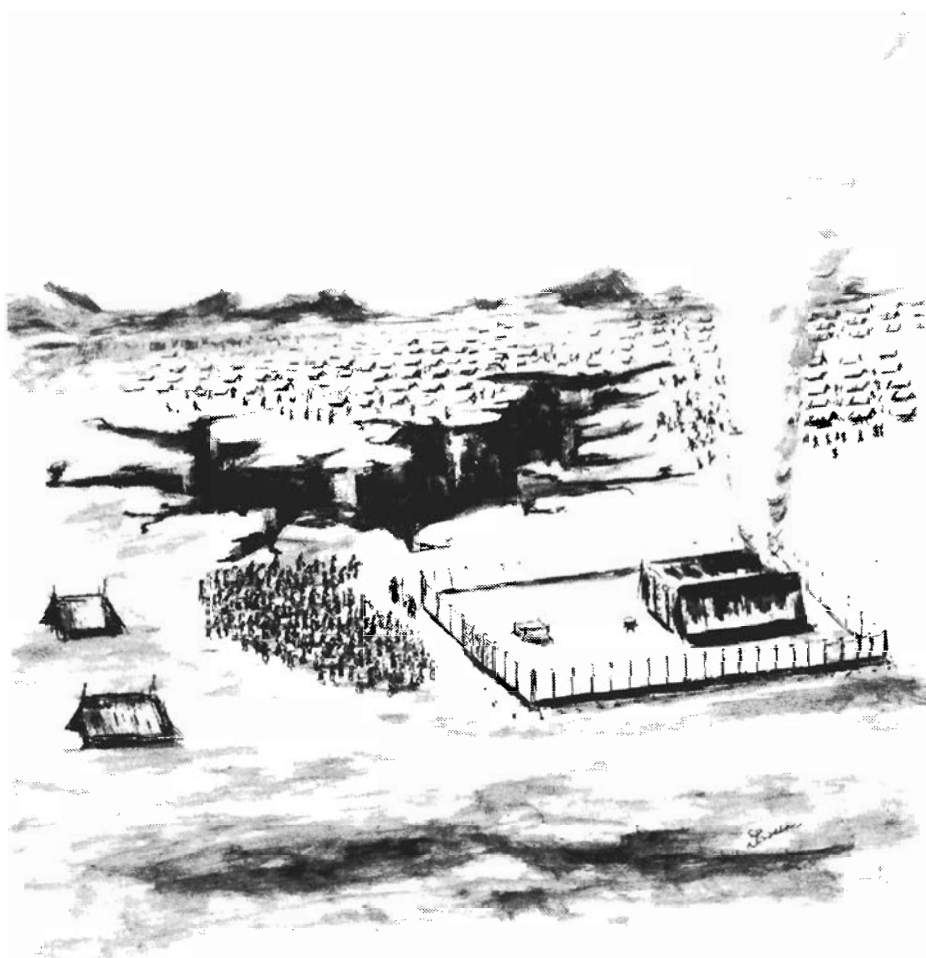
These words of rebellion, filled Moses with concern. He feared lest God should destroy the whole of the rebellious congregation. The unreasonable opposition tired him and made him despondent. The continual heavy work of caring for such an ungrateful and complaining people seemed beyond his ability to cope. He was over eighty years of age, and had never aspired to leadership, but had been appointed by Yahweh to the position. He was not an eloquent speaker like Korah, and was not prepared to stoop to flattery in order to win the support of weak, mortal men, as Korah had done. But there was One to Whom he could turn with full assurance that He would help. Therefore, before answering Korah, he quietly turned to God in prayer, and thus strengthened, replied: "Tomorrow, Yahweh will show who are His, and whom He has selected to come near unto Him as His priests. You, Korah, and all the two hundred and fifty Levites with you, come tomorrow before the Tabernacle with censers in your hands, and light incense before Yahweh. We shall then see whom He has chosen to be prince and priest in Israel!"

This was a challenge indeed! God had commanded that Aaron and his sons alone should offer incense (Exod. 30:7-8; 2 Chron. 26:18), and had warned that death would be the penalty of others attempting to do so (Exod. 30:9). Korah and his company should have known that, for they had seen what happened to Nadab and Abihu when they had dared to come before Yahweh with strange fire. On that occasion, fire from Yahweh had leaped out and consumed those wicked men (Lev. 10:1-2).

But Korah and the men with him now believed that God was on their side, and so they willingly accepted the challenge that Moses put to them.

Moses warned them of the consequences. "You are despising the work that God has given you to do as assistants to the priests," he told Korah and his company. "In so doing, you are not arguing with Aaron, but with Yahweh."

He next sent for Dathan and Abiram, and commanded them to



The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram was punished by Yahweh causing an earthquake to split open the earth and swallow them up in the pit formed. This was a “new thing” publicly revealing the abhorrence of God at the attitude and action of these princes (see Numbers 16:29-34).

come up; but they refused to do so. They had rejected Moses as their leader. They accused him of failing in his mission, and of bringing disaster upon the nation. "You have not only failed to bring us into a land that flows with milk and honey, so that we must die in the wilderness, but you also want to be prince over us. We will not come up!"

This answer angered Moses. He pleaded with Yahweh to reject their offering and their petitions. Then, turning from them, he prepared for the contest on the morrow.

By now all Israel was in a state of great excitement. Most of the people sided with Korah, for they, too, felt that Moses had failed; nor did they like the idea of wandering aimlessly in the wilderness until death overtook them. Therefore, on the following day, when Korah and the two hundred and fifty Levites assembled at the Tabernacle, representatives of all the tribes were there to view the proceedings. They saw on one side Korah at the head of the two hundred and fifty Levites of renown; and on the other side, the lonely figures of Moses and Aaron. Each of the rebellious Levites held in his hand a censer, burning with incense. It filled the air with fragrance. It was an exciting moment. Then, suddenly, a hush fell upon the huge congregation of people, for they saw the glory of Yahweh suddenly shine out from the front of the Tabernacle. The excitement now became intense. The shining forth of the Divine glory made one and all in that great assembly, recognise that the crisis was worthy of God's attention. The rebels were confident that right was with them, and they waited in the hope that God would reveal Himself to be on their side. The people of Israel sympathised with them, rather than with Moses and Aaron, who were thus isolated from the rest. Then suddenly, the Voice of God was heard, speaking unto Moses and Aaron, saying unto them: "Separate yourself from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

As those dread words were heard, fear took hold of the people. They knew full well what the anger of Yahweh meant if directed towards them. Who could save them? They had turned on Moses and rejected his leadership! But that faithful man of God had not deserted them. Once again he stood in the breach. He did not want anybody to die on his account. His great objective in life was the salvation of his people. He could overlook their murmurings and anger against him. He could even sympathise with their disappointment through being denied the Promised Land. He did not want them to be destroyed, but rather changed in heart and mind. With his brother Aaron, he fell down **before** Yahweh pleading that all Israel should not be

punished because of the wickedness of a few. Once more God accepted the prayer of Moses, and the people were saved. But those who had plotted against Moses, and led the revolt had to be punished. To ignore their action would mean that God could be defied without danger. Moses commanded Israel: "Depart from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and touch nothing of theirs lest ye be consumed with them".

The people who had been only too happy to support these men in their plot, now just as quickly drew away from them. They were left standing at the opening of their tents in a little group on their own. Then Moses addressed all the people as they fearfully watched to see what would happen. "By this you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works, and that I have not done them of mine own mind," he said, "If these men die a common death, then Yahweh hath not sent me. But if a new thing happen, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up with all that are with them, then you will know that these men have sinned against Yahweh."

No sooner had he finished speaking, than the earth began to shake; and to the horror of the people, as they gazed spellbound, the ground opened forming a frightening pit, swallowing up the three foolish princes. With a cry of horror, the terror-stricken people rushed away from the spot, lest they likewise perish.

Meanwhile, the two hundred and fifty Levites, who had not assembled at the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, but had remained in the Tabernacle, with their censers smoking with incense suffered for their folly. A fierce flame of fire flared out from before the Lord and consumed them, leaving charred bodies and the brass of the censers on the ground.

Yahweh commanded Moses to gather up the brass, and with it to make a covering for the altar of burnt offerings, that it might be a "memorial unto the children of Israel", teaching them to treat the things of God with greatest reverence: only the priests, whom He appointed were permitted to come near Him to offer incense.

In obedience to the instructions of Yahweh, Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, and made of them broad plates for the altar of burnt offering. This was for a sign and a memorial. It taught the people that they must not presume in their approach to Yahweh, but treat with greatest respect all forms of their worship. Through this tragedy they learned to fear Yahweh, and such fear, or reverence, is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). Though today the altar, with its plates of brass, no longer exists, the "memorial" remains as recorded in the Bible, teaching the lesson of Leviticus 10:3: "I will be sanctified in them that come

nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified". Yahweh is "sanctified" by those who desire to please Him, when they obey exactly the laws He has set for their observance.

Further Revolt

One would have thought that the terrible and unusual punishment that Yahweh had brought on Korah and his followers would have been sufficient to teach the people that they should obey God, and respect Moses and Aaron whom He had appointed. Instead, the people continued to blame Moses for their troubles. Perhaps they felt that he had not properly represented their cause to God. They were angered at the death of so many princes, and depressed at the knowledge that they were condemned to wander without hope in the terrible wilderness until death claimed them. That night for them was a sleepless one, and the next morning, they arose seething with anger and revolt against Moses and Aaron.

The more they discussed these things among themselves the angrier they became. Gathering together, in hostile mood they marched on to the tents of Moses and Aaron, determined to avenge the tragedy which they blamed on to them. "You have killed the people of the Lord," they declared fiercely. They began to move against Moses, and would have killed him. Suddenly their attention was drawn to the cloud overshadowing the Tabernacle. It glowed brightly with the fulness of Divine glory. The people gazed at it in fear, and then heard the voice of God speaking unto Moses: "Separate yourself from this congregation, that I may consume it in a moment!" Once more the fierceness of Yahweh's wrath threatened to destroy the congregation of Israel. But once again Moses and Aaron stood in the breach and pleaded with God on behalf of the people. On this occasion, however, their prayers were not sufficient. The people had openly revolted against Yahweh. They had rejected His authority to appoint as leader whomsoever He would. And now He was determined to punish them for their sin. He ignored the intercession of Moses, and continued to move against the people. Recognising how urgent was the matter, Moses turned to Aaron: "Take a censer," he ordered his brother, "And put fire therein from off the altar, and burn incense, and make a sacrifice, and go in and make an atonement for the people. Do it quickly, for I perceive that there is wrath gone out from Yahweh, the plague is begun, and the people will be destroyed!"

Aaron hastened to do as Moses commanded. He took his censer, and filling it with incense, he offered a sacrifice, as an atonement for the people. Moving to where the plague had begun to strike he stood between the dead and the living. By this action the plague was stayed. But in spite of this, in that terrible

day of folly and disaster, 14,700 people died in addition to those who were destroyed with Korah.

**Why the Children
of Korah
were Saved**

“That is the record of one of the worst revolts in Israel’s history,” remarked Mr. Phillips, after telling the story of Korah’s rebellion to his family. “It warns us not to despise those whom God has appointed to positions of authority (Heb. 13:17). In attacking Moses and Aaron, the people were really attacking God.”

“There is one thing that puzzles me,” remarked Graeham, who had been studying Numbers 16 as his father was speaking. “Verse 2 states that Korah, Dathan and Abiram stood in the door of their tents with their wives and children and that all were destroyed together. It does not seem fair that the children should suffer for the mistakes of the parents.”

“The children of Korah were not destroyed,” replied his father. “Numbers 26:11 states that the ‘children of Korah died not’.”

“What about the children of Dathan and Abiram?” asked Graeham.

“They, unfortunately, were destroyed with their fathers,” answered Mr. Phillips.

“Why should God save the children of Korah but not those of Dathan and Abiram?” asked Peter. “It does not seem fair to me.”

“God is just, and therefore there must have been some very good reason for that,” replied his father. “Perhaps, in some way, the children of Korah refused to follow their father in his wickedness, or it may be that God saved them because He foresaw that they would prove worthy men”.

“What do you mean by that?” asked Graeham.

“The descendants of Korah became very prominent in Israel,” explained Mr. Phillips. “Samuel the prophet, and Heman the singer” were descendants of Korah (1 Chron. 6:33-37). The descendants of Heman were honoured by King David by being appointed as singers for the Temple worship (1 Chron. 15:17; 16:41-42; 25:1-5), so that we find that some of the Psalms are dedicated to ‘the sons of Korah’ (Psa. 42,44,45,46, etc.). Other descendants of Korah were made gate-keepers (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:19) and bakers for the Sanctuary, preparing the shewbread and sacrificial cakes (1 Chron. 9:31-32). Therefore, although Korah himself was held in dishonour, his sons rose to fame.”

“That is very interesting,” remarked Peter. “It shows that God is just in all His ways”.

“There are many similar examples throughout the Bible,” said Mr. Phillips. “Hezekiah, one of the greatest of Judah’s kings was son of one of Judah’s worst kings. Josiah, another great ruler, was son of a wicked man. On the other hand, we have many examples of the children of righteous parents turning from the advice and upbringing of their fathers. The sons of Samuel disgraced their father (1 Samuel 8:3); but an even worse example was the grandson of Moses, who, turned out to be a real trouble-maker in Israel.”

“I have never read that in the Bible,” said Graeham.

“You will find it in Judges 18:30,” replied his father. “There we read, ‘The children of Dan set up a graven image, and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests of the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land.’ This describes idolatrous worship in Israel, with the grandson of Moses assisting it.”

“But that verse says nothing about Moses!” protested Graeham.

“I was about to explain that,” continued his father. “The word ‘Manasseh’ in this verse is *Moses* in the original Hebrew. The Jews altered the word because they hated to hear their leader’s name used in such a connection. Jonathan, the son of Gershom, was the grandson of Moses, and assisted to lead the people of Dan into idolatry. What a terrible example he set in Israel! And what a sad end to a great family! On the other hand, in some way not disclosed, the children of Korah refused to follow their father in his evil conduct and became prominent leaders in the worship of God. These things show us that we cannot always rely upon our parents, but must, ourselves, do what is right and true in the sight of God. No man will ever get into the Kingdom of God because of what his parents were, but must himself show that he is worthy of a place therein. If only the people of Israel had realised that, when Korah plotted against Moses, and had refused to follow him in this wicked way, then 14,950 of them would not have been destroyed. The end of this sad incident brought great mourning in Israel, for almost every family must have been touched with death.”

“Why should the children of Dathan and Abiram suffer with their parents, whereas the children of Korah were saved?” asked Peter.

“We are not told the reason,” replied his father. “But we can be assured that there was a very good cause for it. Perhaps they inherited the same rebellious attitude as their fathers, and therefore were deserving of punishment. When you come upon a nest of snakes, you don’t save the little ones alive merely because they

have not yet learned to bite, but you destroy them all, because you know they will grow to be a danger. That may have been the reason why the children of these wicked men were destroyed with their parents. God would know if they were worth saving. It also taught a very powerful lesson to Israel, and can likewise teach us, that parents need to be very careful lest they bring trouble not only upon themselves, but upon those who are near and dear to them. Many people blame God for troubles they bring upon themselves. If they would observe His ways they would save themselves a lot of harm. That is one of the lessons to be learnt from this terrible and sad incident in the history of Israel."

**The Wonderful Sign
of the Rod
That Budded**

"The terrible punishment that God brought upon Korah and the two hundred and fifty princes of Levi that supported him in his revolt, established Aaron as leader of that tribe," remarked Mr. Phillips, commenting upon the reading of Numbers 16 and 17 with his family, "but it still remained necessary to show to the rest of the tribes that he had to be respected by all Israel as high priest. It was a case of whether mob rule or God's rule were to prevail. Yahweh, therefore, determined to show beyond all doubt that His choice was with Aaron. He commanded the princes of the tribe, to each take his rod, and write upon it the name of his tribe, and He would show whom He had appointed to be High Priest. On Levi's rod, the name of Aaron was inscribed".

"What sort of a rod did they use?" asked Ann.

"The Hebrew word *matteh* rendered 'rod,' means a staff, or sceptre, and was used as the symbol of authority (Ezek. 19:14; Mic. 6:9)," explained her father. "It was probably shaped out of the wood of an almond tree, which the Hebrews called the 'waking tree' because it is the first tree to awaken to new life in the Spring. The almond wood of the staff thus symbolised the watchfulness of the one bearing the badge of office. It is used in Psalm 110:2 for the Lord Jesus who will wield his sceptre over all Israel when he returns to take up his great power and reign (1 Cor. 15:24-26). Another interesting fact about this word *matteh* is that it is not only translated 'rod' but also 'tribe'. Thus the rod was a fit symbol for the tribe, because the same word described both."

"That is very interesting!" remarked Graeham.

"Having collected all the rods," continued Mr. Phillips, "Moses laid them up in the Tabernacle in order that Yahweh might reveal to Israel the tribe that He had chosen to approach near unto Him to conduct the service of the people. Next morning the sign was clear. Aaron's rod had not only budded and blossomed, but also yielded almonds. Moses brought it out in the

sight of all the people that they might clearly understand that Yahweh had chosen Aaron and Levi for the work of the Tabernacle."

"Why should Yahweh select such a sign?" asked Peter.

"The Almond Tree is called in Hebrew the *Shakeh* or 'Awakening' tree," replied his father. "As I told you a moment ago, it is first tree to bud and blossom in the spring, and is therefore, a symbol of the resurrection."

"But what had the resurrection to do with Aaron?" continued Peter.

"We know that Aaron did not rise from the dead," explained his father, "though one day he will do so. But Aaron, himself, foreshadowed a greater high priest, even the Lord Jesus, and the budding of his rod taught that God would awaken from the dead this greater high priest, of whom Aaron was a type. The resurrection of Christ was an indisputable witness to the truth of his claim to be the Son of God (see Rom. 1:4). Notice, too, that Moses was told to take Aaron's rod, and lay it up in the Most Holy Place as a 'token against the rebels' (Num. 17:10)".

"What is meant by that?" asked Ann.

"Let us first consider why God caused the rod to bud and blossom in the time of Aaron, and then we can better understand how it applies to the Lord Jesus," replied her father. "Nearly 15,000 people had died through the revolt of Korah. As a result, death was very much drawn to the attention of the Israelites; then came this great sign which spoke of the resurrection. It was as though God was showing the people that death could be overcome through the appointed high priest whom He would send".

"Is there any importance in the fact that Aaron's rod was laid up in the Most Holy Place after it had budded?" asked Graeham.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Phillips. "As the budding almond rod pointed forward to the resurrection of Christ, our high priest, so the action of Moses in laying it up in the Most Holy Place pointed forward to what would happen to the Lord."

"How does it do that?" asked Graeham.

"In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul likens the Lord's ascension into heaven as entering the Most Holy Place (Heb. 6:19; 9:24; 10:19)," explained his father. "Therefore, in causing Moses to place this rod in the Most Holy, Yahweh was revealing His purpose with His son, our high priest."

"There is a very good reference in Isaiah 4:2 which seems to have some bearing upon this subject," remarked Graeham. "The prophet says: 'In that day shall the branch of Yahweh be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely, for them that are escaped of Israel'."

"That is a very excellent thought" commented Mr. Phillips. "And here is a further one. Aaron's rod was laid up in the Most Holy as a 'testimony against the rebels of Israel,' and these same words are true of the risen Christ."

"How is that?" asked Peter.

"The resurrection of Christ, like the budding of Aaron's rod, proved that God was with Jesus," explained his father. "It confounded the unbelief of those who rejected him, and declared: 'We will not have this man to reign over us' (Luke 19:14)." It witnessed to the truth of his claim that he was the son of God".

"There is a part of this chapter I can't understand," said Ann, who had been puzzling over Numbers 17 with a frown on her face. "Verse 12 records that the Jews came to Moses, and said, 'Behold we die, we perish, we all perish!' What caused them to say that?"

"It shows that the people did not quite understand the purpose of Yahweh," replied her father. "At first they claimed that it was the right of anybody to freely approach Him. They told Moses and Aaron that they took too much upon themselves, and that all the assembly of Israel was equally chosen of God as those two leaders. As a result, two hundred and fifty princes had entered the court of the Tabernacle with incense to offer on their own account, and were slain by God for their boldness. Now Israel went to the other extreme, and claimed that as nobody could approach Him, all would die in their sins."

"But couldn't they approach Him through Aaron?" asked Peter.

"Yes, but they did not understand that at the time."

"That surely cannot be right," exclaimed Graeham, "for had not Moses explained this to them?"

"Yes, but Israel, like us all, forgot much of what they had been taught," replied Mr. Phillips. "Therefore God again explained to the people the duties of the Priests, the Levites and the people. Those duties are recorded in Numbers 18. Israel was taught, once again, that great humility was required if they were to approach God in a way that would please Him. God has ever desired that all should come unto Him and live, but though His way of salvation is offered to all, we must not treat it as something common or ordinary. We must learn to set Yahweh apart as high and exalted above all flesh, and approach Him with the greatest respect. He showed this to Israel in a very wonderful manner. Of all nations, He had selected Israel as the only one through which men of all nations should approach Him. But there was a danger in this that Israelites might become conceited, and imagine that they were

really better than other nations. He therefore selected one tribe, of all the tribes of Israel, and commanded that all worshippers should approach Him through that one tribe. But this privilege could make that one tribe (Levi) believe that it was more righteous than the others, so Yahweh commanded that they should become servants to the priests, who were taken only from the family of Aaron. Then, lest the family of Aaron should exalt itself in pride, God selected one man out of all Israel, the High priest, and he alone was allowed to enter the Most Holy, and come before Yahweh."

"All were taught to look unto the High Priest then!" said Ann.

"That is true," replied her father. "But the High Priest was not allowed to come before Yahweh without sacrifice, so that he was humbled as well. By that means, the people were taught that flesh must not exalt itself before Yahweh, and that all must depend for salvation upon the sacrifice that He will provide, even the Lord Jesus Christ."

"It is wonderful how all these things pointed forward to the Lord Jesus," said Graeham. "The Jews were taught to look forward to him, as we look back."

"Were the Levites assistants to the priests?" asked Ann.

"Yes," answered Mr. Phillips. "God said that He had joined Levi to the priests to act as their servants (Num. 18:2). The word 'Levi' means *joining*, so that in this verse there is a play on words: 'Levi (i.e., *joining*) is joined unto thee.' They had to help the priests in their work. At the same time they had to be careful that they did not presume to take upon themselves the standing, authority and work of the priests. It is also important to remember that neither the Priests nor the Levites were given any inheritance in Israel (Num. 18:20-22); they had no land allotted to them as a tribal division."

"How did they live then?" asked Joan.

"All of Israel had to support them," replied her father. "All Israelites were required to give a tithe (or tenth) of all the increase of their fields and herds to the Levites in order that they might live; and the Levites, in turn, had to give a tithe of all the tithes that they received to the Priests (Num. 18:24-26)."

"Well, they lived pretty easily" exclaimed Peter.

"Yes, Peter!" said Ann, a little sharply, "It seems to me they were something like you, and left the work to the others!"

"They worked hard enough," said Mr. Phillips. "The Levites not only helped the Priests in their duties day by day, but during the wandering in the wilderness they carried all the boards and articles of the Tabernacle from place to place. When Israel were settled in the land, they acted as teachers to the people (Lev.

10:11; Deut. 24:8), and as judges when any arguments arose (Deut. 17:9). For that reason, it was necessary for the Levites to be spread throughout Israel in order to attend to the needs of all the tribes. Therefore, once Israel was settled in the land, the Levites were given cities in different parts of it (Num. 35:2-8)."

"The Levites were a people within the nation apart from all the rest," remarked Graeham, thoughtfully.

"They were really an example to the nation at large of what Yahweh desired in all true Israelites," said Mr. Phillips. "They were not allowed to have any inheritance in Israel but had to rely upon God for their food, giving themselves completely to His work. Followers of the Lord Jesus can see in the Levites an example of what is expected of them, for Christ taught, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all necessary things will be added unto you.' In effect, that is what the Levites were expected to do, for they were completely dependent upon God for all things. As such they were a lesson to the rest of Israel, teaching the people to trust in God for both spiritual and material things."

"Numbers 18:24 makes mention of 'heave offerings'," remarked Ann, "what were they?"

"The word means *levied*, or *taken*," explained her father. "It was an offering that God levied, or took, from the people as His due. The Israelites were taught to give a tenth of all they received back to God. That was His heave offering, or His levied due. They were not to begrudge doing that, but see in it something that was not theirs at all, but which belonged to God. It was giving back to God what was His anyway. All they received came from Yahweh, even life itself. Their existence as a nation was due to His action in rescuing them from Egypt. But though all came from Him, and therefore was really His, in His goodness, He allowed them to keep nine-tenths of all the increase. When they gave Him the remaining tenth, called the tithe, they were taught to view that offering as a token of the giving of themselves to Him (Lev. 27:30-33; Isa. 6:13)".

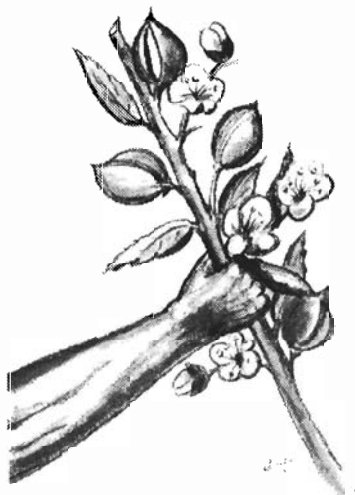
"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that it was no use Israel giving God a tithe of what they received from Him, and thinking that they had done all that was needful. The giving of the tithe was a token that they would serve Him with all their heart and mind, without which, the giving of material things is of little use."

"God also promised that if Israel gave Him, what was due to Him, He would bless them," remarked Graeham. "In Malachi 3:8, the prophet told Israel that they robbed God when they did not bring their offerings to Him, and in the next verse God says

that He would bless them if they faithfully gave unto Him what He required."

"That is true," answered Mr. Phillips, "and the same principle remains true today. We need to be liberal in our attitude towards God. He has said: 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and the firstfruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty' (Prov. 3:9). If we are liberal towards God, He will be liberal towards us. That is the lesson that the Law of the heave offering teaches."



Aaron's rod "brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Numbers 17:8). In so doing it witnessed that his family was divinely selected for the priesthood, and that he was High Priest. Christ's resurrection to eternal life provided a similar witness (Romans 1:4).

The Parable of the Red Heifer —Numbers 19

Nearly 15,000 people had died in the terrible plague that had afflicted the nation following the revolt of Korah, and the Israelites had been busy with the sad work of burying their friends and relations. This unhappy task must have caused them to solemnly consider the final destiny of all mankind, for they knew, as Paul taught, that death entered the world by sin (Romans 5:12), and that all are subject to it. Death is a punishment and not a blessing, and is the very opposite of what God desires. He wants all men to come unto Him and live forever (1 Tim. 2:4), for He is the Author of life (Psa. 36:9; 104:30; Acts 17:25). Unfortunately most people refuse the invitation of God

THE HEIFER (Num. 19)

It had to be red in colour (v. 2)

It had to be "without blemish".

It was to bear "no yoke".

It was "slain without the camp" (v. 3).

It was brought before Eleazar, the High-priest elect.

It was slain "by another," and not by the officiating priest.

Its blood was sprinkled seven times before the Tabernacle (v. 4).

It was consumed by the fire of God.

Cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet were added to the burning by the priest (v. 6).

The ashes were kept in a clean place until required (v. 9), by a "man that is clean".

The ashes were mixed with running (i.e. living) water.

Those who helped to cleanse others by this means were accounted unclean (v. 10).

The cleansing commenced on the 3rd day and was completed on the 7th (v. 12).

The "clean man" was accounted to be "unclean until the evening" (v. 10)

THE FULFILMENT

Red is the colour of sin (Isa. 1:18), pointing to the nature of Christ (Heb. 2:14), which was the same as our own, a nature subject to death.

Christ's character was "without blemish"

The yoke is a man-made method of subduing the wild nature of an animal and to compel obedience; Christ never needed that, for he gave himself completely to his Father's will (Heb. 10:9).

So also was Jesus (Heb. 13:12).

Jesus was the High-priest elect (Heb. 7:11), and presided over his own offering (Heb. 7:27).

Jesus was slain by the Romans.

"Seven" speaks of the perfect sacrifice for sin, for a "greater Tabernacle" (Heb. 9:11).

Christ was consumed by the Spirit of God.

Prayer through the Lord Jesus is a sweet smelling savour (Cedar) unto God, hyssop is a cleansing agent (Psa. 51:7), pointing to the cleansing nature of Christ's offering; scarlet speaks of the sins of the people laid on him (Isa. 1:18; 1 Pet. 2:24).

The saving work of Christ has been kept before men by a people who are "clean through the word" (John 15:3).

Both death and life are brought to view in Christ's offering.

The Lord Jesus was saved by his own offering (Heb. 13:20).

On the 3rd day the earth appeared from under the waters and life was manifested (Gen. 1:9-13) pointing to the new life that commences from the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:4). The cleansing process then begun will be finalised at the millennium, of which the 7th day was a type. Those who are "clean through the word" must await the return of Christ for the final act of cleansing — the putting on of life eternal.

that is given through the Gospel, and thus end up in the grave without hope (Psalm 49:20).

At that time, of mourning for Israel, when it was clearly obvious that death is the result of sin, God took the opportunity of impressing the people with an important lesson concerning salvation. He decreed that as death came in the beginning through sin (Gen. 2:17), therefore anybody touching a dead body was to be held as unclean, and was not to worship at the Tabernacle until they had been made "clean." As all Israel was in contact with death at that time, this Law taught that they were all doomed, unless they accepted God's way of salvation.

There was one final, but important, detail of the offering of the Red Heifer that was very unusual among the sacrifices under the Law of Moses, and which pointed forward to the offering of Christ in a very wonderful way. Of all the sacrifices under the Law, this one remained effective long after the death of the victim. Its ashes were laid up in a clean place to be drawn upon as needed (Num. 19:9). Thus the "one offering" was able to cleanse for as long as it was called upon to do so. This pointed forward to the Lord Jesus whose "one offering" lasts for all time.

The Parable of the Red Heifer thus set forth the mercy of God before the people. It taught them that death was a punishment for sin, and yet if they came unto Him through the way He has revealed, they can be cured therefrom. All who take hold of the Lord Jesus by belief and baptism into his name (Mark 16:15-16) can be cleansed from their contact with death. And that was the real lesson of this important parable.

An "unclean" person was not allowed to come near the Tabernacle in worship until he recognised his position, and sought God's means to correct it (Lev. 15:31). In the same way, we must learn the right way to approach God through Jesus Christ, for in the natural sense all are "unclean" through contact with death. Concerning the New Jerusalem, which is a symbol of the Millennial Bride of Christ then clothed upon with immortality (Rev. 2:9-10), we read: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth . . . but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

Years Of Misery

Thirty-eight years of aimless wandering in the wilderness by a people who had rejected the mercy of Yahweh thus began. Very little is recorded in the Bible concerning this terrible time. In Numbers 33 there is a list of the stopping places of the Israelites as they followed the white cloud, but the true identity of some of these has been lost. The meaning of the names given to them show that the journey was a

most unpleasant one, and reveals that they continued to disobey God. One place means *terror*, another means *falling to ruin*, a third signifies *bitter words*. So the dismal journey continued as death gradually claimed the older generation. We must remember that even though God had decreed that they should not enter the Land of Promise, they could have sought His forgiveness, and found it by seeking His way. But most of them were too stubborn for that. By their own folly, therefore, their lives were made miserable. They had no hope for the future, because they had turned from the true way of peace.

The white cloud which continued to lead them, took them from Kadesh down south to Ezion-geber, which is on the Gulf of Aqaba. Thus they skirted the borders of Edom, and no doubt the presence of such a large number of people seeking a land in which to settle caused fear in such a nation. At last the thirty-eight years came to an end, and a new and better generation of Israelites was again led north until they stood on the outskirts of Kadesh and prepared to enter the Land of Promise.

The people returned to Kadesh on the first month of the thirty-eighth year of their wanderings, the fortieth since they had left Egypt (Num. 20:1; Deut. 2:7,14). It was to prove a most remarkable year: a year of terrible trials and bitter failures, but also a year of glorious triumphs and notable victories. It was to witness three sad events: the deaths of Miriam, Aaron and Moses. These three represented the Covenant made at Sinai. Moses stood for the Law, Aaron for the Priesthood, and Miriam for the Prophets (Exod. 15:20). The death of these three, in this last year, was a lesson to the people, teaching them that the Law, the Priesthood, and the Prophets could not lead them into the true inheritance of God. It was left to Joshua, the Jesus of the Old Testament, (for "Joshua" is the Hebrew form of "Jesus") to do that.

Death of Miriam Miriam died at Kadesh in the first month of the fortieth year since leaving Egypt (Num. 20:1). Sorrowfully Moses arranged for the burial of his beloved sister who had cared for him when, as a baby, he had been left in the little ark among the bulrushes. During the long years of worry and trouble, Miriam had been a great help to Moses. Now the time had come when she had to be laid to rest, awaiting the day when a "greater than Moses" (the Lord Jesus) shall return from heaven, to raise her from the dead, and reward her for her faithful service. Therefore, although Moses and Aaron sorrowed at the death of their sister, they did not do so without hope. They knew that the day will come when they will see her again (1 Thess. 4:16). All Israel sorrowed with the two brothers.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that they mourned thirty days for Miriam. Miriam means *rebellion*, and it is significant that she died in the last year of that rebellious generation that came out of Egypt.

**Moses Provoked
To Sin
— Numbers 20:2-13**

“That is an awfully sad chapter, Daddy!” remarked Joan, as the family completed the reading of Numbers 20.

“Yes,” answered Mr. Phillips. “The unfortunate failure of Moses on this occasion when he sinned against Yahweh, serves to show that even the greatest of men fail sometimes. There is only one man who has perfectly obeyed God, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. But in such incidents as we have in this chapter tonight, we can obtain great encouragement.”

“In what way?” asked Graeham.

“In two ways,” replied his father. “Firstly, the fact that the sin of Moses is so clearly and openly stated in the Bible shows that God must be its Author, for if it were but a book written by Jews (as some foolish people teach) they would have omitted such an incident. But God shows human nature for what it is, and we are warned to be ever watchful lest we are drawn away from the right path. Secondly, the fact that great men such as Moses do sin is rather helpful to us when we fail. As they turned to God and received forgiveness, so can we. If all the men of the Bible were depicted as great men who never did any wrong, I think we would become discouraged, and feel that we could not possibly succeed. But as we see that they all revealed some weakness or other, we are encouraged to continue trying to overcome our own shortcomings.”

“I can’t understand why the people should complain so quickly and easily,” remarked Graeham. “Verse 2 says that ‘when the people saw that there was no water, they gathered themselves against Moses, and against Aaron’.”

“I heard you complaining the other day for less than that!” said Peter, with a grin.

“That was different,” announced Graeham impatiently.

“I am not sure about that!” remarked Mr. Phillips. “We condemn Israel, but after all, many of us growl about things that are not anywhere near as difficult as they had to put up with! It is the little moans that often grow into a big growl, and upset others. If we keep bright and cheerful, faithfully anticipating those things that God has promised, we will not only help ourselves, but others also. Because Israel did not do that, Moses was led to sin. It helps to **give point** to the words of Paul. He declared: ‘I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content’ (Phil.

4:11). He told the Hebrews, 'Be content with such things as ye have' (Heb. 13:5), and, again, 'having food and raiment let us be therewith content' (1 Tim. 6:8)."

"But they were the very things that Israel didn't have," said Peter, with a wink at his sisters. "There was no water to drink."

"That only serves to show that their troubles were greater than yours," said his father. "Therefore, Peter, let us hear less growling about things that really do not matter. Remember that it is not much value reading the Bible unless we put into practice the things we learn. Israel saw about them the harsh barrenness of the wilderness of Zin, they were surrounded by enemies, whilst, day by day, the burning heat of the desert sun beat down upon them. And then the water began to fail."

"But I thought you told us a few nights ago that there was a good supply of water at Kadesh," said Peter.

"Moses had found plenty of water there before," replied his father, "but such a large company of people, making demands upon it, caused it to fail. As the people found less and less to drink, they became very anxious, and then angry with Moses and Aaron. They did not realise that Yahweh was testing them (Psa. 81:7). Perhaps they were over-excited at the prospect of soon entering the Land of Promise, and did not think they would meet such difficulties. They had seen the previous generation slowly dying in the wilderness, and now they found themselves threatened with the same fate. Their faith, like the water, began to fail. They lacked patience and began to despair. 'Would that we had died when our brethren died before Yahweh,' they said to Moses. And then they added angrily to their leader: 'Why have you brought us into this evil place? It is no place of sowing, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, nor is there any water to drink!' What could Moses do? There was only One who could help him. He besought Yahweh for assistance, and was told to take the rod of Aaron that had budded, and with it in hand to speak unto the rock that stood before the people of Israel, and it would bring forth water, sufficient for them to drink. When Moses made this known to the people, the whole congregation came together to see the wonderful miracle."

"I suppose Moses was angry with the people at their complaining," said Joan.

"Yes," replied her father. "The people made him both sad and angry. Thirty-eight years earlier, he had led the previous generation of Israelites through terrible difficulties and hardships to this very spot, and their folly, on that occasion, had resulted in them being driven from the Promised Land. Now their children were acting in the same way! Perhaps Moses thought that if they con-

tinued to do so, they, too, would lose their inheritance, and the whole mission would prove a complete failure through their lack of faith. Thus he became very angry with the people. Now anger is a dangerous emotion and must be controlled. Moses failed to do this and made a fatal mistake. As he led the people to the rock with Aaron's rod in his hand, his anger with them became so great that he forgot what God had told him. With Aaron at his side, he turned and addressed the people: 'Hear now ye rebels,' he said, 'must we fetch you water out of this rock?' Saying this, he raised the rod and harshly smote the rock twice, and to the wonderment and delight of the people a great stream of water gushed out."

"What was wrong with him doing that?" asked Ann.

"The anger of Moses caused him to forget the commandment of God and so led him to sin before all the people," explained her father. "Instead of speaking *to the rock* as Yahweh had told him to do, he had spoken to the people, and in the words he used he did so foolishly (Psa. 106:32). He took to himself and to Aaron, part of the glory of the miracle, saying 'must we fetch water out of the rock!' In addition to this, he had *smitten* the rock instead of *speaking* to it. In doing so he destroyed the lesson God was teaching to the people."

"This was the second time that God had brought water from the rock," remarked Graeham. "On the first occasion, Moses was told to smite the rock, why should God now tell him only to speak to it?"

"There was a very important reason for that, as I will try and explain," answered his father. "As you have said, when the people came to Rephidim, shortly after leaving Egypt (Exod. 17), they had lacked water, and complained to God. On that occasion, Moses had been told to smite the rock with the rod that had turned into a serpent before Pharaoh (Exod. 7:9). But the rod used at Kadesh was Aaron's rod that had budded and had been laid up in the Most Holy (Num. 17:10; 20:9). That rod was a symbol of the resurrection, as we learned earlier. It was quite in order that the rock at Rephidim should be smitten with the 'serpent rod,' but not this second time with the rod that budded."

"I cannot understand why that should be!" said Ann.

"Would you like me to explain it to you, Ann?" asked Peter with a grin.

"No, thank you, Peter!" replied Ann, sharply. "I don't want to be led astray."

"I think Paul would be better than Peter at explaining it to us, don't you, Ann?" asked Mr. Phillips, with a smile.

"**The Peter of the Bible would be all right**", said Ann. "But I

don't think the Peter of this house can help us much!"

"What does Paul say about it?" asked Graeham, who was busy taking notes.

"He says that these things were examples, or types, teaching valuable lessons for us (1 Cor. 10:11)," explained Mr. Phillips. "In other words, there is a hidden meaning to those things recorded in the Bible concerning Israel. In the same chapter Paul says that the rock represented the Lord Jesus (v. 4). With these clues, it is not hard to find the meaning of the lesson before us, and see how great was the mistake that Moses made. At Rephidim, the rock was smitten by the serpent rod, and out poured water to refresh the people. Now what do you think that would teach us when we understand that the rock represented Jesus Christ?"

"As the rock represented Jesus, the serpent-rod must represent the serpent power that crucified, or smote him," said Peter.

"Excellent Peter!" remarked his father.

"See, Ann!" said Peter slyly.

"Jesus called the people who crucified him 'a generation of serpents' (Matt. 23:33), and likened himself to a 'well of water which, if a man drink therefrom, he shall never thirst' (John 4:14)," said Mr. Phillips. "So, you see, the smiting of Jesus, like the smiting of the rock, brought forth a stream of refreshing water for the people."

"If that is the case," said Graeham, thoughtfully, "What was wrong with Moses smiting the rock the second time?"

"It destroyed the type, or lesson," explained his father. "Jesus was not to be smitten twice. His offering was 'once for all.' Having been smitten once, he rose from the dead to life eternal. The rod that budded spoke of that, for it symbolised the resurrection, and it was that rod which Moses was now told to take with him, and *speak* to the rock — not *smite* it. We speak to the Rock when we go to God in prayer, through the risen Christ. When Moses smote the rock the second time, he showed to the people, in type, how badly a man can sin before God."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Graeham.

"We have seen that smiting the rock pointed forward to the crucifixion of Jesus," explained his father, "and in my opinion, you have an answer to what smiting the rock the second time means in Hebrew 6:6. That verse speaks of some who act so badly that they 'crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame'."

"How can anybody do that?"

"They do it when they deliberately and knowingly turn their backs upon the Truth after having accepted Christ."

"But surely Moses doesn't stand for such people as that!" exclaimed Graeham.

"Not when we consider his whole life," answered his father. "I do not believe that a greater man than Moses ever lived (Deut. 34:10), apart from the Lord Jesus. But this incident was used by God to show to the people the fate of those who do not adhere to His teaching. For that reason, Moses was not allowed to enter the Land of Promise (Num. 20:12)."

"It seems very hard that Moses should have been punished like that just because of one mistake," remarked Peter.

"There was more in it than that," said his father. "Moses told Israel that Yahweh did it to him 'for their sakes' (Deut. 1:37). It was a very powerful lesson, teaching the people that they must very carefully obey all that He declared if they would enter the promised inheritance. It showed them that sin would not go unpunished, and that Yahweh must be sanctified in all who would approach Him. From Deuteronomy 3:23-26, we learn that Moses pleaded with God to let him enter the land, but in vain. God could have punished Moses in some other way, of course, but it would not have taught the same lesson."

"Another important reason was this: Moses stood for the Law, and the Law reveals human nature as pre-eminently a sinner. Because of the weakness of the flesh, no person ever kept it to perfection except Christ, and he was helped of God to do so. All others 'have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). It was God's purpose through the Law to show man his faults. Therefore Paul declared: 'I have not known sin, but by the law' (Rom. 7:7). The whole purpose of the Law is summed up in this. It revealed to man the need of a Redeemer who could, by forgiveness, take away sin, Moses could not do that, for he was himself a sinner. It needed a sinless man to become an acceptable sacrifice to provide redemption for those who would approach God. Therefore the Law was as 'a schoolmaster leading to Christ' (Gal. 3:24). This was dramatised to Israel through the death of Moses. It showed that the Law (for which he stood) could not bring them to the promised inheritance; Joshua did that, and so fulfilled the type: for he foreshadowed Christ. So lessons were being continually revealed to the people".

"It would certainly show them that they had to be careful to do exactly as Yahweh commanded", remarked Graeham.

"That is true," agreed Mr. Phillips. "There is much in this incident we need to take notice of. It teaches us to be careful in what we do, and be sure that we do not let anger get the better of us. Moses' sin was not in showing anger (for sometimes Jesus was made angry — Mark 3:5), but in allowing his anger to lead to sin.

Thus Paul commands: 'Be ye angry, and sin not' (Eph. 4:26), and James wrote: 'Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath' (James 1:19). That is hard to do. Most of us are slow to hear, but swift to speak, and we are soon stirred up in anger about little things of no consequence. We need to remember the words of Jesus: 'Whosoever is angry with his brother *without a cause* shall be in danger of the judgment' (Matt. 5:22). These are very important words to remember, and if we bear them in mind, they will help us live more useful and happier lives. How much pain and bitterness is caused by people becoming angry with one another for no real cause. Friendships are broken, useful work is hindered, unhappiness grows — whereas if we follow the Bible way, these things will be avoided."

"It is interesting to notice that both Moses and Jesus were angry with the people for a similar reason (Mark 3:5)," remarked Graeham.

"Yes," agreed his father. "Moses was a type of Jesus (Deut. 18:15), and in him we see how much greater was the antitype (Jesus) than the type (Moses). Both men were angry with the hardness of heart shown by the people with whom they had to do. But Moses, being so much weaker than the Son of God, let his anger lead to sin. For this he was reproved by God, and not permitted to enter the Land of Promise".

"What is meant by 'Meribah' (Num. 20:13)?" asked Ann.

"The word means *strife* and this name was now added to Kadesh because of the strife among the people. Previously the place had been known as Kadesh-Barnea (Deut. 1:19), which means, *The Sanctuary of the Wandering Son*. Israel was the wandering son, and had found in Kadesh a sanctuary and refreshment. But now the place was named Meribah-Kadesh (Deut. 32:51), which means, *The Place of Strife and Sanctuary*. Israel *strove* with Yahweh; but by the wonderful miracle He performed, He revealed that He is completely *separate* and above all flesh. The word Kadesh signifies *sanctuary* or that which is *separated*."

The Death of Aaron The time had come when Aaron, the brother of Moses, was to die; and Mt. Hor, which was on the western border of Edom, was the place chosen by Yahweh for the purpose (Num. 20:22-29; 27:13; 33:38; Deut. 10:6; 32:50). A more appropriate place could hardly have been selected. Mt. Hor is a very rugged mountain that rises steeply from the valley beneath, and which can be seen from many miles away.

Arriving at this place, the children of Israel camped at its base. They were told the sad news, and solemnly watched as Moses

with Aaron and Eleazar, Aaron's son, ascended the mount. As they climbed its steep slopes, Aaron saw stretched before him one of the most remarkable scenes in the world. It took in all that wild, terrible region in which the Israelites had wandered for so many years. From its summit he saw in the distance the mountainous area of the Sinaitic Peninsula, whilst the boundless desert, marked by so many wonderful incidents in which he had played such a notable part, spread before him in a wide expanse.

We can imagine what thoughts must have dominated the minds of the three men as they viewed the scene, and could mentally review the events that had taken place. They had borne the complaints of the Israelites for forty long years in the arid wilderness before them; whilst the Sinaitic Peninsula in the distance had witnessed the wonderful revelation given them from Yahweh, when the nation had entered into covenant relationship with Him. As the three leaders looked upon this scene of their trials they would doubtless speak of their great hopes for the future, when they will unitedly enjoy the "recompense of the reward" which Moses ever kept in mind (Heb. 11:24-28). It must have been a sad farewell, as the two brothers, who had laboured so long and so patiently together, spoke their last words. Then Moses took the priestly garments from off Aaron, his brother, and putting them upon Eleazar, they laid Aaron to rest.

And for thirty days Israel mourned the passing of a great man (Num. 20:29).

But Aaron's history is not yet finished. There is a reward for him such as many of those who mourned his death will not themselves receive. In Psalm 99:6 we read of his future duties. The Psalm speaks of the time when Yahweh will reign over all the earth, and His name will be great among the nations. At that time, those who have proved faithful will be raised from the dead to life eternal, and will assist Jesus Christ in ruling the nations, and teaching the people, as King-priests of the Age to come (Rev. 5:9-10). Among them will be found Aaron, for this Psalm prophetically states: "Moses and Aaron will be among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name."

In his lifetime Aaron sinned as we all do. But he obtained forgiveness from Yahweh, and lived to work faithfully in His service. We can encourage ourselves with the thought that this man did not allow the sins he committed to overwhelm him, but had the faith and courage to turn to Yahweh and humble himself in submission to His will. Because of that, a great and honoured position yet awaits Aaron in the Kingdom that the Lord Jesus Christ will set up. For Christ shall reign in Jerusalem, and "before his ancients gloriously" (Isa. 24:23). In that age, Aaron will see the

Land of Promise that he never lived to see in his lifetime, and will become an honoured priest in the Temple that the Lord Jesus will cause to be built at Jerusalem, as a “house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7; Zech. 6:12-13).

**The Revenge
On Hormah
— Num. 21:1-3**

The presence of a nation of two million people in the south of Canaan, filled the inhabitants with fear. They remembered how Israel had previously appeared at Kadesh, 38 years earlier, but had been driven away by strong military action (Deut. 1:44). On that occasion, the Israelitish army had been defeated at a place called Hormah. Now, from the same direction, the king of Arad the Canaanite, swooped down upon the Israelites encamped at Mt. Hor, and took some of them prisoners (Num. 21:1).

This showed Israel that they could not put any reliance in their own strength. It caused them to turn to Yahweh asking Him to help them against their enemies. They promised that if He would deliver them into their hands, they would completely destroy their power. Yahweh listened to their prayer. He granted them a temporary victory over the Canaanites, in anticipation of a greater one to come. The place of this victory was Hormah, the same place where the previous army had been so easily defeated. Hormah means *destruction*. Previously it had been the Israelites who had been destroyed, but then it was the Canaanites.

This victory encouraged Israel greatly. It showed that Yahweh was with them again, and that He looked upon them with favour. We read that “Yahweh hearkened unto Israel” at this time (Num. 21:3), whereas, thirty-eight years earlier, at the very same place, the record states that “Yahweh would not hearken” (Deut. 1:45).

Though they had vowed that they would completely destroy the Canaanites of Hormah, Israel did not do so at that time. The words “utterly destroyed,” really mean *to devote to utter destruction*. The vow was fulfilled by Joshua after the Israelites had entered the Land of Promise (Josh. 12:14).

Meanwhile, with this new response by Yahweh, marking the way of victory for Israel, the people returned to their camp full of confidence.

**Deadly Serpents
Plague Israel
— Num. 21:4-9**

But their confidence did not last very long. They were hemmed in by large forces of powerful Canaanites in the north, and Edom on the east; and when Moses sent to the king of Edom requesting permission to pass through his

border, he not only refused, but sent a large army to drive the Israelites away (Num. 20:20-21). Israel was not yet ready to meet such attacks, and so God led them south again to Ezion-geber at the head of the gulf of Aqaba.

This took the people through the harsh, arid desert that lies between Kadesh and Elath; a desert described by Moses as “a great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents, scorpions and drought, in which there is no water” (Deut. 8:15).

As the people turned their backs upon Kadesh, and began again to descend south into this terrible burning desert, it seemed the end of all their hopes. They heard again the complaining of their little ones; they felt the harsh, glaring heat of the sun; they saw around them only barren hills and waterless plains. Day after day they endured great discomfort, until they tired of it. They turned on Moses in anger, and complained that he had brought them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. They angrily said: “There is no bread, nor water, and our souls loathe this light bread!” So they despised the manna which God, in His goodness, continued to send them day by day. They complained that there was no value in eating it. They desired something better, more tasty, and substantial.

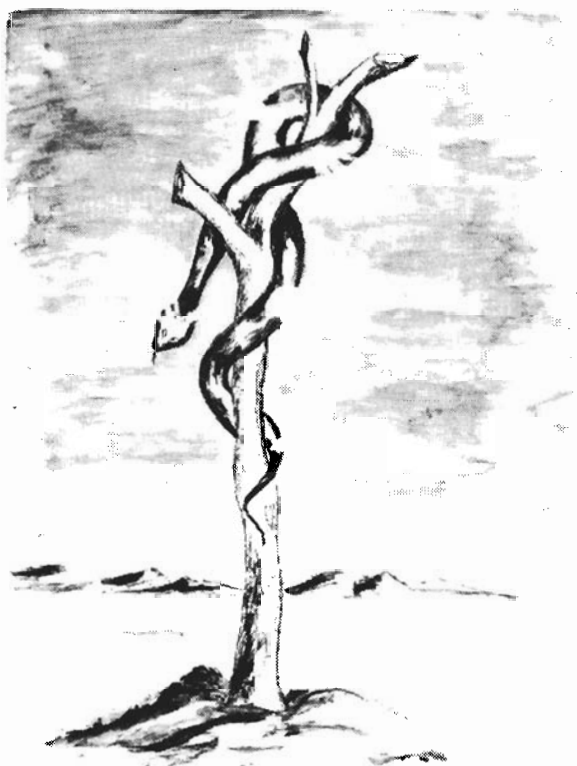
Of course, it was monotonous to eat the same food every day, Even though it did convey an important lesson. For it taught the people that they were utterly dependent on God for the necessities of life, as well as those things that lead to eternal life. They learned by experience to utter the prayer the Lord taught his disciples to pray: “Give us this day our daily bread”; for every day they had to get up early and gather their daily quota of manna. It was “bread from heaven” because God supplied it; and, as such, it typified “spiritual bread” (1 Cor. 10:3), for it foreshadowed the Lord Jesus Christ. He described himself as the “bread from heaven”, and he taught his disciples that they had to absorb his teaching, as they did the food they ate, if they desired to live for ever (John 6:51).

But as some find the restrictions of a life in Christ dull, and seek for more interesting or exciting things to do, so now the Israelites found the way monotonous, and lusted for food more tempting than the daily provision of manna.

To despise the way of God, however, is to earn the punishment that will certainly follow. The Israelites learned that lesson the hard way. They had moved south to Eilat at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba, and had passed over to the eastern side of the Aravah, the deep and wide depression that extends from the Dead Sea to the Gulf, and had commenced to move north. That brought them to a narrow pass called *Wadi el Yutm*, that runs between the

harsh, dark-red, granite mountains of Edom: a gloomy defile, the sides of which rise sheer on either side for a short distance. It is frequented by a breed of serpents so called in the Bible because their bite causes severe inflammation and a lingering sickness often ending in death. On this occasion, as the murmuring, complaining Israelites passed through that dreadful pass, they were attacked by a plague of serpents. Many were bitten and experienced a burning fever. Then, as the poison took effect, many died.

The frightened people turned to Moses for help. In doing so they differed from the previous generation, for at least, they admitted their mistake, and sought forgiveness. Moses, ever ready to help, pleaded with God on their behalf; and God provided a



The brazen serpent on the pole: symbolic of Christ's sacrificial death through which is offered eternal life (see John 3:14-16; 12:32-33).

cure for the people from the deadly bite of the serpents.

Moses was told to take a pole, and set upon it a brazen serpent. Those who felt the bite of the serpents on the ground, were instructed to look upon this brazen serpent, and they would be healed from the deadly fever.

This was the story the Phillips' family read from Numbers 21. And now, as they paused, Ann pondered it.

"I suppose there is a lesson in it," she said with a sigh, "but I cannot work it all out".

"There is a very important lesson in it," answered her father, with a smile. "In fact, the truth concerning salvation in Jesus Christ was being taught to the people in those events".

"How?" asked Ann, puzzling over the chapter.

"If you read John 3:14-15 you will find a clue," replied her father.

Ann turned to the place and read: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"You see, Ann, Jesus saw in this incident a lesson pointing forward to his own death," explained her father.

"Do you mean to say that the serpent on the pole represented Jesus on the cross?" asked Ann.

"I say it because the Lord Jesus said it", answered her father. "He likened the serpent on the pole to himself. There was, however, a very important difference between the serpent on the pole and those on the ground. Those on the ground had poison in their fangs, and when they bit the people, the people died. But there was no poison in the serpent on the pole. It was made with brass which had been purified by fire. And it foreshadowed the work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"In what way did it do so?"

"In the Bible, the serpent represents the thinking of the flesh (Gen. 3:15). The leaders of Israel who crucified Jesus are styled a 'generation of vipers'; (Matt. 23:33), and their teaching is described as the 'poison of serpents' (Psa. 58:4; 140:3). Jesus came in the same nature as all other men (Heb. 2:14): a nature that is subject to sin and death. But whereas all others have given way to sin, he conquered it. He was like the brazen serpent upon the pole: there was no poison in him, for he purified himself from all dross".

"There was another important difference between the serpents on the ground and the brazen serpent on the pole," remarked Graeham, who had been listening to the conversation between his father and sister. "The serpents on the ground

brought death, but that one lifted up before the people saved them from death.”

“Why did God allow Jesus to be crucified, seeing he did not sin?” asked Ann.

“It was to teach a very important lesson,” replied her father. “It was to show that we should not put any confidence in the flesh. The righteous character of Jesus came not by following the will of the flesh, but the will of God. Therefore, at the end of a perfect life of obedience, God allowed the Jews and Romans to crucify His son (Acts 2:23), to teach mankind the true nature of flesh and blood — as only fit for destruction. It must be figuratively put to death if we would live unto God (Gal. 2:20; 5:24). However, after the Lord had been in the tomb for three days, God raised His son from the dead and gave him life eternal, to show what He will do for those who try to serve Him faithfully (Rom. 4:25).”

“Was it not unfair for Jesus to die, seeing he did not sin?”

“No, because he came into the world to save others (1 Tim. 1:15). His nature was the same as ours, that is death-doomed, so that he had to be redeemed from it. To that end, his sacrifice on the cross benefited him as it does all others who come to God through him (Heb. 13:20).”

“How did Jesus succeed in obeying God perfectly, whereas all others have failed?” asked Ann.

“God strengthened him to overcome” (Psalm 80:17; Isaiah 11:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:19), replied her father.

“Doesn’t that give Jesus an unfair advantage over all others?” asked Peter.

“It all depends what you mean,” said Mr. Phillips. “The Bible teaches that ‘to whom much is given much is also required’ (Luke 12:48). God strengthened the Lord more than He has any other, but of Jesus much more was required than of any other man. He had no sacrifice for sin if he failed; therefore he had to succeed. God does not expect that we will render perfect obedience, but made provision that through the Lord we might find forgiveness of sins. Each one of us is given opportunities and talents that differ from those of others, and God does not expect from us that which it is beyond our ability to provide. Jesus received strength to overcome, and the lesson of his life is that unless we are also strengthened we will not succeed. Paul wrote: ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me’ (Phil. 4:13). If we hearken to the voice of God through His word, and commune with Him in prayer, we will find strength to meet all our needs, and will succeed in revealing some of Christ’s ways in our lives”.

“There is another question I would like to ask you about the

brazen serpent,” said Ann. “It says that when the people looked at it they lived. Was it a magic serpent?”

“No,” replied her father. “It was the faith of the people that saved them. There was no magic in the serpent. The people had to believe Yahweh, and have faith in His power to save them, without which looking at the serpent was not of much use. It is the same in relation to salvation in Christ. It is our faith in him that will save us (Rom. 3:25). Without this, ‘it is impossible to please God’ (Heb. 11:6). The serpent of brass was preserved as a memorial for many years in Israel, but later the people began to worship it, and Hezekiah who ruled Israel at the time broke it in pieces and called it only ‘a piece of brass’ (2 Kings 18:4). He did this to show the people that there was no magic in the serpent, and that only Yahweh can save them. It was He alone whom they should worship”.

Towards The Land of Promise

The white cloud led Israel onwards past the eastern borders of Edom. Here the defences of Edom were much weaker, and the Edomites viewed with fear the movements of the large, well-organised nation of Israelites as it steadily marched on the borders of their land. But God had warned Moses not to trouble the Edomites, for He had given them the land they occupied (Deut. 2:3-8).

They passed along the border of Edom unmolested, purchasing from the inhabitants what provisions they needed (Deut. 2:6), heading northward towards the land of Moab.

Gradually the appearance of the land changed. The harsh desert was left far behind, and the Israelites saw in the distance lovely, wooded hills and rich green valleys. Finally they came to a place called Zered (which means *ample growth*). It is a very fertile place of trees and grass, towards the west, but on the eastern border, along which the Israelites moved, it was only a shallow dry bed about the time the tribes arrived there.

For a while, the Israelites encamped at this place. They did so because they had been instructed to await the death of the last of the old generation that had been condemned to wander in the wilderness (Deut. 2:13-14). What a sad moment for their relatives! Nevertheless it gave the survivors food for thought. They could ponder the fact that such a disaster was unnecessary! If those whom Yahweh had delivered from Egypt had exercised greater faith, they also would have entered the Promised Land!

So the people waited, sadly burying those who died. When this sobering task was finished, Moses addressed the people:

“Rise up, and go over the brook Zered,” he commanded.

Chapter Six

ISRAEL CONQUERS THE LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN

Israel Prepares To Invade The Land Of Promise

With rising excitement, the new generation of Israelites recommenced their journey. They were a hardier and more spiritually-minded people than those who had left Egypt. Moreover, they had evidence that Yahweh, indeed, was with them. They saw in the changed character of the land a foretaste of the glory of the Land of Promise. In anticipation of the glorious inheritance they were about to receive, they no longer complained, but, instead, began to sing. The Bible has preserved some of the songs of victory that arose from their lips as they moved forward towards the land for which they had waited so long. This is the theme the Phillips family discussed as the members read from Numbers 21.

The Song of The Well

“What is *The Book of the Wars of Yahweh*?” asked Ann of her father, one evening.

“Never heard of it,” interrupted Peter.

“It is mentioned in Numbers 21:14,” said Ann, “but I did not ask you, Peter. I asked Daddy”.

“We do not know for sure,” replied Mr. Phillips, “but it is thought to be a book in which Moses wrote some of the wonderful happenings that took place, during the wandering of the Israelites; incidents which would be of special use to Joshua when he entered the land. In Exodus 17:14-16, it is said that Moses recorded in a book the victory that Yahweh had given Israel over Amalek, and it may have been that this book was called, *the Book of Wars of Yahweh*. Moses was told to encourage Joshua in the difficult work that lay before him (Deut. 1:38-39; 31:7,23), and such a book would certainly help do that!”

“What does the Bible say about it?” asked Peter.

Ann read: “Wherefore it is said in *The Book of the Wars of Yahweh*:

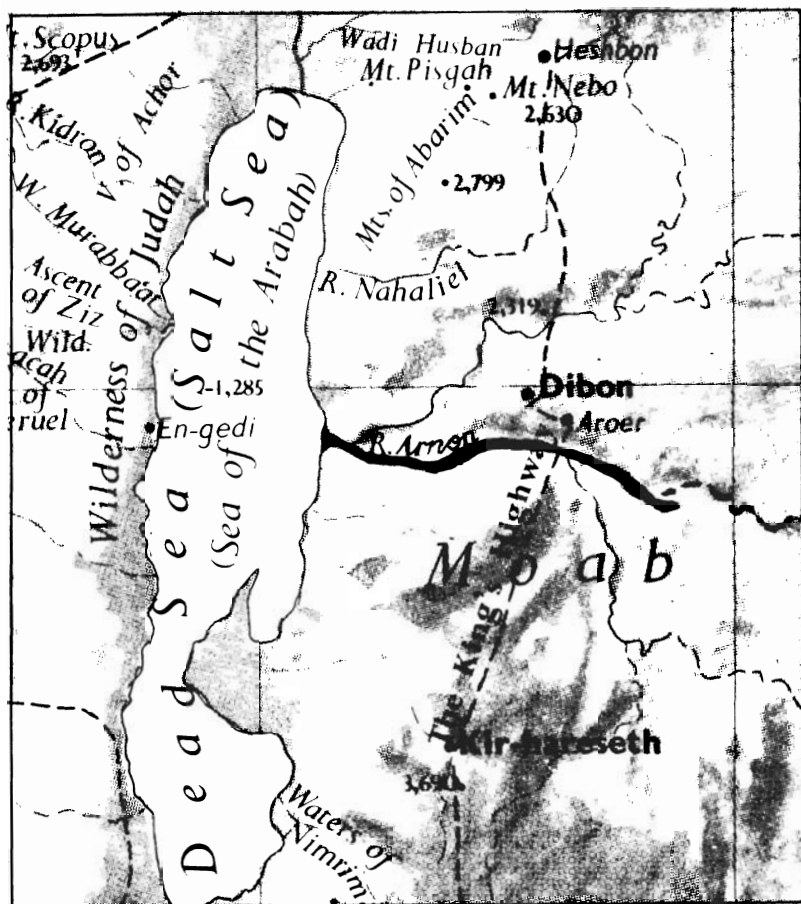
*‘What He did in the Red Sea,
And in the brooks of Arnon,
And at the stream of the brooks
That goeth down to the dwelling of Ar,
And lieth upon the border of Moab’.*”

"That is a part of a song, or poem, recorded in this book describing the important victory won through the help of Yahweh at the River Arnon," explained her father. "In its magnitude it is compared with the miracle the first generation saw as the waters of the Red Sea opened and a way of escape was afforded the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians".

"What did Yahweh do at the Arnon that was of such importance?" asked Ann.

"He gained for Israel a wonderful victory against tremendous odds", declared her father enthusiastically. "In doing so He avenged the defeat which the Amorites inflicted on the Israelites some 38 years earlier, and He gave evidence to the people that a time of great blessing was about to open out to them".

"How did He do that?" asked Joan.



"The Israelites had been told that they must not invade the land of Edom and Moab because those two nations were related to them", explained her father. "Accordingly, they advanced north on the eastern borders of those two countries. When they came to the river Arnon, however, they had reached the existing northern border of Moab, because the Amorites had invaded the northern section of Moab, and occupied all the land up to that River. Therefore the River Arnon was the existing border between Moab and the Amorites.

"When the Israelites reached that point, they turned west and moved along the course of the Arnon. The Arnon follows the course of a very deep and wide valley, the sides of which rise precipitously to the highlands above. The Israelites moved west until they came to the point where the King's Highway crosses the river. Here they made preparations to invade the north. But the obstacles were great. The sides of the valley rise almost sheer for about 1000 feet (over 300 m). Barring the way, and dominating the heights above were the well-trained and well-armed forces of Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose skill in warfare was well-known throughout the area. Moses and Joshua, at the head of untrained men, had to scale those steep cliffs and repulse the powerful army above which waited to destroy them. From their vantage point the Amorites could rain down upon the Israelites all kinds of weapons. To scale the heights, in the face of such a formidable army, was a task to daunt the hearts of the most courageous. But it was one that Moses and Joshua had to undertake in faith and courage. And, with the aid of Yahweh they succeeded in accomplishing it. They repulsed the army of Sihon, and greatly added to their reputation in doing so. The Moabites and Ammonites, who had already been defeated by Sihon and the Amorites, viewed the success of the Israelites with great fear. They had no confidence in defeating them by war, and planned to engage Balaam, a false prophet from Babylon, to curse them. But that was later.

Meanwhile, north of the River Arnon, the successful Israelites entered a glorious plateau of smiling fields of grain, gentle slopes clothed with trees, and fertile green-clad valleys. After wandering in the harsh wilderness for thirty-eight years, this was a sight to gladden the hearts of the most dismal. But it was only the beginning of wonders for them. First Yahweh revealed to the people that they need not worry any more about lack of water. He showed that it not only came from heaven above but could also be obtained by digging wells. At His instruction, the people dug a large well, and saw an abundance of fresh water such as they had not seen previously. For years they had been rationed in

their water supply, but now they had sufficient. In view of the scene of prosperity and beauty about them, they forgot all their complaints of the past, their bitter words, their angry charges against Moses, and burst into a song of joy and cheer. This song is contained in Numbers 21:17-20, and is as follows:

*"Spring up, O Well! Sing ye thereunto
The Well! Princes searched it out;
The nobles of the people have digged it,
By their decree, their act of government!
So, after the wilderness was Mattanah!
And after Mattanah was Nahaliel,
And after Nahaliel was Bamoth,
And after Bamoth was the valley;
Where, in the country of Moab,
Appeareth the top of Pisgah,
Which is over against Jeshimon."*

"Whatever do all those names mean?" asked Peter.

"They are not merely names of places, but a description of the blessing received," answered his father. "Mattanah means *a gift*. So, in this song of joy, the people sang that 'after the wilderness they saw *the gift of Yahweh*,' in the well that they dug. 'Nahaliel' means *great streams of water*, which they now saw in the fertile country they had entered. 'Bamoth' means *heights*, and doubtless refers to the beautifully-wooded hills of Moab from whence descended abundance of water to flow along the fertile valleys to the Jordan below. 'Pisgah' means *a hill*, from the top of which they could see back to the *wilderness* (or Jeshimon) from where they had come. Thus they saw a land of beauty and plenty, and their joy abounded".

"I suppose they were now sorry at the trouble they had caused Moses," said Ann.

"Yes," replied her father. "If they had kept singing 'the songs of Zion' in the wilderness, instead of murmuring and complaining, they might have done much better for themselves. It is a lesson we, too, can learn. Do not let us give way to trouble, but try to see beyond it. Keep a song on our lips, and cheerfulness in our hearts, and count the blessings we have received from God. By so doing we will not only help ourselves, but also cheer others. But if we moan and complain, we will not only get down into the dumps ourselves, but we will discourage and weaken those about us. That is what happened in Israel, and one of the reasons why the old generation perished in the wilderness. So Ann, the moral of this story is, *stop moaning!*"

A Song of Victory

But in spite of an initial victory mighty enemies barred the way. Sihon and Og were allied kings of the Amorites, who dwelt on the east of the Jordan, and they prepared to do battle with Israel. The Amorites were among the most powerful nations of Palestine, and had extended their influence in the countries where now Sihon and Og reigned. Sihon had overthrown the Moabites and occupied part of their land (Num. 21:26), and had made five Midianitish tribes his vassals as well (Josh. 13:21). Og had occupied Bashan where he had set up two capitals, Ashtaroth and Edrei. He was a very powerful man, with a large army, and had built sixty well-armed fortresses throughout the land of Bashan where he ruled (Deut. 3:4).

Israel first sent ambassadors of peace, asking permission to



Though untrained for war, the Israelites under Moses gained victories over well-armed warriors because they fought in faith and with courage. They learned the meaning of the words of the Psalm: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of Yahweh our God. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright . . ." (Psalm 20:7-8).

pass through the land, but the offer was rejected (Deut. 2:26-29). Sihon was an obstinate man (vv. 30-31), and in spite of his previous defeat at the hands of the Philistines, with Og his ally, he prepared for war.

Israel also prepared for war, for Yahweh had commanded them to do so. They had a score to settle with the Amorites, and God had promised them the victory (Deut. 2:24,31).

Sihon did not wait for Israel to attack, but gathering a mighty army he went out to the battle. Despite the setback at Arnon, he was confident that he could defeat the Israelites, and advanced against them at a place called Jahaz (meaning *trodden underfoot*). The battle raged furiously, but it was Sihon's army that was trodden underfoot, for Israel again won a notable victory. The Amorites were driven back to the border of Ammon where they made a last stand, but were completely destroyed.

Israel did not invade the land of the Ammonites because God had warned them not to attack that nation (Deut. 2:19). The Ammonites were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham, who entered the Land of Promise with him (Gen. 19:38), and Yahweh always deals more kindly with those nations who are in any way related to "His friend". Later, however, when these nations failed to respond and rewarded good with evil, He commanded Israel against them (Deut. 23:3-6), and declared He would destroy them.

Meanwhile, this wonderful victory over so powerful an enemy, showed Israel how successful they can be if they work with Yahweh. The victory was put to music by men of skill in composition (Num. 21:27), and the song was divided into three parts like a play. The first part recalls the boasting of Sihon when he first marched against Moab and occupied the land; the second part shows how the god of Moab was helpless to assist his worshippers; and the third part records the glorious victory of Israel and the defeat of Sihon.

Israel's Victory Anthem

Part One: Sihon's Boasting (Numbers 21:27-28)

*Come ye to Heshbon, let it be rebuilt;
As the city of Sihon, let it be established.
For from Heshbon the fire went out,
And the flame from the city of Sihon:
It hath consumed the city of Moab,
With the lords of the heights of Arnon.*

Part Two: Moab's Weakness (v. 29)

Alas for thee, O Moab!

Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh
He hath given up his escaping sons
And his daughters into captivity,
To the king of the Amorites, even Sihon.*

Part Three: Israel's Victory (v. 30)

*But on them have we lifted destruction,
From Heshbon even to Dibon;
We have destroyed even to Nophah,
The fire did reach to Medeba.*

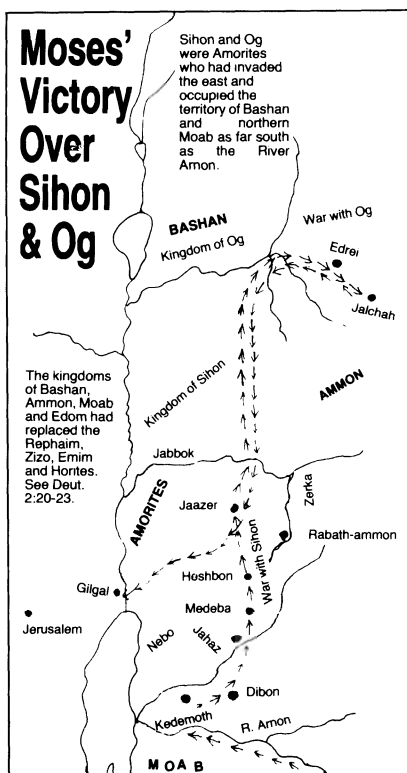
Defeat of Og

As Israel sung their song of victory, news arrived that Og was marching quickly to the aid of his friend, Sihon. Og was an Amorite king who had conquered the lovely, fertile country of Bashan. He was a big man, of powerful stature, and was among the last of the nations

of giants (or *Rephaim*) that lived in that area in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:5).

As the people received the report of Sihon's advance they were also told of the comforting message received from Yahweh. "Fear him not," declared God, "for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land" (Num. 21:34).

Made confident by this message the army of Israel marched forth against Og, and invaded his territory. The battle was fought at his capital, Edrei, and again Israel won a notable victory, in which Og was slain. His body was taken to Rabbath in the land of Ammon, the headquarters of the god Milchom, and there buried in a tomb of iron or basalt (Deut. 3:11).†



* Chemosh was the god of Moab.

† The word rendered "bedstead" (*eres*) is not the usual one for that purpose, and could relate to the "tomb" or "stone coffin" (sarcophagus) of Og.

In the overthrow of these Amorite kings there was partly fulfilled the promises made to Abraham and Moses when God said He would punish this nation (Gen. 15:16; Exod. 34:11). It was an encouraging sign to Israel (Deut. 3:2), and a source of fear to other nations (Josh. 2:10; 9:10).

Following this victory, Moses called the people before him, and on the land recently conquered from the enemy, repeated to them the Law that he had received at Sinai (Deut. 1:3). This last speech of Moses (for shortly after its conclusion, he died) is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, which means *Second Law*. The keynote of this book is "Fear not!" (Deut. 1:17,21,29). Time and again Moses speaks of the love that Yahweh had for Israel, and the promises He made unto them. It is said that these promises are referred to some 27 times in this book. Thus the message of Deuteronomy is expressed in the sentence: "Fear not, for Yahweh hath loved you, and will bestow upon you the promises". The defeat of Sihon and Og showed to Israel that Yahweh would, indeed, perform His word, if they would hearken to and obey Him.

**Balaam And
His Ass
— Num. 22-25**

"I met Sheila today, Daddy," remarked Ann, to her father, "and she asked me did we still talk about the Bible each night. When I told her that we did, she laughed and said: 'Fancy wasting your time on a book that says dumb animals can speak!'"

"She was probably referring to Balaam's ass," answered Mr. Phillips.

"Yes, that is so," said Ann.

"Balaam's ass walked on four legs," commented Peter. "But there are other asses that walk on two legs; the pity is that they are not dumb!"

"You used to be pretty dumb when Sheila used to visit us!" said Ann, always ready to pounce on her brother.

"It is hard to explain such miracles in the Bible," said Graham, bringing the conversation back to more profitable matters.

"It is so only if you look at it from man's standpoint," replied his father. "If we recognise that God is the real Author of the Bible, the difficulty vanishes".

"Miracles are never easy to explain," commented Peter.

"That is true," replied his father, "otherwise they would not be considered 'miracles'. There are many things with which you are familiar today, that would have been thought miracles ages ago. Such things as Radar, which allows man to see in darkness, or the

Radio, by which voices can be heard throughout the world, or Television, which permits a person to view things afar off — would have been thought miracles in the days of the Apostles.”

“Yes, but we *know* how those things are done!” protested Peter.

“We will get Peter to build us a television set over the weekend,” said Ann, glad of the chance to have a dig at her brother.

“Man can only do those things because God has allowed him to find out the laws by which they are done,” remarked Mr. Phillips. “Until he discovered those laws, they remained miracles. There are many laws which man has not discovered, and some which he will never find out. But those laws are known to God, and by them, He does things that are beyond our power to do. Remember that God has control of all things, so that miracles are common place to Him — as common-place as the radio is now to us. Therefore to cause Balaam’s ass to speak would not present much of a problem for the angel of Yahweh. As a matter of fact, that is one of the lesser miracles relating to Balaam.”

“What do you mean?”

“A study of the words that Yahweh forced Balaam to utter will reveal that he foretold events that did not happen for over a thousand years after he spake, and also things that still are to be fulfilled. Balaam declared that Israel would never be destroyed; and that although the people would experience great trouble they would triumph in the latter days. How did Balaam know of those things?”

“I do not know!”

“He did not know of them. It was the voice of God sounding through the prophet as it had sounded through the ass; and to me that is the greater miracle of the two.”

“Who was Balaam?” asked Joan.

“The story of Balaam,” commenced Mr. Phillips, always ready to seize an opportunity to speak lengthily on any subject, “is . . .”

“One of the most dramatic stories of the Bible,” mimicked Peter, with a wink at his sisters, who viewed the interruption with indignation.

“Don’t take any notice of Peter”, said Ann to her father, “Remember what he said about asses on two legs who are not dumb! He will learn in time if we are patient!”

“The defeat of Sihon and Og, the warlike kings of the Amorites, caused great fear in the weaker nations of Moab and Midian,” continued Mr. Phillips. “Yahweh had commanded Moses that Israel was not to harm Moab” (Deut. 2:9), but the king of Moab did not know that, or else did not trust Moses. His name

was Balak, which means *Wasting*. He saw how easily Israel had defeated its enemies, and in fear sent to the Kings of Midian, who had been vassals of Sihon (cp. Josh. 13:21 with Num. 31:8), suggesting that they should join with him in hiring the services of a notable prophet who lived in Mesopotamia, not far from the river Euphrates (Num. 22:5; Deut. 23:4), whose name was Balaam. He was a magician, or soothsayer (Josh. 13:22), and it was thought that he only had to curse the people to weaken them sufficiently to overcome them”.

“Was Balaam a good man?” asked Joan.

“No, he was a wicked man. His name means *waster of the people*. He was a man with the ability to sway others, and this was viewed as evidence of his divine power. Such men were condemned by God (Deut. 18:9-14). His fame extended throughout the then known world, for it was imagined that nothing could stand in the way of his blessing or curse.”

“Did he worship God?”

“He worshipped a god but not the *true* God” replied Mr. Phillips. “Otherwise he would not have attempted to curse Israel as he tried to do, nor would he have used enchantments” (Num. 24:1). ”

“But does not he speak of Yahweh as ‘*his* God’?” asked Graham, who was following his father’s account with his Bible (Num. 22:18).

“Balaam could have used such an expression merely to claim that he was in touch with Israel’s God as well as those of other nations. Other versions of the Bible (e.g. *The Septuagint*) give the phrase as ‘Yahweh God’ and leave out *my*”.

“How could he refer to the name of God if he did not know Him?” asked Graeham again.

“It would present no difficulty for Balaam to find out the name of Israel’s God from the messengers who had visited him” answered his father. “He could then use it as though he were familiar with it.”

“I understand.”

“The leaders of Midian joined with Balak in his request. They sent some of their leading men, carrying valuable presents to Balaam, and with offers of even greater wealth if he would come and curse the people of Israel. But Yahweh refused to let Balaam go. ‘Thou shalt not go with them; for thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed’ (Num. 22:12), the angel told him. Though Balaam was a wicked man, he did not doubt the existence of the God of Israel, for he considered Him a God among the other gods of the nations. When he received this message, therefore, he refused to leave. He did not tell the messeng-

ers of Balak that Israel was blessed, and therefore nothing he said could alter that, but he merely told them ‘Yahweh refuseth to give me leave to go with you.’

“The princes of Balak returned home with this message. They, in turn, left out some of the message they had been given. They did not tell their King that it was Yahweh who refused Balaam permission, but only that he refused to come. Balak, therefore, thought that Balaam was not satisfied with the present he had sent him, so he selected more honourable princes, and presents of greater magnificence, and sent them back with another message. ‘Do not let anything stop you from coming,’ they told the magician, ‘for Balak will give you great honour and wealth’.

“But Balaam sadly replied (for he was very fond of honour and wealth): ‘If Balak gave me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Yahweh to do less or more. Nevertheless I will see if He will permit me to go with you’.

“That night, the angel of Yahweh again visited Balaam. ‘If the men come to call thee,’ he said to the prophet, ‘rise up and go with them, but only speak the word which I shall say unto you’.

“God had made a condition. Balaam was given permission to go *only* if the men again called him. But the prophet was a very greedy man, and anxious to obtain the riches about which he had heard. He therefore did not wait for the conditions to be fulfilled. Instead, he rose up in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

The Angel Opposes Balaam

“The eagerness with which Balaam made ready to go, without waiting for the conditions to be fulfilled, made God very angry,” declared Mr. Phillips as he continued his outline.

“He sent an angel to punish the prophet. The angel stood with a drawn sword in his hand awaiting the approach of Balaam who was riding on his ass. The angel was invisible to Balaam, but the ass could see him. To the great anger of the prophet, the ass suddenly and violently turned out of the way when he saw the angel with the drawn sword standing in his path. It would not return to the road until it had passed the angel, no matter how hard Balaam attempted to force it to do so. Further on, the road led to a part where there was a wall. Again the angel appeared before the ass. Moved by fear the animal crouched against the wall to avoid the angel, badly bruising Balaam’s leg. This made the prophet even more angry. But even worse was to come. A little further along the way the path became very narrow. Here, again, the angel appeared, and here there was no way by which the ass could pass. In consequence, it took fright, and fell down under Balaam.

“This made the prophet very angry indeed, for he was blind to the cause of this strange conduct on the part of the ass. Picking himself up from the dust, he took his rod, and harshly beat the poor beast as it crouched before him. Then suddenly he was startled by hearing it speak to him. ‘What have I done that I should be smitten these three times?’ asked the animal. Balaam was amazed to hear it speak, but he answered, ‘I have punished you because you would not obey me!’ Then in his fury and anger he added: ‘If I had a sword in my hand I would even kill you!’ But the beast replied: ‘You know that I have been a patient animal until this moment. You should know that I would not act like this unless there was good cause for it!’



Balaam and the Ass: “The dumb ass speaking with man’s voice rebukes the madness of the prophet” (2 Peter 2:16).

“Then God opened the eyes of the prophet. He saw standing before him a stern angel, with a sharp sword pointing at him. He knew the purpose of this, and now realised that the ass had actually saved his life. Bowing himself low to the ground before the angel, he pleaded to be forgiven. He recognised that he could not trifle with the God of Israel. Balaam had thought it right to punish his ass, despite good reason for its behaviour. How much more right had God to punish him for his stubbornness! He knew that he had flouted God’s word. The humbled prophet was ‘rebuked for his iniquity’ (2 Pet. 2:16). In humiliation he now offered to return home. However, the angel told him to go on his way, but to be careful to speak only the words that God would give him.

“The terrible appearance of the angel with the glittering sword in his hand, the desperate resistance of the ass, the amazing experience of hearing the dumb animal speak, the realisation that it had saved his life, were as a prelude to the wonderful drama and message that were to be enacted and heard by the king on the plains of Moab.

“Meanwhile, Balak had learned that the prophet he had employed to curse Israel was about to arrive. He decided to welcome him with royal honours. With all his notable men about him, the King made his way to the borders of his country to honour the prophet (Num. 22:36). ‘Why did you not come earlier?’ he asked Balaam. ‘I am able to promote you to great honour!’ This was not only an idle boast (for Balaam knew that Balak was really in fear and trembling lest he lose his kingdom to Israel) but the presence of the angel on the way had shown to the prophet that nobody could help him if the God of Israel were against him. He, therefore, replied: ‘I have no power to do anything apart from what God permits’.

“Balak then conducted Balaam with great pomp and ceremony to Kirjath-huzoth, which means *City of Streets*. Here there had been arranged a public gathering in honour of Balaam. Oxen and sheep were sacrificed, and the King and the Prophet ate together to show that they were joined in the work of cursing Israel, if possible.

Balaam Blesses Israel

“Next morning, Balak took Balaam to a hill from whence could be seen the encampment of Israel. There they built seven altars, and offered seven oxen and seven rams. As the smoke of the sacrifices arose from the seven altars, Balaam withdrew on his own, to seek with enchantments a curse upon Israel (cp. Num. 24:1). He climbed the bare rocks to the very top of the hill.

For a moment he stood, a solitary figure, gazing out upon the scene before him (Num. 23:9). Further down the hill the expectant king with his nobles stood by the altars, awaiting the curse that would rid him of his enemies. And below that, on the plain beneath, was the camp of Israel, with the twelve tribes set out in their order, and the Tabernacle in the centre. As Balaam looked upon the scene before him, the angel of Yahweh again appeared unto him, and told him to return to Balak with a message that he would put in his mouth.

“And what a message it was! There was no curse in it but a blessing! As Balaam clambered down the rocks, towards Balak who stood by the smoking altars with his nobles, he felt the prophetic urge becoming stronger and stronger in him, until, at last, it burst out into glorious poetry — a song of blessing upon the people he had been paid to curse:

*‘From Aram I am brought by Balak,
from eastern hills by Moab’s king,
to lay a curse on Jacob,
and to threaten Israel.
But how can I curse whom God hath not cursed,
or threaten whom Yahweh hath not threatened?
From these cliffs I see him,
from the mount I mark him,
lo, the people shall dwell alone,
and shall be separate from all nations.
Who can count up Jacob’s numbers?
who can reckon the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my final reward be like his!’*

“Balak listened to this Song of Blessing with amazed anger. He was as astonished at its teaching as Balaam had been when he heard his ass speak. ‘I took you to curse mine enemies,’ he exploded impatiently to Balaam, ‘but you have blessed them instead!’ But Balaam replied: ‘I cannot go beyond what Yahweh has caused me to say’.

“Let us go to another place” replied Balak, ‘From where you will see a different part of Israel, and then you can curse them’.

**Yahweh Will
Not Change
Towards Israel**

“Balak took Balaam to the field of Zophim, which means *Watchmen*. It was situated at the top of a hill from whence could be seen part of Israel’s camp. Again they built seven altars and offered thereon; again Balaam with-

drew from the others in order to seek a curse on Israel through enchantments; and again he met the angel of Yahweh, and returned with a message. This time he recorded in poetry the purpose of Yahweh with Israel:

*'Balak listen and attend,
hear me, son of Zippor!
God is no man to break His word,
no mortal to change His mind;
He promises, and performs His word,
He has spoken, and shall do what He says.
He bids me bless,
and bless I must — I cannot take it back.
He shall not behold iniquity in Jacob.
nor remember perverseness in Israel;
Yahweh his God is with him,
and the shout of a King is among them;
God brought them out of Egypt;
He has strength to bear all down before them.
No enchantments will succeed against Jacob,
no divination will hurt Israel;
in future ages it will be said of Israel,
'What hath God wrought!'
The nation shall rise up a great lion,
showing the strength of a young lion;
it shall not lie down until it has eaten its prey,
and drunk the victim's blood'.*

"These were terrible words for Balak. If Israel were to do all this, how could Moab stand? Here he was, paying money to hire Balaam to curse his enemies, and his labours and wealth were only helping to bless them! 'If you cannot curse them, do not bless them!' he told Balaam irritably. But the prophet replied: 'I must speak all that I am told to do'. Balak decided to try once more. This time he took the prophet to the top of Mount Peor that looked towards the wilderness (Num. 23:28). This was the headquarters of the worship of Baal. On the mount there was a Temple called Beth-Peor, or House of Peor, built to the honour of the god. Again the altars were built, and the sacrifices offered, but now the prophet knew that he could not obtain a curse on Israel for Balak, and therefore he no longer went to a place on his own to seek enchantments against the nation. Instead, from the top of Peor, he gazed upon the scene before him. He saw far below the encampment of Israel, in all its splendid order, with the mysterious Tabernacle in the centre, and the tents of the

priests and Levites clustered around it. He saw the cloud of glory that ascended from over the Tabernacle, and the priests intent upon their worship, unconscious of their enemy watching from above. Behind him was Jeshimon, the wilderness from whence this people had suddenly appeared, where once had ruled the mighty nation of Amalek that had tasted defeat already at the hands of Israel. On the western side of the Jordan there rose the hills of Palestine, on the crested heights of which could be seen the ancient fortresses of powerful kings, and beyond which there rolled the deep waters of the Mediterranean Sea. As he gazed on the wonderful scene before him, and looked down again upon the encampment of Israel, set in orderly rows, stretching far out like mighty valleys, or the hanging gardens he knew so well on the banks of the river Euphrates — Balaam realised that nothing he said could possibly affect this nation, the Kingdom of God. Enchantments, divination, all the arts of the magician were useless. What Yahweh has purposed would undoubtedly come to pass. He therefore spake his third prophecy unto Balak, a song that proclaimed the ultimate purpose of Yahweh with Israel, setting forth the goodness, exaltation and victory that awaits the people in the future.

*“The prophecy of Balaam, son of Beor,
the prophecy of the seer,
the prophecy of him who hears God speak,
who knows what the Almighty has revealed,
who lying prostrate, with eyes closed, has had them opened.*

*How fair, O Jacob, are your tents!
how fair your homes, O Israel!
like valleys that stretch afar,
like hanging gardens by a river,
like oaks planted by Yahweh,
like cedars by a stream.*

*Let nations tremble at their might,
let peoples feel their power!*

*His King shall be higher than Gogue
and his kingdom shall be exalted.*

*God brought him forth out of Egypt;
he hath strength to accomplish His purpose;
he shall eat up the nations his enemies,
and shall break their power, and destroy them.*

*He crouches as a lion,
as a great lion — who dare rouse him up?
Blessed is he that blesseth thee,
and cursed is he that curseth thee!”*

“Balak had heard enough! Not only had the hired prophet

blessed the people he had been paid to curse, but he had ended by cursing those who cursed Israel — and that included Balak himself! His temper rose, and blazed forth in terrible anger. Smiting his hands together, he called upon Balaam to stop, and threatened to kill him if he did not. But again the prophet reminded him that he was powerless to do anything about it — he wanted to curse Israel, but God would not let him. Nor could Balak stop him. ‘I will return to my own land’, said Balaam, ‘but first let me tell you what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days’. This time he spake of a Mighty King who would arise in Israel and destroy all its enemies.

*“I see him, but not now:
I behold him, but not nigh:
There shall come forth a Star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
And shall smite through the corners of Moab,
And break down all the sons of tumult.
And Edom shall be a possession,
Seir also shall be a possession, which were his enemies;
while Israel doeth valiantly.
And out of Jacob shall one have dominion,
And shall destroy the remnant from the city’.*

“Balaam spake these words as he gazed from the top of Peor. He looked towards the wilderness, where dwelt the powerful nation of Amalek, and spake of how Amalek would be overthrown. He looked towards the Kenites who had joined with Israel, and thought themselves secure, and spoke of the time when Assyria (or Asshur) would carry both Israel and the Kenites captive. He spoke of the retribution that would be brought on Assyria by Rome who would come from the west and afflict the Israelites (or Eber), only to be destroyed at the last time of Israel’s final triumph.

“At last, to the relief of Balak, his prophesying came to an end, and he prepared to leave for home. What a failure his mission had been! Instead of cursing Israel he had shown in his five prophecies: (1) — that Israel cannot be affected by any curse of man; (2) — that Yahweh cannot be changed from His purpose with Israel; (3) — that Israel will finally receive the blessing and victory promised by God; (4) — that a great ruler (the Star of Jacob) shall come who will rule over Israel, and bring under his control all the nations of mankind. And though God would punish Israel by bringing against them Assyria and Rome, He will finally destroy those who would destroy Israel.

“Thus Balaam was forced to curse his own people beyond the

Euphrates. Realising this he lamented: “Who shall live when God doeth this!”

“The wonderful way in which Yahweh had turned the cursing of Balaam into a blessing was long remembered in Israel. Hundreds of years later, when the people were beginning to forget the goodness of Yahweh, Micah the prophet reminded them of this incident: ‘O my people,’ he said, ‘remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him’ (Micah 6:5). Balak had been thoroughly defeated in his intentions, and in his anger he ordered Balaam to return home.

How Balaam Did Bring Disaster to Israel

“But unfortunately for Israel, Balaam did not return home. He desired the wealth that had been promised him, and thought out a way to obtain it. Though he was powerless to pronounce a curse on Israel, he knew that if the people could be induced to sin against God, they would be punished. He advised the kings of Moab and Midian what they should do to accomplish this (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14).

“The Israelites were encamped in the Plain of the Acacias close to the River Jordan (Num. 25:1). Above it towered Mt. Peor, with the sanctuary to the god of Moab, thereon. From this pagan temple there came some of the daughters of Moab, with offers of friendship to the Israelites. Soon the two nations were mingling together, and gradually some of the Israelites became very attached to the young women of Moab. One immoral action led to another, until Israelites were to be seen bowing in the temple of Peor. The people had been warned against committing this sin (Exod. 34:12-16), but in the excitement of the new friendships they had formed, they chose to ignore it. Soon they were eating the sacrifices of the lifeless idols of Chemosh (Psa. 106:28-31) to their great shame — a shame that was long remembered and recalled (Josh. 22:17; Hos. 9:10; 1 Cor. 10:8; 2 Pet. 2:15-16; Rev. 2:14). The record says that Israel ‘joined himself unto Baal-peor’, and it is interesting to learn that the word ‘joined’ can be rendered *yoked*. It reminds us of the severe warning of Paul in 2 Cor. 6:14: ‘Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.’ We need to remember this in our companionships particularly when young people enter into friendships with those who ‘know not God’. There is a danger that such a friendship might lead to an attachment that can end in marriage — and bring about a personal disaster as bad as that in Israel.

“On this occasion, Yahweh’s anger rose against the people, and he sent a plague amongst them. As Moses saw the sin of the

people, and the effect of the terrible plague that had begun, he called upon the judges of Israel, to publicly hang, or crucify those leaders who had been guilty of this sin. By this means the people could see and acknowledge the enormity of their wickedness, and recognising the justness of the punishment so that the plague might be stopped.

“This was done, and the people were called together to plead God’s forgiveness. As they were weeping before the Tabernacle of God, one of the princes of the tribe of Simeon sauntered past with a Midianitish princess, mocking at the sorrow of Israel. Phineas, the son of Eleazar the priest, saw this, and full of indignation, took up a javelin in his hand, and slew both Zimri, the Israelite, and Cozbi, the daughter of the Midianitish king (Num. 25:7,8,14,15). He did this in his zeal for God, for he hated to see such defiance of Him. And God showed that He was pleased with his action. The plague ceased, though twenty four thousand Israelites lay dead. God publicly praised Phineas for his zeal. He promised that he will enjoy an everlasting priesthood in the Kingdom He will set up when Jesus Christ returns (Num. 25:13). Phineas will thus take his place among those who will be made immortal king-priests in the day when Christ will reign on earth (Psa. 106:30-31; Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10).

The End of Balaam

“God now commanded Moses to attack the kings of Midian, who had escaped the judgment on Sihon, but who had sheltered Balaam. Twelve thousand men were selected for this purpose (Num. 31:5). With Phineas and Joshua at their head, they marched against the Midianites. The five kings were slain, and with them, Balaam the prophet (Num. 31:8). The whole country was taken over by the Israelites, and the inhabitants brought into subjection. The spoil was divided between the people of Israel — half being given to the selected warriors, and half distributed among those who stayed at home. Thus Balaam, who thought he could obtain great honour and riches by cursing Israel, was himself destroyed. How many more powerful leaders have thought the same as he did, and came to the same end!”

“That is the story of Balaam and of his ass that spoke words of wisdom” concluded Mr. Phillips. “Now are there any questions you would like to ask?”

“Yes,” said Graeham. “Numbers 25:9 says that 24,000 people died in the plague, but Paul gives the figure as 23,000 (1 Cor. 10:8). Which number is right?”

“They are both correct,” replied his father. “The figure given in Numbers includes those leaders who were publicly put to

death, as recorded in v. 4. Paul's figure only includes those who died by the plague."

"Is there any lesson to be learned in the story of Balaam beside the fact that God turned the curse into a blessing?" asked Peter.

"I believe there is," replied his father. "Balaam came from Aram, which was beyond the Euphrates, in the land of Babylonia (Num. 23:7; Gen. 28:5), and set up his altars in a place called the *City of Streets* (Num. 22:39). The *Book of Revelation* speaks of spiritual Babylon (Rev. 16:19), which is also called a *City of Streets* (Rev. 11:8). This spiritual Babylon relates to the world about us. Balaam was a prophet who tried to curse Israel, and introduce a false religion among the people in order to gain a reward. The *Book of Revelation* also refers to a 'false prophet', who is considered a great man in spiritual Babylon. The false teaching that emanates from him out of Rome not only distorts the hope of Israel, but also teaches falsehoods for reward, such as the immortality of the soul (Rev. 2:14). Balaam was destroyed with the Midianites by an army of select Israelitish warriors (for out of all the thousands of Israel, only 12,000 were chosen for that purpose — Num. 31:5) and the conquest of the world, and the overthrow of Roman Catholicism by Christ, in the age to come will be by a select company of warriors: his immortalised followers (Psa. 149:5-9; Rev. 17:14; 19:15-16). As Balaam was destroyed in the overthrow of Midian, so the 'false prophet' of Revelation 16, will be destroyed in what the prophet Isaiah calls, 'a day of Midian;' and with which he identifies the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, with the Lord reigning upon the throne of David (Isa. 9:4-7). So, you see, in this incident, as in so many others of the Old Testament, we have lessons and types pointing forward to God's purpose in the future".

"What did Balaam mean when he said, 'Let me die the death of the righteous!'" asked Ann.

"The righteous die in hope of a resurrection to life eternal upon this earth (Dan. 12:2)," replied her father. "But the unrighteous die without hope (Eph. 2:12). Here are some excellent references for you to mark in your Bible against the statement of Balaam — Psa. 16:8-11; 37:37-38; 71:20-21; Prov. 14:32; Isa. 57:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:53-57; 2 Tim. 4:6-8."

"I noticed that when you were telling the story of Balaam, you altered the wording of some of his speeches," said Graeham.

"That was only to express more clearly what is meant by the words used in the Bible," said Mr. Phillips. "For example, instead of quoting Balaam as saying, 'Let my last end be like his' (Num. 23:10), I quoted it as it should be rendered: 'Let my final reward be like his,' i.e., like the reward of the righteous".

"In Numbers 23:21, Balaam said, 'God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob'. How could he say that in view of the punishments God brought upon Israel?" asked Peter.

"Balaam was not speaking of the people of his day, but the nation that will inherit the Kingdom of God in the future, and whose sins will be blotted out (see Micah 7:19; Rom. 11:25-29). When a thing is 'blotted out' it cannot be seen, and it is of that time that the prophet was speaking. That is shown beyond doubt by his own statement, for he said, 'According to *this time* it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!' The time is the future age, and Psalm 46:8-11 shows what God will do then".

"Why does Balaam speak of both 'Jacob and Israel'?" asked Graeham who was taking notes.

"In the future age, the nation will comprise two kinds of people," explained his father. "Its rulers will be immortal (Matt. 19:28-29; Rev. 5:9-10), but its subjects will be mortal people who will be humbled and taught the truth concerning God and His son, the Lord Jesus (Isa. 65:18-23). Israel means a *prince with God* and refers to these rulers. Jacob means *Supplanter* and pre-figures Israel after the flesh. Though constituted of mortal people, the nation, called by Balaam *Jacob*, will supplant all other nations as Micah 4:8 shows.

"Numbers 24:7 says that the coming King of Israel will be higher than Agag," said Graeham, "but you quoted this word as Gogue, the same as Ezekiel 38:2. Did you make a mistake?"

"No," replied his father. "I think that it should be rendered *Gogue* and some versions of the Bible give it as that (see *The Septuagint* and *Moffat*). In his vision of the future, Balaam saw in prospect the triumph of the King of Israel (the Lord Jesus Christ) over the enemies of Israel, and particularly over the Russian Gogue. He saw the Lord as a great Lion, the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' as he is called in Genesis 49:9 and Revelation 5:5; a Lion so powerful that men will fear to rouse him. He also visualised the Lord as a Star and a Sceptre, expressions used in the New Testament (see Luke 1:78; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28; Rev. 22:16) to describe him as ruling over the enemies of Israel. These enemies included Moab, Edom, Amalek, Assyria (Asshur) and Rome (Chittim). Although those ancient Empires have disappeared, similar powers have risen in their place; but over them all, Christ will triumph, and in his triumph Israel will be exalted."

"Why can you say that Chittim refers to Rome?" asked Graeham.

"Josephus, in his history, says that Chittim was one of the sons of Javan (Gen. 10:4) whose descendants settled in Cilicia,

Macedonia, Cyprus and Italy (*Ant. 1:30,22*). The Roman Power seems to be referred to as the *ships of Chittim* in Daniel 11:30. They occupied the territory of Assyria, and afflicted Eber, or the Hebrews, as Balaam said they would. Indeed, in A.D. 70 they destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, and took many Jews into captivity. But Balaam also prophesied that they were to perish forever. The Roman Empire has disappeared showing how true were his words.

"These things may be very interesting for Graeham," said Ann, with a yawn, "but they are a little beyond me, I am afraid."

"Yes, you all look tired", agreed her father. "I think we had better leave it for tonight, and see about bed".

Last Duties Of Moses

The time had come when Moses must die, but a few things first remained to be done.

In preparation for entering the land, the people of Israel were numbered, and it was found that they were fewer in number than when they had left Egypt. The greatest decrease was in the tribe of Simeon which had dropped to less than half its previous size. This tribe had probably been prominent in the sin of Baal-peor, for Zimri, whom Phineas slew, was a prince of a leading house in Simeon (Num. 25:14), and it was after the 24,000 had died in the plague that the numbering of Israel was commenced (Num. 26:1). Perhaps many of those who died were of the tribe of Simeon.

Following the numbering of the tribes, instructions were given that the Land of Promise should be divided among the Israelites (Num. 26:52-56). This was to be done by Lot, but not by chance. There is a great difference between the Lot and Chance. The Lot was conducted by God through the priest who was ever present on such occasions (Num. 34:17; Josh. 17:4-5). It was God therefore Who determined the division according to the Lot (Prov. 16:33; 18:18). It was He, therefore, Who chose the inheritance of each tribe.

The use of the Lot showed that no Israelite had exclusive right to any part of the land. His inheritance, and position, was decided by Yahweh who is the great Disposer. It is also interesting to learn that the word in the New Testament translated *inheritance*, and relating to the reward of the righteous also means "Lot" (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:14,18; Col. 1:12). The fact that each of the tribes of Israel obtained its inheritance by Yahweh's Lot showed that they had no natural right to the land: they received it through the grace of Yahweh. So also with the Kingdom Christ will set up. The inheritance that he has promised to those who follow him, will be a grant of grace. He told two of his disciples:

“To sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared” (Mark 10:40).

Other matters attended to by Moses just before his death were the Law of Inheritance (Num. 27:1-11); the appointment of Joshua as his successor (Num. 27:18-23); the orderly arrangement of the various offerings to be observed when the people entered the land, and the Divine worship was properly set up (Num. 28); the marking out of the nation's borders (Num. 34); the appointment of cities for the Levites, and cities of Refuge where justice and mercy could be found (Num. 35).

Meanwhile, the elders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad saw that the land of Gilead on the east of Jordan, where the nation was then camped, provided excellent grazing country for cattle. And in this occupation they excelled. Therefore they approached Moses and Eleazar the priest with the request that they be allowed to be apportioned their inheritance in that area (Num. 32:1-5).

The suggestion displeased Moses. He thought that it arose through fear of the enemies the tribes would have to face on the other side of the Jordan. He warned these two tribes of the consequences of failing to co-operate with the other tribes in the work that Yahweh had set them. But the elders of Reuben and Gad assured him that they did not make the request through fear of the Canaanites. Indeed, they offered to send warriors over the Jordan, with the rest of the tribes, to play their part in driving the enemy from the land, providing they could leave their wives, and children and flocks in the land that had been taken from the Amorites and Midianites. The half tribe of Manasseh also asked permission to stay and have their homes on the east of Jordan. The request of these tribes was granted on condition that they helped the rest of the nation in the war.

The Death Of Moses

Yahweh had told Moses that he would not be permitted to pass over the Jordan, but would die in the land of Moab. Though he was an hundred and twenty years of age (Deut. 34:7), he was as strong and active as a man in the prime of life. Forty years of that time had been spent in Pharaoh's court as a ruler, forty years in the land of Midian as a shepherd, and forty years with Israel as a leader. Realising that he must die, he gathered the tribes together and delivered to them a final exhortation. He reminded them of their experiences, and warned them that success in their forthcoming attack on the land, depended on obedience to Yahweh. God had told him, that after his death, the people

would forsake His way (Deut. 31:16-17), and in a long and wonderful prophecy contained in Deuteronomy, chapters 28 to 30, he foretold the history of Israel. He predicted that the people would prove disobedient and be scattered among the nations in consequence (Deut. 28:64-67). There they would become a "proverb and a byword" among all people of the earth (Deut. 28:36-37). Their fertile land would be neglected and would become desolate and untilled (Deut. 29:22-23). But he also had a message of hope for them. He predicted that God would regather them into their land in the latter days (Deut. 30:1-4), and placing His law within their hearts (vv. 6-8), would make them a great nation (v. 9). Moreover, Moses knew that he will live to see it, for he was able to look beyond the time of trouble that he knew was in store for Israel, to the glorious future when he will be brought again from the grave to obtain his reward, and the people will become a "great nation" in the Land of Promise (Gen. 12:2; 15:18).



Moses smote the Rock and water came forth therefrom. He should have only spoken to it. Because he spoke unadvisably he was not permitted to enter the land. He typified the Law which, of itself, can not provide the way to life.

But now the time had come for Moses to close his eyes in death. Facing the Land of Promise, like a mighty barrier, is the mountain range of Abarim (Num. 27:12), among which is Mount Nebo, the top of which is called Pisgah (Deut. 32:49; 34:1). Abarim means *Places of Crossing*. It barred the way to the Land of Promise, but across it Moses was not permitted to go.

Yahweh called him up into the mount. Filled with sadness, the people watched their gallant leader slowly ascend the steep mountain-side until he passed out of sight. Onwards and upwards he climbed until he came to its barren and desolate top. Like Balaam, he surveyed the scene before him, looking "westward, northward, southward and eastward" (Deut. 3:27), as did Abraham before him (Gen. 13:14). Therefore he saw it with different eyes to those of the prophet of Babylonia. In being invited by God to view the land, like Abraham, it was with assurance that he would attain unto an inheritance therein with that great Father of the faithful in the age to come.

Beneath him was the camp of Israel stretched out in its four divisions, awaiting the order to march. On the other side of Jordan could be seen the fortress of Jericho, key to the Land of Promise. Beyond Jericho and to the north, stretched the mountains of the land with Hermon and Lebanon on the far north and east. South of these peaks were the rolling hills of Galilee overshadowing the blue waters of the huge lake of that name. From where he stood, Moses could also see the vast opening among the hills and mountains which commences the beautiful valley of Esdraelon, along which many an army was destined to march, seeking conquest and glory. He could see the twin hills of Ebal and Gerizim; Mounts of Cursing and Blessing, which stand like sentinels over the fertile valley of Shechem, where Abraham built his altar to God, and later the Lord Jesus had his conversation with the woman of Samaria. Over these parts the eyes of Moses roved, taking in the hills of Judea, where the powerful fortress of Jebus, one day to be known as Jerusalem, could be seen. Behind him was the wilderness, speaking of the trials and difficulties he had undergone in order to bring the people to this place; before him was the Land promised to Abraham, the land for which he had borne so many years of toil, and experienced such dangers and difficulties; but upon the soil of which he was not permitted to tread in this life. Down below, the waiting multitude could only see the harsh range of mountains that stood as a barrier before them. But his vision was exalted and glorious and saw beyond it all. And as he viewed the scene, he doubtless recalled to mind Yahweh's great purpose with it. He saw in vision the cities fall before the valiant Joshua; the heathen scattered from their places;

the cities of Israel replacing those of the Canaanites; the pure worship of Yahweh supreme over that of Baal, Ashtaroath, and the numerous gods worshipped by ignorance and superstition.

He saw this in vision, and much else besides. For Moses knew the heart of Israel. He knew that the people would fail from the way and be driven from the land (Deut. 28). But he was able to look beyond that time, even to the time when the "prophet like unto himself" (Deut. 18:18), the Lord Jesus, will stand in immortal glory upon the earth, to whom the people will be compelled to listen. He saw a greater, more spiritual Israel restored to the land in the latter days, after centuries of trial and affliction (Deut. 4:30). He saw the King, of whom Balaam spoke, establish Jerusalem as a royal city, ruling over all the earth (Deut. 30:6-8). He anticipated the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, when his seed, including Moses himself, clothed with immortality, will inherit the land for ever.

Moses on Mount Nebo, gazing upon the Promised Land, illustrates the words of the Apostle: "He died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off . . ." (Heb. 11:13). He died in confidence of his future inheritance and glory; and in comparison with that, the fact that he did not tread upon the soil of the Land in his lifetime was as nothing.

The time at last came. The vision was at an end. The eyes must be averted. The angel touched the solitary figure on the Mount — the greatest man who ever lived apart from the Lord Jesus (Deut. 34:10-12): Death came quickly to this hero of faith, and the angel buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-Peor; but "no man knoweth of his sepulchre to this day" (Deut. 34:6). The death of Moses was the end of an epoch and a new phase now opened for the people waiting below.





The Book of Joshua

The Book of Joshua depicts the victory of Faith. It is a record of graphic movement, of campaign, conquest and subjugation through faith. It tells of how Joshua led the way into the Land, and so weakened the power of the Canaanites as to make it possible for every Israelitish family and tribe to obtain its Divinely selected inheritance. It is set out in four main sections:

Section One: Entering the Land: The First Principles of Faith (Chapters 1-5).

Section Two: Conquering the Land: The Works of Faith (Chapters 6-12).

Section Three: Occupying the Land: The Promise of Faith (Chapters 13-22).

Section Four: Exhortations For the Future: The Appeal of Faith (Chapters 23-24).

Each of these main sections can be sub-divided. For example, Section Two tells how Jericho was conquered in faith (Hebrews 11:30), how Israel suffered defeat at Ai because of disobedience, teaching the lesson that faith must be perfected by the works of obedience. It also records how the Gibeonites tricked Joshua because he failed to seek counsel of Yahweh, and so it was impressed upon the Israelites that there is a constant need to closely commune with Yahweh through His word and prayer.

Thus wonderful lessons were impressed upon Israel by the events that took place as they entered the Land.

Of these records, Paul wrote: "These things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

We read the account of these incidents, not merely as historical details, but as typical foreshadowing of the purpose of God in Christ, the Joshua of the New Testament.

Chapter One

JOSHUA ASSUMES THE LEADERSHIP

Character of Joshua

Moses was dead, and a leader was needed to take his place. But it was not left to man to appoint who he should be, for that was Yahweh's privilege. Even Moses had not ventured to say who was to be his successor, but wisely asked God to choose the man (Num. 27:16-17). And Yahweh chose Joshua, the son of Nun.

Joshua was a man of courage and faith. Both are necessary for true leadership. A person may have faith, but if he has not the courage to put faith into effect, he may fail through very timidity to do what God requires of him. Joshua had these qualities, and though dwarfed by the greatness of Moses, he nevertheless emerges as an outstanding hero in the work of Yahweh. He was known first as Hoshea (*Salvation*), but his name was changed by Moses to Yahoshua (*Yahweh's salvation*), to be shortened to Joshua, or Jesus (Num. 13:16; Acts 7:45). He was of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8), and led the people to war against Amalek at Rephidim (Exod. 17:8-16). He became Moses' personal assistant, ascended Mount Sinai with him (Exod. 24:13; 32:17-18) and had charge of the tent where Moses used to meet with the people (Exod. 33:11). He was among the spies sent by Moses to search out the land, and with Caleb he opposed the faithlessness of the other spies, pleading with the people to obey Yahweh. For this act of faith he nearly lost his life (Num. 13:8; 14:6-9).

Before his death, Moses had been commanded to set Joshua before Eleazar, the High Priest of Israel, and appoint him as Leader before all the congregation — and very solemnly, we may be sure, did Moses perform this important act (Num. 27:18-23). Therefore, before the death of Moses, the people of Israel knew who would be the new leader.

And now Moses was dead, and the decisive moment had come for Joshua to act for though Yahweh buries His workmen, His work must go on. Did Joshua hesitate, or shrink from the task? Though, at first, he may have felt somewhat timid, he immediately gave himself to the task with faith and courage. Yahweh gave him his mission, exhorted him no less than three times to "*be strong and of good courage*" (Josh. 1:6,8,9), and promised him that victory would be his. The *Book of Joshua* is a monument to the great qualities that this man revealed in the work that Yahweh set before him. Joshua was a type of the great-

er Jesus leading the people into their inheritance. He made it possible for them to succeed, though individual initiative and effort were personally necessary for each tribe or family to secure their individual holding.

How To Succeed

The death of Moses was a great shock to Israel (Deut. 34:8). For a moment, the people were at a loss what to do. But the hesitation was soon broken by a message that came to Joshua from Yahweh. "My servant Moses is dead," he was told. "Now, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all the people unto the land that I will give unto them. There shall not be any man able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

Yahweh told Joshua that four things were necessary: (1) Faith; (2) Courage; (3) Obedience; (4) Constant study of the Bible. If he developed those four attributes (see Joshua 1:7-8), Yahweh promised that he would "make his way prosperous, and he would have good success".

Before his death, Moses had completed the first five books of the Bible, so that now God's revelation and purpose were conveniently recorded in a book (Josh. 1:8). That Book has the power to change lives. It has "promise of the life that now is and that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). To the portion of it then recorded Joshua is now directed.

In presenting this wonderful book to the nation Moses had warned the people "not to add to or take away" from its contents (Deut. 4:2). In this he was like the Lord Jesus, who in the last book of the Bible, gave a similar command (Rev. 22:18-19). Thus the "last words of Moses" (Deut. 1:1), and the last words of the prophet like unto Moses (Rev. 1:1; Deut. 18:18), contain similar instructions.

Moses had also told the people the importance of the Book he had given them. He declared: "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do . . . For it is not a vain thing for you; because *it is your life*: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deut. 32:46-47).

It was very important, therefore, for Joshua to study the section of the Bible that had just been completed; and it is just as important for us to do the same. We, too, must "set our hearts" upon the words contained therein, for they provide life-giving Truth. We will only inherit the promise of God if we do this. If we set it as our aim in life to learn of God, and do His will, we, too,

will “make our way prosperous, and have good success”. It is the only recipe for true happiness and peace.

Spies Sent to Jericho

But there were great obstacles to overcome. From Abel-Shittim where the Israelites were camped (Josh. 3:1) they looked down upon the swiftly flowing waters of the River Jordan that barred the way to the land. Though the river is only about 60 feet across at this part, it is quite deep, and was then in flood (Josh. 3:15). There was no bridge crossing it, and no means of carrying all their possessions over. In the distance, beyond Jordan, the Israelites could see the proud, arrogant fortress of Jericho, with its wide, massive walls, upon the top of which there were built houses. They doubtless remembered the report that the spies had brought back to Moses, about the giant warriors to be found in the Land of Promise, and realised that a most difficult task lay ahead of them.

Yet they, too, had faith at that stage. They had defeated Og and Sihon, and believed Yahweh would continue to help them. When Joshua told them that they must go over armed to fight for victory, they readily agreed. “Whoever rebels against your commandment, let him be put to death,” they told Joshua, “only be strong and of good courage” (Josh. 1:18).

Joshua sent two spies to search out the land. He did this secretly (Josh. 2:1), doubtless remembering what had happened in the days of Moses when the spies returned with their discouraging report, and the people had become disheartened. The two spies swam the swiftly running waters of Jordan, and creeping cautiously through the forest of palm trees that hid the city from sight (Deut. 34:3; Jud. 1:16), at last came in front of the massive sixty-feet (20m) high walls of the city. The gates were open, and boldly the disguised men entered, to explore the narrow winding streets, that they might know where to lead the attack when the time came. This was a very dangerous task. They needed a place from where they might escape should their presence be discovered. They noticed that the city was surrounded by two walls, across the top of which were built houses. If they could obtain a hiding place in one of these, they would be able to escape from the city if their presence were discovered. They decided to do this, and in their choice, God led them to the house of Rahab.

Rahab was a very intelligent woman, who had listened carefully to all the rumours and reports that were circulating throughout the land of Canaan. She had heard how the Red Sea had opened to provide a way of escape for the Israelites and how the powerful army of Egypt had been destroyed. She had learned of the defeat of Sihon and Og, the powerful Amoritish kings on the

eastern side of Jordan (Josh. 12:10). Around her were people fearful of the Israelites. Meditating upon these things, she could see that God was with Israel, and therefore Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, was He whom men should worship.

The spies could not have selected a better place to hide, for Rahab was anxious to throw in her lot with Israel, and so escape the destruction that threatened her city.

Meanwhile, the presence of the spies in the city had been discovered, and it was reported that they had entered the house of Rahab. The King of Jericho sent a band of soldiers to capture them. But Rahab took the spies to the roof of her house which was flat, and upon which were bundles of flax, laid out to dry in the sun, and hiding them under these stalks of flax, she returned to receive the approaching soldiers.

Soon they were knocking on the door, and roughly demanding that she deliver up the spies to them. But Rahab pretended she did not know where they were. "It is true they came here," she said, "but I do not know where they have gone. It came to pass at the time when the gate was shut, and it was dark, that the men went out. Pursue after them quickly, and you might overtake them."



"Joshua sent out two men to spy secretly . . . and they went, and came into Jericho, and into the house of Rahab, and lodged there" (Joshua 2:1).

The spies ponder their next move as they come close to the walled up city of Jericho.

The soldiers hurried away, and Rahab returned to the two spies. They were very impressed with her kindness, and when she requested that she and her family be saved when Israel attacked the city they readily agreed. "When our army invades the land," they told her, "bind this line of scarlet rope in the window of your home, and lock yourself in, together with your near relations, and we will see that you are saved. Be sure that you do not leave the house, for whoever does will die".

Rahab then let the spies down from the window by the scarlet rope into the open country beyond the wall, and they hid themselves for three days until the soldiers who were searching for them returned to the King of Jericho with the news that they had been unable to find the Israelites. The spies then returned to Joshua, on the other side of Jordan, grateful to God for their remarkable deliverance, and with a most encouraging report for their leader. "Truly Yahweh has delivered all the land into our hands," they told him, "for all the inhabitants of the land do faint because of us".

The Amazing Miracle of the Jordan

Meanwhile, the angel had instructed Joshua how the invasion of the land was to take place, and Israel had removed from Abel-Shittim to the banks of the Jordan in preparation for this event. At last the day arrived, and Yahweh said unto Joshua: "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (Josh. 3:7).

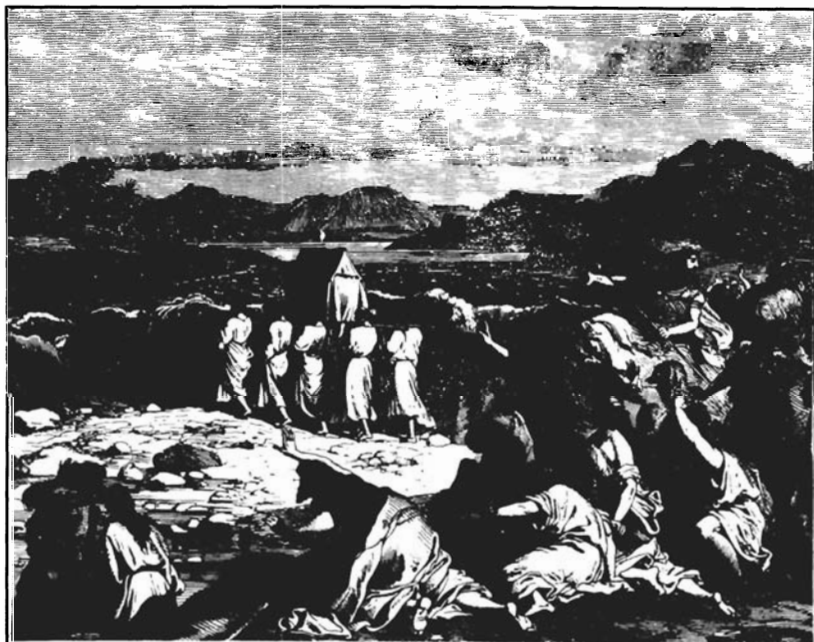
The time came for the crossing to be made, and marching in order, the tribes of Israel approached the deep, swiftly running



Twelve rough stones were taken from the bank of Jordan and placed in the riverbed; and twelve smooth ones were taken from the river and set up on the land. Both witnessed to the change that should take place in a believer's life through baptism: the rough, dirty stones of the land are washed and made smooth by the water of the river.

waters of the Jordan, then in flood. At their head (instead of in the centre as before — Num. 10:21) went the Ark carried now by Priests instead of Levites, and removed from the rest of Israel by “about two thousand cubits” (Josh. 3:4).

When the priests came to the river, they stepped into the midst of the waters, which began to boil and foam, as the mighty power of Yahweh drove them back. The people looked with amazement at the wonderful sight. They saw the waters bank up, as though held up by a strong, invisible barrier, and then slowly begin to flow backwards (Psalm 114:3-5). A great valley of dry land appeared where once there was a river. As the Priests, holding aloft the Ark, remained in the midst of this valley, the people of Israel rushed across (Josh. 4:10). They were led by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had been given an inheritance on the east of Jordan, but who now spear-headed the advance, as though as if to show their willingness to fulfil their vow, and help the other tribes obtain their inheritance (Josh. 4:12).



Bearing the Ark into the River Jordan. There was a change in procedure. Priests bore it aloft instead of Levites.

North of where the Israelites crossed, there was a town called Adam. Usually the waters descended swiftly from Adam to the Dead Sea, which was further south, but now from Adam they began to flow backwards towards the Living Sea, called elsewhere the Sea of Galilee (Josh. 3:16).

As a memorial of this wonderful miracle, Joshua was told to appoint twelve men of Israel to take twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, and set them up on the western bank of the river; and take a further twelve stones from the land, and set them up in the midst of the river. These stones were a lasting memorial of this wonderful happening. "When your children shall ask in time to come. What mean these stones? Then ye shall let them know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land" (Josh. 4:21-22).

These instructions to Joshua show that God is pleased when young people take note of what is done in His worship, and question their elders about it. Parents need to encourage such a spirit of enquiry, and be ever ready to explain why certain things are done in the service of Yahweh.

The amazing miracle of the Jordan showed to the people that Joshua was, indeed, appointed of Yahweh. They could see that He was with them, and they need not fear the enemy — no matter how powerful the latter may appear.

The crossing of the Jordan took place on the tenth day of the first month (Josh. 4:19). This was the day appointed by God for Israelites to select the Passover Lamb for the Passover Feast which took place four days later (Exod. 13:4), and which celebrates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

Exactly forty years earlier they had celebrated it in Egypt, the night before they left the land of slavery. But after they had left Mt. Sinai, this feast, together with the rite of circumcision, had been discontinued. Now however, with the deliverance from the wilderness, and the new beginning in the Land of Promise, all the males among the Israelites were circumcised, and the Passover was again held*.

**Joshua Meets The
Captain of
Yahweh's Heavenly
Army**

For some weeks nothing happened (Josh. 5:8). The Israelites remained encamped at Gilgal, which means *Rolling*, because God had "*rolled away* the reproach of Egypt" from Israel, when they were circumcised. From their camp, the Israelites looked towards what was to be the first prize of the conquest of the land. Before them was a vast forest of majestic palms. In the open spaces before the

* For the significance of circumcision see *Story of the Bible* Vol. 1 p. 101, and for that of the Passover, pp. 273-274.

forest were waving fields of ripe corn, for it was the time of barley harvest. Above the trees could be seen the high walls and towers of Jericho. As they awaited the moment of attack, the people doubtless wondered by what means such a city would be given into their hands — for they had no battering-rams, or siege weapons with which to make a breach in the walls.

Meanwhile, in the doomed city, the people fearfully awaited the attack they knew must come. When it was learned that the spies had escaped, the gates of Jericho were kept closed day and night, so that nobody could come in or go out. Normally, most people lived outside the walls of the fortress-city, where they tended their crops or herds, but with the ominous presence of the enemy at Gilgal, only a few miles distant, all the people had withdrawn within the walls of the city. As day followed day without anything happening, fear and then panic began to grip them, for they recalled the amazing stories they had heard concerning the God of Israel.

As the time of waiting drew to an end, Joshua decided to approach the city and study the defences for himself. He left Gilgal, and walked towards Jericho. There he saw the massive walls, and high towers of the city that shortly he must attack. It was to be a conquest of faith, for he realised that he had no weapons with which to breach such strong masonry. But as he stood gazing at the city, his attention was suddenly drawn to a powerful warrior who stood not far from him with a drawn sword in his hand. Who was this warrior? Was he friend or foe? Not daunted by his obvious strength, the courageous and faithful Joshua approached him with the challenge: "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" The gracious reply was given: "I am the captain of the Army of Yahweh".

Joshua realised that he was in the presence of the angel whom Yahweh had put over the affairs of Israel (Exod. 23:21). He was Captain of the army of angels (Deut. 20:1-4), who though unseen, could very effectively fight on the behalf of the nation. Concerning this angel Moses had been told that the people must give to him implicit obedience: "If you will indeed obey his voice, and do all that I (Yahweh) speak, then I will be an Enemy unto your enemies, and an Adversary unto your adversaries" (Exod. 23:22).

In the presence of this exalted angel Joshua felt very humble. Bowing down to the earth he enquired as what he should do. The angel replied: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place wherein thou standest is holy" (Josh. 5:15). These were similar words to those heard by Moses at the bush (Exod. 3:5), and it was no doubt the same Angel that spoke on this occasion.

The Captain of Yahweh's army explained to Joshua how he was to attack the city. Jericho was to fall, but not through fleshly might. The people were not to lay siege to it and take it by war, but were to merely march around the city, with the priests blowing their trumpets, and the walls would fall down flat.

**The Amazing
Miracle of Jericho**

Within the city the people still waited fearfully. Representatives of all the nations of Canaan sheltered behind its walls (Josh. 24:11). They had gathered to assist the men of Jericho repel the invader. Watchmen had been placed upon its walls with instructions to immediately report any suspicious movements. But they were not the only ones who watched, for fear and curiosity caused many of the inhabitants to do likewise.

Then one day the announcement was made that the army of Israel was on the march. The people flocked to the walls of the city, and saw the massed soldiers advancing five abreast (Josh. 1:14 mg.). But they marched quietly. There was no shouting, nor battle-cries, no words of command or exhortation. The warriors silently approached Jericho, then after encircling the city, just as quietly returned. The Canaanites heard the regular, steady tramp of Israelitish feet, and the harsh strident wail of the shofar trumpets. For behind the marching troops came the rereward. This was made up of seven priests sounding seven trumpets, filling the air with the strange, penetrating noise of trumpets that looked like rams' horns. These priests were followed by other priests bearing aloft the Ark of the Covenant. They also marched around the city, and then returned to the camp at Gilgal.

To the wonderment of the people of Jericho, silence again settled over the walled-up city!

What strange omen did this foretell? The people of Jericho did not know. They had heard sufficient of Israel to be fearful of whatever was done — and this silent encircling of the city was unnerving. They settled down to wait. Next morning, the same thing happened. The soldiers appeared, quietly marched around the city, the seven priests followed blowing the trumpets, the body of priests brought up the rear, bearing the Ark of Yahweh — and again they returned and silence settled down on the city.

For six days the same thing happened, until the men of Jericho began to take it for granted, and fewer people gathered on the walls to witness it.

But on the seventh day there was a change. On that day, Joshua rose early in the morning, and calling the leaders of Israel before him, instructed them what they were to do. They were to

* For the meaning of this expression see "Story of the Bible," Vol. 1 pp. 239-240.

encircle the city no less than seven times, and on the seventh occasion, when the people heard the trumpets of the priests sounding, they were to suddenly shout with all their might, and the walls of the city would fall down before them. The soldiers were to immediately turn on the city, and put all its inhabitants to the sword as a punishment for their frightful wickedness (Deut. 9:5-6).

Accordingly, on the seventh day, the people of Jericho were disturbed earlier than ever. Again they waited for the soldiers of Israel to encircle the city and then march off as before. But on this occasion, they continued to surround it, until the circles of marching soldiers extended out from the fortress, which was only about 12 acres in extent[§]. Seven times the marching soldiers with the priests blowing the trumpets, or carrying the Ark, encircled the city, and then, on the seventh occasion, when the priests commenced their last march, the people of Jericho were startled by a tremendous shout that came from the ranks of the Israelites. The noise of the shout echoed among the hills in the background and rolled back over the doomed city. Then the earth began to heave and shake, and the outer wall of the city began to lurch out from its inner supporting wall. Finally, with a terrible crash, most of the outer wall gave way, dragging the inner wall with it—and the city was open to the warriors of Israel.

Not all of the walls fell down. Part of them remained standing, and on this portion there was the house of Rahab. In the window could be seen the crimson rope, telling a similar story of faith, as the blood-spattered lintels of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when the Angel of Death passed over the land. Rahab, and those who sheltered with her in the house, were saved from the slaughter that was taking place outside. She was safely conducted into the camp of Israel, saved through her faith (Josh. 6:23; Heb. 11:31). But the rest of the city, being the first-fruits of the conquest of the land, was wholly devoted unto Yahweh. That meant that nothing was to be taken by the invading soldiers. Everything was to be put to death, or subjected to the purging flames of fire. Such valuables as silver and gold, having been thus purified were to be placed in the treasury of Yahweh. Thus the city was taken, and as the soldiers of Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal, it was with the knowledge that Yahweh was with them, and nothing could stand before them.

About fifty years ago the ruins of Jericho were thoroughly excavated by the archaeologist John Garstang. He uncovered ruins

[§] Archaeologists claim that this was the size of the fortress walled city. The homes of citizens extended outside the walls within which the people sheltered in time of danger.

that told a story confirming the record in the *Book of Joshua*. In fact, in describing the walls of the city, he used similar words to those of Joshua: "the walls fell down flat" (Josh. 6:20). His excavations revealed that the city had been burned after it had been taken, as Joshua likewise records. And as Joshua was commanded to "keep yourselves from the things of Jericho" (v. 18), so the archaeologists found under the ashes and fallen walls, in the ruins of storerooms, an abundance of foodstuffs turned to charcoal by intense heat; untouched and uneaten, evidence that the conquerors had avoided touching these things as the Angel had commanded (Josh. 6:18).

Before he excavated Jericho, archaeologist, John Garstang, had rejected the Bible as false, but he was now convinced of its truth. Since then, succeeding archaeologists have disputed his claims, giving a different dating to the ruins excavated by him. However, Garstang maintained his belief in the validity of his explanations until his death; disputing the conclusions reached by others. Archaeology confirms the Truth of the Bible upon every aspect touched by it. We see no reason to reject the conclusions of John Garstang in regard to Jericho.

**Mr. Phillips
Discusses the
Crossing of Jordan**

"This was a greater miracle than the dividing of the Red Sea", remarked Mr. Phillips, to his family after reading the story of the crossing of Jordan.

"Why do you say that?" asked Graeham.

"Because there was no apparent means by which it was done," explained his father. "In the case of the Red Sea, God used a strong east wind to divide the waters, but there was no natural agency at all used in regard to the Jordan".

"I read in a book on archaeology that it was performed by earthquakes," said Graeham. "The author wrote that it has been known for earthquake to cause a barrier to form across the river Jericho, cutting off the supply of water for some time".

"It is obvious that did not happen on this occasion," declared his father, "for as soon as the priests lifted their feet from the mud of the river, the waters returned again (Josh. 4:18). If your theory were correct two earthquakes would be required: one to put the barrier there, and one to lift it away again! Moreover, even that would not explain the Bible story, for it does not merely say that the waters stopped, but that 'Jordan was driven back' (Psa. 114:3)".

"But that is impossible!" declared Peter.

"Nothing is impossible with God," replied his father. "It was God's power at work on this occasion. That is why I said that it

was one of the most remarkable miracles recorded in the Bible. And, in addition to that, it provides one of the most amazing types contained in God's word".

"Well, come on, Dad!" exclaimed Ann, impatiently. "Let us into the great secret".

"It commences with the Ark," replied her father, with a smile. "As you know, the Ark of the Covenant pointed forward to Jesus, who is our Ark of safety (Heb. 9:11). Previously the Ark had been hidden in the midst of Israel, for it was carried in the very centre of the marching tribes (Num. 10:21), but when they crossed the Jordan, it went ahead of them 'about two thousand cubits' (Josh. 3:4)."

"Yes, I noticed that," said Graeham, "what does it mean?"

"It is part of the type, teaching the lesson of God's purpose with man," replied Mr. Phillips. "As the Ark went ahead of Israel 'about 2,000 cubits,' so the Lord Jesus attained unto his reward about 2,000 years before those he came to save. He did this for the very same reason that the Ark went across the Jordan — that 'ye may know the way by which ye must go'. Thus the Apostle Paul tells us to 'Look unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12:2). What Jesus has attained to, we can likewise attain unto".

"Why should the Ark be suddenly brought to the front whereas before it was in the centre of Israel?" asked Peter.

"We have the answer if we look at the Lord Jesus," replied his father. "Previously he was concealed in Israel, being proclaimed by prophecy and promise, and set forth in type; but 1,900 years ago he was openly manifested to the people, and has since been appointed over all (Matt. 28:18)".

"Are there any other lessons connected with the type?" asked Graeham.

"Indeed, yes!" said Mr. Phillips. "You read that instead of the Levites carrying the Ark, on staves, it was borne over the Jordan by the priests. This has its answer in the words of Paul when he said there was a 'change of priesthood', from that known as the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11). The New Testament shows that those who are followers of the Lord Jesus are called to be priests (1 Pet. 2:9), and they bear aloft before all men the Ark of God, or the Lord Jesus Christ. What is more, when they do that, they cause the waters of the Jordan to flow in reverse".

"Whatever do you mean by that!" exclaimed Ann. "You get very irritating sometimes Daddy, talking in riddles like that!"

"Let me try to explain," said Mr. Phillips, with a chuckle. "The river Jordan flows into two lakes — the Sea of Galilee and the

Dead Sea. The former is a comparatively small lake, but it is a lake of living water, teeming with life; the latter is a large sea, so salty as to be called the Dead Sea. The word 'Jordan' means the *Descender*, and its waters flow out of the living lake down through the city of Adam to the Dead Sea. But when the priests put their feet in the river, and held aloft the Ark, the water stopped flowing from Adam to the Dead Sea, and instead it commenced to flow back through Adam, towards the living sea (Josh. 3:16). That is the wonderful type. What happens when men preach the gospel in Christ? It causes those who were descending into the grave to see the way of life, and they can be turned back to walk in that direction. That is the wonderful type of the Jordan".

"I suppose that the crossing of the Jordan was like baptism for the people?" said Graeham.

"Yes," replied his father, "Though Israel was accounted as baptised when the people passed through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10), there was a difference. The water of the Red Sea is salty but the water of the Jordan is fresh, or 'living water'. In the Bible, this kind of water is used as a symbol for the spirit-word of God (John 4:10,14; 7:37-39; so that in crossing the Jordan, the people symbolically were baptised in living water figuratively representing the spirit-word, and anticipating Spirit-nature".

"What is spirit-nature?" asked Ann.

"It is God's nature," replied her father, "and it will be given to those who obey Him (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul speaks of those who will be given life eternal as then possessing a spirit-body (1 Cor. 15:44). That is a body that will never die, because it does not need blood, but is kept alive by God's spirit. Jesus taught that a man must be born of water and the spirit to inherit the Kingdom of God (John 3:3,7). The new generation of Israelites were born of water when they passed through Jordan into their promised inheritance. We, too, are 'born of water' when we are baptised into Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28), and we will be 'born of spirit' when the Lord returns to change our bodies (if we have proved worthy) like unto his glorious body (Phil. 3:21)".

"In Hebrews 11:31 it says that Rahab had faith, but it does not say anything about that in Joshua," said Peter.

"Oh yes it does," replied his father. "Remember that Paul said 'faith cometh by hearing' (Rom. 10:17). Rahab said she had 'heard' of the exploits of God (Josh. 2:11); she believed what she heard, and she acted on her belief. That is faith. And faith can change the most hardened sinner into worthy servants of the Lord (Matt. 21:31; 1 Cor. 6:10-11). It did that to Rahab. She was greatly impressed by the things of God, and this brought about a

great change in her life, so that she is commended for her faith (Heb. 11:31). In Matthew 1:5 we learn that she later married a prominent Israelite, and became the great-grandmother of King David”.

“She told the messengers of the King of Jericho a lie,” protested Peter, trying to find a weak spot in his father’s explanation.

“Yes,” replied his father. “She was not praised for her lie, nor her previous manner of life, but for her ultimate faith. The Bible tells what actually happened without commending everything that was said or done”.

“Why should seven trumpets be used by the priests, when they circled the walls of Jericho?” asked Graeham.

“The word *seven* stands for completeness,” replied his father. “In addition, it is interesting to compare the seven trumpets of the marching priests around Jericho with the seven trumpets of the *Book of Revelation*, at the blowing of which the ‘cities of the nations will fall’ (Rev. 16:19). In this, again, we have a type of those things happening in the world, as well as those which are shortly to happen. The power of the Gentiles shall be destroyed, as was that of the Canaanites, and the Lord Jesus and his friends will reign in their stead (Rev. 11:15)”.

“What did the Angel mean when he told Joshua that the city was accursed (Josh. 6:17)?” asked Ann.

“The word really means *devoted*,” replied her father. “It denotes that the city was to be given over to God. He decreed that anything devoted to Him should not be used by man, but should be offered in sacrifice to Him (Lev. 27:28-29). When the Angel said to Joshua, ‘Keep yourselves from the accursed thing’ (Josh. 6:18), he merely meant do not take for your own use that which Yahweh has set aside for His purpose”.

“When Jericho was destroyed, Joshua said, ‘Cursed be the man before Yahweh that riseth up and buildeth it again’ (Josh. 6:26),” said Graeham. “Is that the same thing?”

“No, the word is different there, and means that a curse, or punishment would be laid upon the one who tried to rebuild this city devoted to Yahweh. Joshua warned that anybody doing so would pay for his folly. He would ‘lay the foundation in his firstborn, and, in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it’. This came to pass. A man by name of Hiel attempted to rebuild the city, and suffered as Joshua warned that he would (1 Kings 16:34)”.

Chapter Two

AN ATTACK THAT FAILED

An Attack That Failed

About fourteen miles west of Jericho, in the maze of hills and valleys that lead to the hilly country of Central Palestine, was another city called Ai. It was of no great size or strength, and the spies who were sent out by Joshua to report on its situation, said that it would not be necessary for the whole army to be used in its capture — that only a small force would be required. But it was important for Israel to take the city, for it controlled the main route into the Land of Promise.

Three thousand men were selected for the work, and confidently marched to the attack. But in no space of time they rushed back pell-mell into the camp of Israel in a state of consternation. They had been driven back by the defenders of Ai, and pursued, with a loss of thirty-six men. Their arrival in the camp caused a panic. "The hearts of the people melted and became as water". They knew full well that if Yahweh were not with them in their conquest of the land they would miserably fail; and here was evidence that He had withdrawn His help.

Joshua shared the dismay of the people. He could not understand why the attack should have failed. He called a meeting of the elders of the people, at the Ark of the Covenant. There they lamented before God, rending their clothes and throwing dust on their heads as a sign of mourning. Joshua, in an excess of sorrow prostrated himself on the ground with his face towards the Ark pleading not to allow Israel to be destroyed. "O Yahweh," he prayed, "what shall I say when Israel turneth their back to their enemies?"

To his prayer, the stern reply came: "Get thee up! Wherefore liest thou thus on thy face? Israel hath sinned. They have taken of the accursed thing, and stolen and dissembled also, and have put it among their own stuff. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you . . ."

Further instructions were given, and next morning, Joshua called representatives of all Israel before him to carry them out. He explained to the people why the army had been defeated. Someone had sinned by taking for his own use some of the riches of Jericho that Yahweh decreed should be offered only to Him. Whoever it was had therefore robbed God, and though the sin

had been committed secretly as far as man is concerned, nothing is hidden from the eyes of Yahweh. He knew of the sin, He knew who did it, and He decreed that sin must be revealed for what it is, and the sinner punished before He would again help Israel. By means of the Lot, the offender would be revealed, and all would know why Israel had failed in the battle.

We can imagine the feelings of the guilty man as he heard these words. How foolish he had been to imagine that he could hide his sin from Yahweh. Had not Moses been told: "Be sure your sin will find you out?" All Israel, too, must have felt saddened as they realised there was a traitor in their midst.

It was therefore a very solemn, sad occasion, as a Lot was taken of the tribes. First the tribe of Judah was taken; then from Judah the division of the Zarhites was taken; and from the Zarhites, the house of Zabdi was taken; and from Zabdi, the family of Achan was taken.

FOR THESE THINGS HE GAVE UP HIS LIFE!

"I have sinned . . . I saw a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight; I coveted them, and took them . . ." (Joshua 8:21). "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:15-16).



A hush fell on the tribes as the Lot narrowed down the suspects from a nation to a tribe then to a division in the tribe, then to a family group until, finally the guilty man stood revealed. The eyes of all the people were turned on Achan to his shame. There was the man who had caused the army of Israel to flee, who had brought about the death of 36 soldiers, and whose folly could have destroyed the whole nation! For if other nations learned that Ai had defeated Israel, they would soon have gathered their forces to overwhelm the invader. Achan is a Hebrew word meaning *Trouble*. Indeed he had troubled Israel.

Achan deserved to suffer, and perhaps his sorrow became more obvious by the gentle rebuke of Joshua. "My son," he said quietly, "give, I pray thee, glory to Yahweh, and make confession unto Him. Tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me".

A true confession would justify the action of Yahweh in withholding His help at Ai, and therefore would give glory unto Him.

Achan answered: "I have sinned, I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it".

Messengers were sent to the tent of Achan, and they found as he said. The evidence of his crime was brought forth, and laid before the Ark of the Covenant. Then it became the painful duty of Israel to punish this man who had nearly destroyed the whole campaign. Having taken to himself that which was devoted to destruction, he, himself, now had to suffer a like fate. And all Israel had to assist in the punishment to show that they condemned the crime. The family of Achan had all joined with their father in what he had done — they had helped him to hide that which he had stolen, and they, too, were to be punished with him (see Deut. 17:5).

Solemnly and sadly Joshua led them to a nearby valley. "Why hast thou troubled us?" he said to the man whose name means *Trouble*. "Yahweh shall trouble thee this day". There they were put to death, all Israel stoning them with stones. Afterwards, they burned all his property with fire, and over all of this evidence of crime against Yahweh, they raised a great heap of stones, as though as if to blot it from sight.

This valley was then called "The Valley of Achor," or *Trouble*. Today it remains an arid, stony valley of trouble. But the time is coming, when the Lord Jesus will return to this earth, and shall restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), and this valley will be changed. It will be re-named the *Door of Hope* (Hos. 2:15), for

along this valley will proceed the people of Israel whom he will restore to their own land in that day (Ezek. 20:34-38; Ezek. 36:21-23). This valley ascends to the hill country north of Jerusalem, and in the Age to Come, when the Lord Jesus reigns as King in the Temple located in that city, people will approach it along this valley. Then it will no longer be a valley of sin and trouble, but one of great prosperity and happiness. Pilgrims moving towards Jerusalem to worship (Zech. 14:16) will find it a place of herds (Isa. 65:10), which they will be able to purchase for sacrifice (Isa. 56:7). The story of the man who troubled Israel may still be remembered in that day, but in addition it then will be shown how Yahweh has brought righteousness and hope to the earth, instead of sin and trouble as it is today — and as the story of Achan reveals.

What Caused Achan to Sin?

Some say Achan was induced to sin by the influence of an evil angel, called the Devil, who tempts men to wrong doing. But Achan did not excuse himself by such teaching. “I have *sinned*,” he told Joshua. “I *saw*, I *coveted*, and I *took*”.

Achan’s eye, hand, and heart were thus joined in transgression. The eye *saw*, the heart *craved*, and the hand *took*.

There were three stages in his sin, as there usually is in every sin. Eve first *saw* the fruit of the forbidden tree; she *coveted* it, and she *took* it (Gen. 3:6).

The Bible teaches that sin is the result of giving way to the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). A better word for “lust” is *desire*. “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust (*desire*), and enticed. When lust (or *desire*) hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).

It was not a powerful, immortal angel called the Devil that tempted Achan to sin, but the desires of his heart. *He* saw the garment and the gold, *he* coveted them, *he* took them, and so *he* said, “I have sinned.”

If it had been a “fallen angel” who tempted him, why should Achan have been stoned to death?

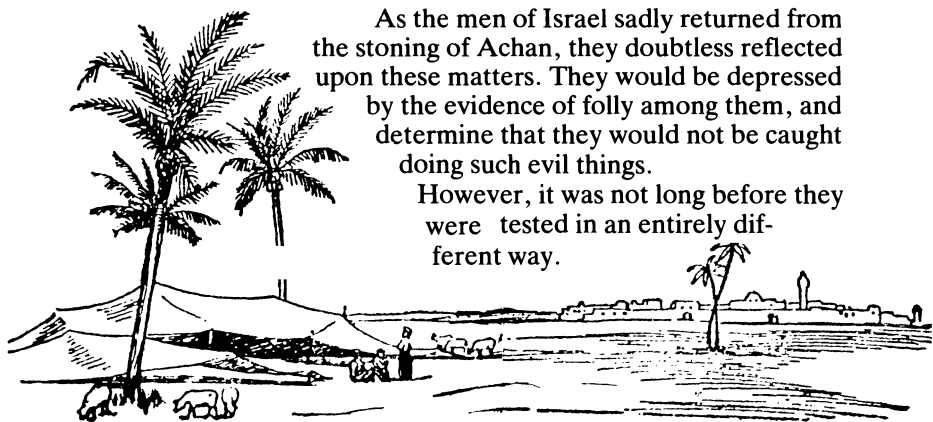
Among the many wonderful gifts that Yahweh has given us are the faculties of our bodies. He has endowed us with brains, eyes, hands, tongue and so forth. We need to learn to use these attributes in His service. Because of the tendencies of the flesh, we are, by nature, bodies of desire. We say, “*I want*”, “*I think*”, “*I believe*”, “*I feel*”. “*I wish*”. And the things we *want*, or *think*, or *feel*, or *wish* are those for which our flesh craves; unless we have learned to restrain those desires. God has given us a law designed to do that. If we hearken to His law, and apply its principles, we

will find that it draws a line around all our desires, and limits them. God is not unreasonable. He has given us many things to enjoy, and invites us to be happy in our enjoyment of them. His laws actually teach us how best to live to advantage. Take the case of Achan as an example. If he had not been punished, Israelites could imagine they could sin with impunity, so that one sin would lead to another. Before long Israel would have been as bad as the Canaanites. They would have been stealing from each other, and that would have led to conflict and murder. They could have worshipped whom they liked and how they liked. So one evil step would have led to others, and defeated the purpose of God. Yahweh called Israel out of Egypt in order that the people would so live as to reflect His glory (Deut. 4:6-8). Actions like that of Achan and his family destroyed that purpose — and Yahweh has no use for a people like that.

It might be asked why did the whole nation suffer through the action of one family? The sin was committed secretly, and yet the whole congregation suffered shame and disgrace. That was done to teach Israel a very important lesson. Though made up of many families and tribes, Israel was one Body joined closely together in national unity (1 Cor. 12:26; Jude 9). When one sinned, it was as though all sinned — and not until the whole of Israel rejected the sin, by punishing the sinner, could Yahweh look favorably upon the nation. It reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus: "Woe to that man by whom offence cometh. Therefore if thy hand or thy foot offend, cut them off and cast them from thee..." By "hand" or "foot" he did not mean our literal hands or feet, but those friends or acquaintances who might cause us to stumble in our walk in him. "Cut them off", declared the Lord, and that is what Israel did with Achan.

As the men of Israel sadly returned from the stoning of Achan, they doubtless reflected upon these matters. They would be depressed by the evidence of folly among them, and determine that they would not be caught doing such evil things.

However, it was not long before they were tested in an entirely different way.



Chapter Three

THE CONQUEST OF AI

Jubilation in Ai Achan's terrible punishment revealed how important is obedience. This was necessary if the people were to succeed in obtaining their inheritance. Meanwhile, the fortress of Ai stood proudly defiant, barring the way for any further advance on the part of Israel. A long, steep valley led upwards to the hill upon which it stood, and behind it was another shallow valley or depression dividing it from the town of Bethel nearby.

In Ai, the people were jubilant. Their army had defeated the hated, but hitherto triumphant Hebrews, who had conquered so many powerful nations, and overthrown so many mighty cities.

In Israel, the people were depressed. The defeat to them had been a terrible shock. Their confidence had been undermined. They had thought that they could easily take the city with but two or three thousand men. They had rested upon their own ability to wage war, but now they realised that unless Yahweh was with them, they would not succeed.

But would Yahweh continue to help them, even though Achan had been punished? Their faith had been shaken, but now it was to be restored.

The Voice of Yahweh came to Joshua. "Fear not", he was told. "Do not be dismayed. Take all the men of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. I have given into your hand the King of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land" (Josh. 8:1).

Joshua knew that the people of Ai were confident that they could defeat Israel again, and he decided to use their confidence to bring about their defeat. He thought out a plan to draw their soldiers out of the shelter of their walls. He hid the main forces of his army in the deep valleys that cut into the hills of Palestine by Bethel and Ai, and from their number he chose 30,000 men for the main attack on the city. Of these, he took 5,000 men, and under cover of night, led them to the valley which divides Bethel and Ai, and hid them in such a way so as to be unseen by the watchers on the walls of those towns. He instructed his warriors to await the signal he would give them and then to emerge from their hiding place and storm the city of Ai. Whilst it was still dark he returned to the main body of his troops, ready to lead them in the attack early next morning.

At dawn, on the following day, the watchmen on the walls of

Ai saw Joshua advancing at the head of the 25,000 soldiers he had chosen for the purpose. Quickly the news was given to the captain of the army of Ai. All preparations had been made, and the city was ready to meet and repel the attack that the people knew would come. From Bethel, reinforcements had been drawn to strengthen the already confident forces of Ai (Josh. 8:17). Recalling the victory on the previous occasion, the captain of Ai's soldiers decided to move outside the city, and boldly attack the advancing Israelites. The gates were opened, and out swarmed the soldiers, charging down the valley, up along which the Hebrew army was marching. And once more, in obedience to Joshua's instructions, the Hebrews turned and fled before the men of Ai.

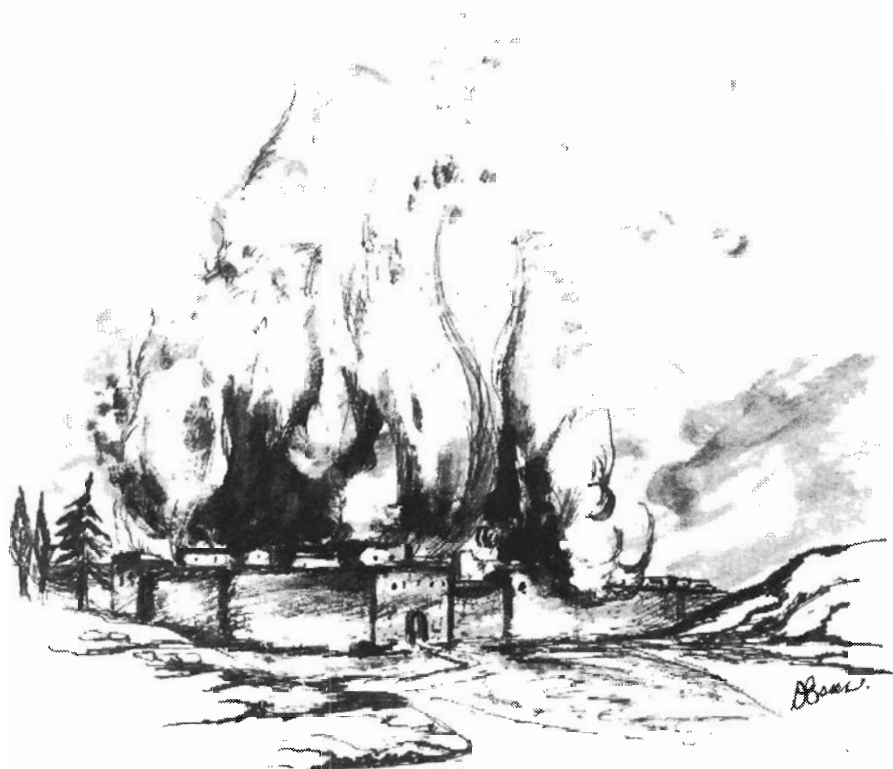
Confident they were on the eve of a greater victory than before the men of Ai threw all caution to the wind, and boldly charged down the hill, chasing the Israelites before them. This was what Joshua desired. Following the plan that he had given his captains, he left his troops as they made out to run before the Canaanites, and climbing a hill that overlooked both Bethel and Ai, he waited until the men of Ai were sufficiently away from their city. Then the Angel whom he had seen earlier, and now again appeared to him, declared: "Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand towards Ai, for I will give it into your hand". Joshua stretched out the spear in his hand towards the city of Ai. This was the sign that he had instructed the men hiding in the ambush in the valley between Bethel and Ai, to heed. As they saw Joshua standing on the hill above, with the spear pointing towards Ai, they arose from their hiding places, and attacked the city. It had been left without a defence, and was easily taken and set on fire.

Meanwhile, the men of Ai who were chasing the fleeing Israelites, suddenly became aware that something was wrong. They saw smoke billowing up into the sky above, and realised that their city was on fire. Panic took hold of them. They turned from chasing the enemy, and hastened back to their city. But the cloud of smoke was also a sign to the fleeing Israelites that Joshua's plan had succeeded. They ceased running before the enemy, and turned to attack. Thus the men of Ai, drawn from the shelter of the walls of their city, were helplessly caught between the pincers of Joshua's army.

On the hill above this valley where the battle raged, Joshua could be seen, standing with his spear outstretched towards Ai. He stood as the standard-bearer, or ensign of Israel, as Moses had been at Rephidim, when he had upheld his hands in prayer, whilst Israel battled with Amalek (Exod. 17:11-16). And as on that occasion, Israel prevailed so long as Joshua stood in that attitude.

A great victory was won that day. The people of Israel now recognised that loyal obedience to God was essential if they were to obtain their inheritance. That lesson had been impressed upon them first by their failure and then by their success at the city of Ai.

At the command of God the city was burned, and the people were destroyed. The King of Ai, who had been taken alive, was brought before Joshua, and in the sight of the people, he was killed, and his body was hanged on a tree until even, when, in accordance with the Law of Moses (Deut. 21:23), it was taken down, and buried under a great heap of stones by the city where once he ruled.



"They hasted and set the city on fire" (Joshua 8:19). The over-confident warriors of Ai were lured away from the city which was then set alight by those who were in ambush. Ai signifies Ruin. It is a ruin to this day.

**Why the People of
Canaan were
Punished**

“I cannot understand why Joshua should so cruelly treat the king of Ai”, said Ann to her father after they had read the 8th of Joshua. “Surely it was enough that Israel had taken the city, and had gained the victory”.

“It may seem cruel to us,” replied her father. “But sometimes we have to be cruel to be kind. God was mostly concerned with saving His people, and He knew, in His wisdom, that He had to impress them with the importance of obeying Him. The Canaanites stood for everything that was opposed to His way (Deut. 9:5-6), and were held up before Israel as an example of terrible wickedness to be avoided at all costs (Deut. 7:1-6). The King of Ai was a leader of a way of life which was completely opposed to the ways of Yahweh. To have let him live, would have implied that people can sin against Yahweh, and not suffer the consequences. He was put to death in the sight of all the people, that they might see the fate of those who follow such ways of wickedness (see Num. 25:4). Afterwards the dead king was buried under a heap of stones, so that all he stood for might be blotted out from sight”.

“It still seems very cruel to me to punish all the people,” said Ann. “Surely they should have been given the chance to change their ways.”

“They had been given that chance,” replied her father. “Yahweh is not unreasonable. The sin of the Canaanites was deep rooted, and He knows best what should be done under every circumstance. After all, the example of Rahab shows that the Canaanites could have turned to God and lived, if they were prepared to humble themselves as she did.”

“That is true,” answered Ann.

“We must remember that Yahweh is both merciful and just,” replied her father. “He will forgive men their sins if they approach Him in the proper manner, but if people remain evil and refuse to accept His mercy, they will feel His punishment. The destruction of the Canaanites seems cruel until we remember how evil and wicked they were. The whole country was like a vast Sodom and Gomorrah, and only fit for destruction. After all, it is far better that the wicked should be destroyed, than that they should remain to lead astray those who are innocent. Even as it was, the few Canaanites that remained, caused the people of Israel to turn from Yahweh in time. This serves to show that if the occupation of the land had been conducted in a more peaceful manner, the whole of Israel would have soon lost its separateness, and the precious heritage that has come to us through them, would have been lost. Thus in their bitter war against the

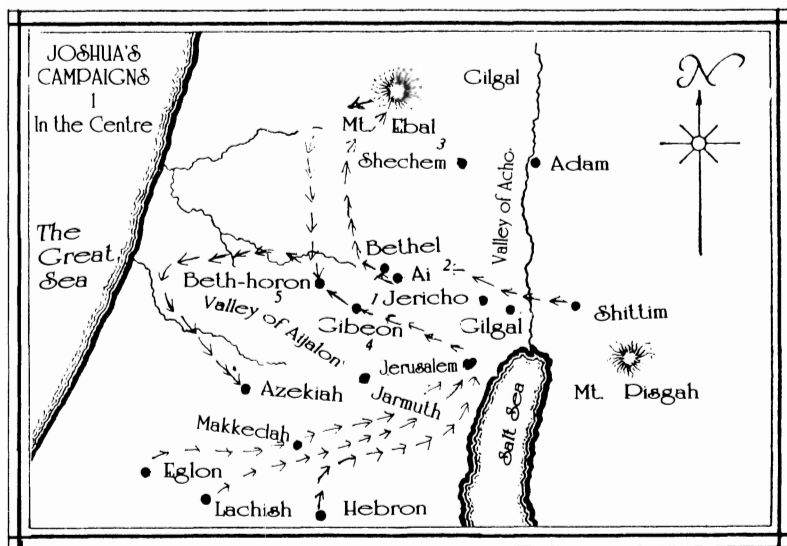
Canaanites, they were really fighting for us. The sword of Israel did a work of mercy for all mankind.”

“How do you mean?”

“If Israel had been destroyed, and the Canaanites victorious, the world would have become so evil, that only one fate would have remained — complete destruction as in the days of Noah.”

“But why should the little children be destroyed as well?” asked Joan.

“It seems hard”, replied her father. “Yet we know that what God commands is for the best. Those children had been taught in the ways of their parents, and therefore would have grown up into the same wickedness. When you come upon a nest of snakes, you do not only kill the large ones, but you destroy all of them, for you know that the baby ones will grow up to be a danger to your children; they will develop poison in their fangs in time. That was the case with the children of the Canaanites. It was a pity that God had to so punish them, but no other course was open to Him, if He were to help His people — and that was His chief concern. In helping them He helped us, and all the world. Thus it was a work of mercy. Sin must be punished, and it was the people’s fault that the punishment was so terrible”.



Conquest of the centre. 1. Jericho; 2. Ai; Followed by pact with Gibeonites. 3. Joshua moves north to Shechem and Gilgal; 4. Confederacy of south attacks Gibeonites who appeal to Joshua; 5. Battle of Beth-Horon followed by complete conquests of the Centre, then the South.

Chapter Two

JOSHUA CONQUERS THE SOUTH

God's Covenant Renewed at Shechem

The victory of Ai opened the centre of Palestine to Joshua. About five miles from the town of Bethel was the next stronghold of Gibeon. It was the headquarters of a little group of towns that stood at the head of the Pass of Beth-horon, and thus stood next in line in the conquest of Joshua.

But instead of proceeding to Gibeon, Joshua turned north to Shechem, about fifteen miles distant. Yahweh had commanded Moses, that when the people of Israel entered the Land of Promise, they should go to Shechem, and reaffirm their covenant with Him there.

Shechem is a very important place in the history of Israel. It had been the first stopping place of Abraham when he had entered the Land (Gen. 12:6). He had built an altar at Shechem, and there had first heard the promise of God: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). Now that the seed of Abraham had begun to inherit the land, it was fitting that they should go to the very spot where the promise had been given, and again remember their covenant with God.



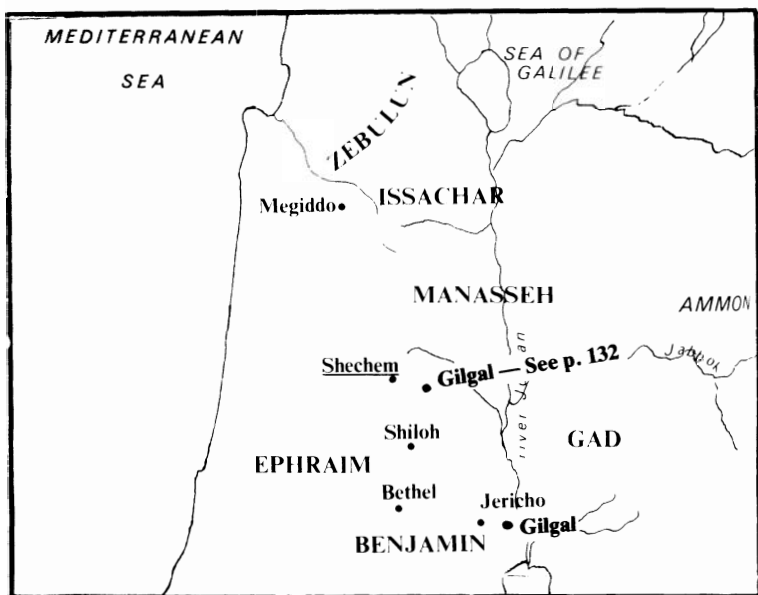
*Modern Nablus (Shechem) overshadowed by
Mt. Gerizim.*

Shechem is in a lovely valley overshadowed by two mountains called Ebal and Gerizim. Ebal is the higher of the two. It is a bald, bare mountain with very little growth, for it is stony and arid. Gerizim, on the other hand, abounds with grass and trees, and springs of water which flow down into the valley below. Ebal is known as the mount of cursing, and Gerizim as the mount of blessing. Ebal overshadowed Gerizim, as the curses of the law overshadowed its blessings.

Arriving at Shechem, Joshua built an altar of unhewn stones, in mount Ebal. Upon it he inscribed a summary of the blessings and cursings of the Law (Deut. 28:3-16). And then upon the altar, in the sight of all Israel, and on their behalf, the priests offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings unto Yahweh (Josh. 8:31).

This was very fitting for the occasion. Burnt offerings were firstly washed inside and out, and then wholly consumed by the fire of God upon the altar. In the burnt offering, Israel could see a picture of how they should offer themselves unto Yahweh. They should be clean of all wickedness both within (in thought) and without (in action); they should give themselves completely unto God.

The peace offering was a sacrifice for thanksgiving, an offering given in gratitude for Divine favours received (Lev. 7:12). It was



killed, and the fat, kidneys and caul of the liver were burnt on the altar (Lev. 3:3-4); the breasts and right shoulder were given to the priests (Lev. 7:30-34). The rest of the offering belonged to the offerer, but had to be eaten within two days according to the nature of it (Lev. 7:15-16). By this offering, all three parties were joined in a fellowship festival. The death of the animal taught that there was need for the offerer to "die unto sin" (Rom. 6:10) in order to enjoy fellowship with God. The portion given to the priests, taught that the offerer relied upon them (as the body of the beast leaned upon its shoulders) for mediatorial services. Finally, the people had to bring unleavened wafers, together with leavened bread (Lev. 7:13); and as leaven is a symbol of sin, the offerer recognised his own shortcomings as he sacrificed unto Yahweh. The portion of the sacrifice that remained was eaten by the people (Lev. 7:15), much the same as baptised followers of the Lord eat bread and wine in remembrance of him, and of their communion with him, at the Table each Sunday. Through the Peace Offering, Israelites enjoyed fellowship or communion, with each other, with the priests and with Yahweh (Deut. 12:7).

However, in the case of public peace offerings, it appears that all the flesh went to the priests, who represented the people to Yahweh and Yahweh to the people (Lev. 23:20). The nation, as a priestly community (Exod. 19:6) was brought as such into fellowship with God.

Israel assembled at Shechem, fresh from the triumphs of Ai and Jericho, and with the solemn warning of Achan's fate to meditate upon. They realised that God was with them, and they would be successful in their conquests. Therefore, they joined in an enthusiastic service of praise, in which they offered themselves unto Yahweh, and rejoiced in being united with Him in fellowship, as His people.

In obedience to the command of Moses, six of the tribes then assembled by Mount Gerizim, and six by Mount Ebal. In the valley between the two mountains the priests gathered around the Ark of the Covenant. The blessings and the cursings of the Law of Moses were proclaimed, and as they heard these solemn words the tribes, gathered on the lower slopes of the two mountains, responded. Those on Mt. Ebal said "Amen" as the curses were pronounced; and those on Mt. Gerizim said "Amen" to the blessings. Afterwards Joshua read the words of the law in the hearing of all. No one was exempt from this hearing. The whole congregation, including the women, children, and strangers who had attached themselves to Israel, assembled for the purpose, for it was necessary that all should hear, and take heed, of the things said, and done, on this important occasion.

How the Gibeonites Tricked the Israelites

Israel's renewal of the covenant of Yahweh at Shechem gave time for the Canaanites to think out a plan to defeat Joshua.

The Kings in the southern part of Palestine were gathering together to form a confederacy to overthrow the Hebrews. But the inhabitants of Gibeon did not join in this plan. They knew that they would be the first to be attacked, and having seen what had happened to Jericho and Ai, knew full well that they would suffer a like fate. They thought out a plan to trick Joshua. They decided to send some of their number to him disguised as though they had come from a far country, and try to enter into an agreement of friendship with him. They knew that Joshua would keep such an agreement, for their spies had found out that Israel was a righteous nation, and that it kept the promises it made.

Therefore, it came to pass that as Joshua was at Gilgal*, close to Shechem, he was told that some strange looking men wished to meet him, in order that they might enter into an agreement with him. Now Joshua had been commanded that he was not to enter into any agreement with the nations of Canaan (Exod. 23:32; 34:12-14; Deut. 7:1-2; 20:16), and therefore he was immediately on his guard. He told the ambassadors of Gibeon that he was not allowed to make a league with any of the people of the land. But the men replied: "We are from a far country, and have heard of the mighty deeds of Yahweh from the time you left Egypt to the time you destroyed Sihon and Og. The elders and people of our country commanded us to take food for a long journey and go and meet you, and bow before you as servants, and make a league with you. Our provisions were fresh and new when we left home, but now they are old, our garments are rent, and our shoes worn out, because of the very long distance we have travelled".

Joshua and the elders of Israel took note that the shoes of these ambassadors were indeed worn out, that their clothes were rent, their bread was dry and mouldy, and the skins in which they kept the wine they drank were old and rent. That was how the Gibeonites had dressed their ambassadors before they left, but Joshua and the elders imagined that it was because of the long distance they had come.

To the Israelites the ambassadors seemed very decent men. They were humble, they spake reverently of God, they referred to His mighty deeds, they appeared to have come from a distant

* This Gilgal was close to Shechem, and so north of Bethel (Deut. 11:30; 2 Kings 2:1-2; 4:38). It was a royal city conquered by Joshua in battle (Josh. 12:23) rendered in the RV as Goliim of Gilgal. It is obvious that there were two places called Gilgal, for the one close by the Place of Crossing was not a city, and was not taken by war.

land — there seemed no reason why they should not make a covenant with them.

Joshua and the elders of Israel were thus deceived by the Gibeonites. They then made a further mistake. They did not ask



Gibeon (modern el-Jib) looking north — headquarters of the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua.

guidance from Yahweh. Instead, relying upon their own wisdom, they entered into an agreement with the Gibeonites to be allied with them. They then ate a communal feast of covenant with them, and let them return home, thinking they would not see them again for many a long day. They were soon to find how mistaken they were!

The time came for the campaign to be renewed. The Israelitish army marched from Gilgal by Shechem, down past Ai and Bethel into the hilly country of central Palestine. On the third day of their march, they came upon a very pretty part of hills and valleys, and gushing water in which there were four towns: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. As they made ready to attack, the men of Gibeon came out, and the elders recognised the ambassadors with whom they had made a covenant! What a shock it was for them! They now realised how they had been deceived. What could they do? The people of Israel murmured

against their elders, criticising them for the foolish way in which they had been misled. And the elders could do nothing about it, because they had made a solemn promise with the Gibeonites not to harm them — and when Israel makes a promise, that promise must be kept.

The Gibeonites thus escaped attack. In punishment for their deceit, however, they were made slaves to the Israelites, and were forced to do the most menial tasks: those usually left to women and children (Deut. 29:11). The Gibeonites did not mind that, for they had, at least, saved their lives. Through the folly of Israel, therefore, Gentiles were brought within the scope of the Hope of Israel, and became inheritors of the Promised Land.

Important lessons were being taught the Israelites. They had learned that faith is necessary for victory in the battle of life (see Heb. 11:30; 1 John 5:4). Next in the defeat and ensuing victory at Ai, they learned that faith must be joined with obedience to the successful. Now they learned the need for vigilance, the constant need for being on guard, and always seeking the counsel of Yahweh through His word.

The Important Battle of Beth-Horon

The destruction of Jericho and Ai, and the surrender of Gibeon and her sister-towns, had given the whole of central Palestine into the hands of Joshua. But meanwhile, in the south, the Kings had gathered together in alliance to defeat the invader. With indignation they heard that the Gibeonites had gone over to the enemy, and determined that they would first destroy Gibeon, and then march against Joshua.

Adoni-zedec, § king of Jerusalem, sent to the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon asking them to send troops to help him overthrow Gibeon. Gibeon is only about seven miles from Jerusalem, and Adoni-zedec knew full well that he had to act quickly or he would be overwhelmed by the powerful Hebrew forces invading the land. At the head of the combined armies of the Kings in alliance with him, and joined with the armies of the Kings he marched on Gibeon and encamped before it.

Meanwhile, the Gibeonites had sent post-haste to Joshua for help. “Come quickly, and save us,” they said, “for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us”. The Gibeonites knew full well the dire fate of traitors, and realised they had no hope of defeating the powerful

§ Notice the similarity to the name of the previous King of Jerusalem — Melchi-zedec (*King of Righteousness*). Adoni-zedec means *Lord of Righteousness*. Jerusalem means *Vision of Peace*. Righteousness and Peace go together — but not in this campaign!

combined forces commanded by Adoni-zedec.

This time Joshua did not forget to ask counsel of Yahweh. And he received an encouraging answer: "Do not fear them," he was told, "for I have delivered them into your hands; there shall not a man of them stand before you".

Joshua decided to make a surprise attack on Adoni-zedec's forces. Twenty miles separated his army from the enemy, but those twenty miles were covered during that night. Early next morning, to the surprise and consternation of the Amorites, there were the Hebrews before them, ready to attack. As the sun arose above the hills, shining directly into the eyes of the enemy, and thus making it more difficult for him to see to defend himself, Joshua gave the command, and Israel attacked. The battle was soon over with great loss of life of the Canaanites. The forces of Adoni-zedec, already fearful of the Hebrews, panicked as they were driven back by the Israelites. Breaking their ranks, they turned and fled before them making their way up the slopes that lead to Beth-Horon. This is a long, rocky ascent, an undulating road that sinks and rises more than once before reaching the summit. At the summit, a wide view opens over the valley of Aijalon, which extends east from the Shephelah or lowlands. The panic-stricken forces of the Amorites thought that if only they could reach this summit before Israel, they would have the advantage of the decline. If so, they believed they would be able to out-distance the Israelites, who were tired from their forced march through the night before.

The scattered remnants of fear-stricken Amorites reached the heights of Beth-Horon, which leads to a sharp descent. About 600 feet below them was Beth-Horon the Lower, for there were two towns of the same name (Josh. 16:3,5) about 2 miles (3 kms) apart. The steep descent between these two places is a rough, rocky decline with loose stones, sheets of smooth rock, and uneven steps cut into the mountain side. Down this slippery descent the panic-stricken fugitives rushed to escape the tiring Israelites. But now a new menace threatened them. Yahweh fought against them. A storm of huge hailstones beat upon the fleeing Amorites, of such a size as to kill many of them. More were slain by the hailstones than by the Israelites at Gibeon.

Meanwhile, Joshua reached the Pass of Beth-horon. Far below him he saw the fleeing Amorites, and knew that with darkness coming on they would escape. Publicly, before his warriors, he prayed for a miracle. He asked God to cause the Sun to stand still in the heavens over Gibeon in the east instead of setting in the west, and the Moon to remain over the valley of Aijalon.

God granted this wonderful miracle. He extended the day, so

that there was no day like it before or after. The additional light gave Joshua the opportunity to complete the destruction of the enemy.

Meanwhile, the five kings of this southern confederacy had hidden themselves in a large cave at Makkedah. Here they thought they were safe. Though the cave was well known to the Canaanites, it was not well known to the Hebrews. But Joshua learned of their hiding place, and commanded that his soldiers put a large stone at the mouth of the cave to shut them in (Josh. 10:18). After the battle, he returned to this cave, with the Israelitish army, and the five kings were brought before him. They were made to bow before the captains of the Hebrew army who put their feet upon the necks of the kings as a symbol of victory and triumph (Josh. 10:24; Psa. 18:40).



Moon stood still in the Valley of Ajalon.

As they saw the kings of the warlike Amorites crouching humbly before them, and they remembered the wonderful events of the day -- how that even the sun was made to obey the dictates of the God whom they served, a feeling of awe came over the Jewish leaders: a natural reaction to the exciting and unusual events they had seen. They felt themselves unworthy of all the goodness they had received from God.

Joshua said: "Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall Yahweh do to all your enemies against whom you fight".

The five wicked kings were then executed and treated as was the king of Ai, to show once more to Israel the fate of those who boldly sin against God. Then Joshua, without waiting for the Canaanites in the south of Palestine to recover from the effects of their defeat at Beth-horon, pressed on in the work of conquest. Libnah fell; the important and powerful fort of Lachish was besieged and taken; the king of Gezer, marching to the relief of Lachish, was defeated; Eglon was occupied; the city of Hebron, which had hastily re-elected another king after the death of the previous one (cp. Josh. 10:37, with v. 23) was overthrown, and Debir was conquered. Thus in one swift, successful campaign, the whole of southern Palestine was in the hands of the triumphant Joshua. Having defeated his enemies, he returned to Gilgal with his victorious army. Thus the confederacy of the five kings that was designed to overthrow Gibeon and defeat Joshua, ended in the whole of the southern portion of country falling to the Hebrews. In the words of the Psalm: "Yahweh brought the counsel of the heathen to nought" (Psa. 33:10).

A Discussion on the Battle of Beth-horon

The Tenth of Joshua had been read by the Phillips' family, and the course of the battle had been traced on the large map that hung in the library of their home. This showed that from Jericho and Ai in the central part of Palestine, Joshua had turned south, and occupied all the main important towns of the hilly country of Palestine, and westwards to Gaza on the coastal plains, and as far south as Kadesh-barnea from where the spies had been sent, in the days of Moses, to search out the land.

"But why should you say that this was such an important battle?" asked Ann of her father, who had made that remark.

"I would say it was more than that," replied her father. "It was really one of the world's decisive battles. It changed the whole course of human history".

"How can you say that?" asked Graeham.

“Because it really lay the land open to the Israelites,” replied his father. “If Joshua had been defeated at that stage it would have meant the end of the campaign. But having established himself in the south, he had a foothold in the country, which made it his, even though groups of Canaanites still remained to be overcome. That victory really gave them control of the south so that today the Jews can claim it as their land. Look what the world has received from that victory — the Bible, a way of hope, the principles of Christianity, the Lord Jesus himself. If Joshua had been defeated and the Amorites had succeeded in destroying the Hebrews (humanly speaking) these things would have been denied us — thus the importance of this wonderful victory”.

“I read a book a little while ago which explained how the sun stood still, when Joshua uttered his prayer,” said Peter, “but the explanation was hard to follow”.

“I have read many of them,” answered his father, “but they all seem to contradict each other. Some say that the light of the sun remained in the sky long after its normal time, something like the long twilights they have in England when it is light up until ten o’clock at night; others say that the revolution of the earth was suspended for a day, and claim that they can prove that the earth is a day out in its calculations; and there are other theories. For myself, I do not think we can explain how the miracle happened. To my mind the fact is proved because it is recorded in the Bible, but the manner by which it was done, is entirely out of our knowledge, because it is beyond our comprehension”.



Joshua fought not only for victory and conquest, but to destroy the evil influence of the vile gods of the countries of the Middle East. This drawing depicts one of the worst gods: the brutal god, Molech. It is depicted as viciously awaiting the sacrifice of a living child which would be placed in its flaming, hollow stomach or outstretched arms, heated by fires within. The beating of drums would drown the screams of children given in this way to its fiery embrace. Yahweh, the God of mercy, kindness and love had a particular detestation of this wicked worship (Jeremiah 7:31).

"But don't you think it is very significant if it can be shown that the world is a day out in its calculations?" asked Graeham.

"I do not think it can be so shown," replied his father. "I have read what has been written in that regard, but it seems to lack proof to me. I feel we are on safer grounds when we accept the fact, and do not query the means by which it was done, which, I believe, is beyond our knowledge. It will be revealed to us one day, when Jesus Christ returns".

"Is there any significance in it as far as our times are concerned?" asked Graeham.

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips. "There is a great significance in it. In the defeat of the Amorites in the battle of Beth-horon, when they marched against Gibeon, Yahweh revealed His power in a strange and wonderful manner. And it is likened by the prophet Isaiah to the future manifestation of His great power when Jesus Christ returns, to put down the nations, and rule from Jerusalem (Psalm 72; Rev. 11:15). We read that Yahweh shall be 'wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that He may do His work. His strange work: and bring to pass His act, His strange act' (Isa. 28:21)."

"What act is that?" asked Ann.

"We are told that He shall go forth 'to fight against the nations (who have confederated together to destroy Jerusalem — Zech. 14:1) as in the days of old' (Zech. 14:3). As the confederacy that marched against Gibeon and Joshua was destroyed by Yahweh's power manifested through His servant, so the confederacy of the latter-days (Ezek. 38) will be destroyed by Yahweh's power revealed through His son. Psalm 44 should be read in the light of Joshua 10, and applied to the rejoicing of those who will be with the Lord Jesus in the latter days".

"Has the standing still of the sun and moon any significance?" asked Graeham, who was taking notes.

"I believe it has," replied his father. "Let us again consider what happened as the result of Joshua's prayer. The sun and moon stood still in the heavens, and remained like that to lengthen the day. Both were seen together in the heavens, as Joshua chased and overcame the defeated remnants of the Amorite army. Now of the future age we read: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself" (Isa. 60:20). During the reign of Christ, known in Scripture as a day of a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8; Rev. 20:4), the sun and moon shall always be seen in the heavens — they shall remain there during that long day in the sight of all the people".

"But that would mean that the world would be dark, on one side of the globe," said Ann.

“Oh! I don’t mean the literal sun!” exclaimed Mr. Phillips, with a smile.

“The Bible speaks of the sun as the civil government, and the moon as the ecclesiastical system (e.g. Isa. 13:10; Isa. 34:4; Rev. 12:1),” explained Mr. Phillips. “When Christ rules on earth, he will represent the Sun, or the ruling orb of the political heavens; and as such he is referred to by Malachi as the Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:1-2). At the same time, his resurrected and glorified brethren (who today constitute the ecclesia) are represented as the moon. Both will be seen in the political heavens in that day.”

“Doesn’t Isaiah 60:20 apply to the literal sun and moon then?” asked Peter.

“Of course not,” replied his father. “Otherwise, as Ann says, there would only be light on one side of the earth”.

“Isn’t it rather difficult to know when it is the literal or symbolical sun that is being referred to?” asked Graeham.

“No, the context always tells the true meaning,” replied his father. “For example, in Isaiah 24:23, we read that the ‘moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed’, when Christ reigns in Jerusalem. This does not refer to the literal sun and moon, but to the systems of religion, and of government among men. When Christ is established in Jerusalem, the former will be ashamed because their leaders will realise the errors they have taught, and the latter will be confounded at the power manifested in Israel.”

“That is very interesting,” said Joan.

“You have another example in Isaiah 30:26,” replied her father. “There we read that in the Age to come, the ‘light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold’. If this were true literally, such a powerful sun and moon glaring upon the earth would burn everything up! But it is not meant to be taken literally. It refers to the government, and the universal worship to be set up by Christ in the Age to come. That ‘Sun’ will enlighten men with his glorious truths in a complete sense. For, remember, seven is the number of completeness. When it says that the ‘light of the sun shall be sevenfold’, it means that the glory that shall be seen, and the enlightenment that shall be given through the Sun of Righteousness who will reign in the political heavens (i.e. the Lord Jesus) will completely illuminate mankind in the things of God. Thus the experiences of Joshua typifies what shall happen in the day when Christ shall rule”.

“There is one flaw in your reasoning, Dad,” said Peter, with a wink at his sisters. “Joshua spent that long day chasing his enemies and destroying them, but the Lord Jesus won’t do that!”

“Oh, yes he will!” replied Mr. Phillips. “Paul taught: ‘He must

reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death' (1 Cor. 15:26). In fact, we could say that the day of Christ's reign will be extended in order to permit him to completely destroy his enemies. Thus you see, Peter, the flaw does not exist!"

But though the Israelites had conquered the central and southern parts of the Land of Promise, the most powerful forces of all still lay undefeated in the north. In the fortress of Hazor, close by the marshy lake Huleh, at the source of the river Jordan, there ruled a king called Jabin, or *The Wise*. He was the most powerful monarch of all, and was known as "the head of all those kingdoms" (Josh. 11:10). Confident in his own might, and the defences of his fortress, he had not joined the confederacy of Adoni-zedec of Jerusalem. But the rapid progress of Joshua throughout the land alarmed and roused Jabin the Wise, and he determined to gather all his forces to utterly overwhelm the Hebrews.



The chariots of King Jabin of Hazor presented a new threat to Joshua's forces. Yet with courage and faith he was able to overcome them: a lesson Israel failed to learn (Judges 1:19).

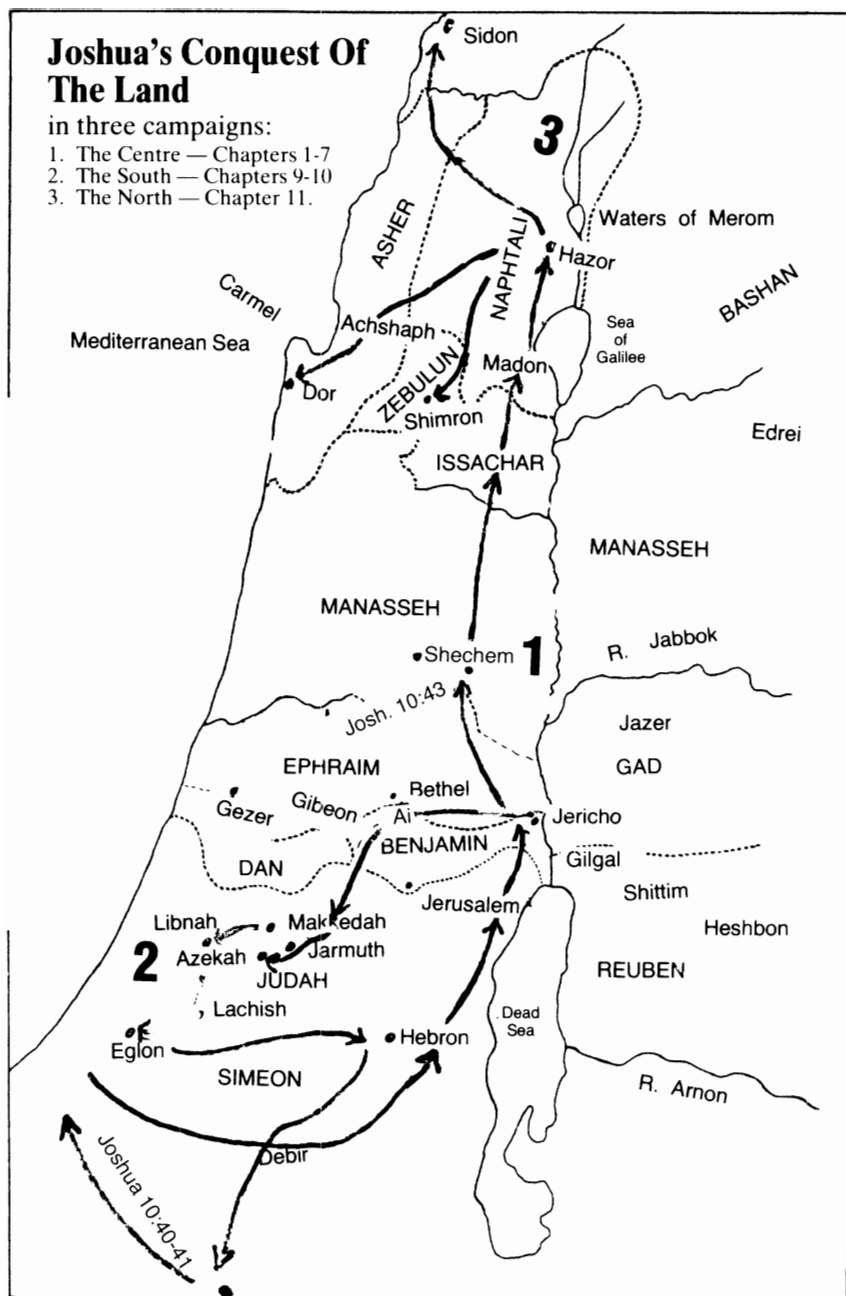
He issued a general summons to all Canaanites to gather together with him in a joint effort to defeat Joshua. This brought a stream of recruits from all parts of Palestine, to Hazor in the north, so that there was soon gathered under Jabin the greatest army that Joshua had yet faced. Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, says that in addition to some 300,000 infantry, Jabin commanded 10,000 cavalry, and 20,000 chariots. These chariots were iron chariots, and are said to have been armed with iron scythes, fastened to the wheels, so that as they were driven into the midst of the opposing forces, their terrible blades would cut the enemy to pieces.

Up to this time, Israel had not fought a pitched battle with the foe, nor contended against chariots or cavalry. But Joshua relied

Joshua's Conquest Of The Land

in three campaigns:

1. The Centre — Chapters 1-7
2. The South — Chapters 9-10
3. The North — Chapter 11.



on the help he received from Yahweh to do so. Moses had laid it down in the Law: "When you go out to battle against the enemy, and you see horses, chariots, and a people more than you, do not be afraid of them; for Yahweh thy God is with you, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Deut. 20:1). He then instructed Israel that when these words had been proclaimed, officers were to go through the army instructing any who were faithless or fearful to return home (vv. 8-9). The army was then to be led in prayer beseeching Yahweh's help. The faithful in Israel realised that prayer was greater than any weapon of war. It was a secret weapon, unknown to the enemy, which greatly aided Israel in their battles. On this occasion, when Yahweh was approached by Joshua, he received the answer: "Do not be afraid of this great army. Tomorrow about this time I will deliver them up all slain before Israel. You shall destroy* their horses, and burn their chariots with fire (Josh. 11:6)".

Meanwhile Jabin gathered his forces at Merom†, on the shores of Lake Huleh, a flat stretch of country which gave every advantage to his cavalry and chariots. Joshua was probably at Gilgal near Shechem, about 60 miles south of Merom. Immediately he heard of the intentions of Jabin, he decided to use the same method of surprise attack as had proved so successful at Gibeon. By a forced march, he rapidly covered the 60 miles that lay between him and Merom; and then, suddenly (Josh. 11:7), when Jabin imagined that he was miles away, he swept down upon the assembled host like a bolt from the blue. The Canaanites were thrown into confusion. Jabin had no chance to use his cavalry and chariots effectively. Everything went wrong as far as he was concerned, for "Yahweh delivered his army into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them" (v. 8).

They fled back to their dwellings which extended as far north-west as Zidon, the Valley of Mizpeh to the east and Dor to the south west (vv. 2,8). They were pursued by the Israelites who put them completely to rout. Jabin's power was completely broken.

* The Hebrew *akar* rendered "hough" in the Authorised Version, can refer to either mutilation or destruction — and probably relates to the latter, for mutilated war horses would be of no use to Israel. The word is rendered *to root out* or *disable* in the *English and Hebrew Bible Students Concordance*. The horses and chariots were destroyed to teach Israel to trust in Yahweh, and not in fleshly strength (Psa. 33:16-18).

† Originally the site of the waters of Merom was located close to Lake Huleh not far from Hazor, the powerful fortress headquarters of Jabin; but because of a small pool adjacent to Mount Merom, many prefer to identify it in that area. However, we believe the evidence strongly points to the Lake Huleh district. This would be ideal for chariot warfare whereas that of Mount Merom would not. Jabin, as a wise Commander in Chief would carefully choose the ground as the site of battle. We have personally visited both sites and are confident that the area close to Hazor is the correct one.

The defeat of Jabin meant the end of any major opposition to the conquests of Joshua. There still remained parts where the Canaanites were found in strength, however, and for another six years he waged war on them, gradually wiping out all organised resistance. God had promised that He would drive out the Canaanites little by little (Exod. 23:29-30), and this was best for Israel, for it gave the people time to become used to their new manner of life. Having wandered for thirty-eight years in the wilderness, they knew little about the planting of crops, or tending of trees, but these necessary things were maintained by the Canaanites as they gradually declined in influence and power. Wild beasts also were kept under restraint by the original inhabitants, and the land prepared by the heathen for occupation by Israel.

Joshua waged war particularly against the Anakims. He succeeded in driving them from their strongholds, so that they took refuge in outlying towns such as Gaza, Gath and Ashdod in the land of the Philistines (Joshua 11:22). The Anakims were strong powerful people, whose physical might had been the cause of dismay and fear to the faithless spies, causing them to give an evil report to Moses (Num. 13:32), and weaken the resolve of the people.

**Faithful Caleb
Obtains His
Inheritance**

All organised resistance to Israel having been overthrown, the way was now open for every tribe and family to each obtain its particular inheritance. However it was not left to any to select what land they should have, nor was the choice left to chance. God is the great Dispenser of His gifts, and the particular inheritance of each tribe was selected by Him. He revealed His will to Israel by means of the Lot. Eleazar, the priest, together with Joshua, gathered the tribes together, and arranged for a distribution of the land by this means. But there was one man who did not have to await the Lot. The faithful Caleb, with Joshua, had opposed the other spies when they had weakened the hands of the Israelites by their evil report, and had barely escaped being stoned to death in consequence. God had promised him, on that occasion, that he would inherit Hebron (Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:9), and now the opportunity was his to do so.

But during the six years of war,‡ the tall, powerful Anakims had made their way back to Hebron (which Joshua had previ-

‡ This is based on the statement of Caleb. Forty-five years had passed since he had been sent with the other spies to search out the land (Josh. 14:10), and as 38 years had been spent in the wilderness (Deut. 2:14), it meant that six years had been occupied in the war with the Canaanites, leaving the seventh year as the Sabbatical "year of rest" when "the land rested from war" (Josh. 14:15; Lev. 25:4).

ously captured — Josh. 11:21) and again set up their power there. Caleb was now an old man; would he be able to drive them out? Caleb was sure he could. "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me to spy the land," he confidently told Joshua (Josh. 14:11). "As my strength was then even so is my strength now for war, both to attack or defend. If Yahweh is with me, I will drive out these Anakims" (Josh. 14:11).

Caleb, full of vigour and faith, was as good as his word. The Anakim were driven out and he occupied Hebron.

Not far from Hebron was the important fort of Debir, or Kirjath-sepher, also occupied by Canaanites.

"Whosoever taketh Debir, I will give him, Achsah, my daughter to wife," declared Caleb.

A young man named Othniel, a half-brother of Caleb heard this. He was filled with the spirit of adventure, and decided to make the attempt. Full of faith, he gave himself to the task, and soon this city was in his hands. Debir was on a hill, overlooking a deep valley, about 12 miles south of Hebron. A copious stream of water, rising at the top of the hill, descends in a series of waterfalls to the deep valley beneath. Achsah set her heart upon this stream of water, but Othniel, so courageous in the face of the enemy, did not like to ask her father for this further favour. But Achsah, obtaining from Othniel permission to do so (Josh. 15:18), asked and received this further blessing.

Thus did Caleb, Othniel and Achsah each strive for his or her particular reward and obtained it. It taught Israel, and it teaches us, that though God might make available the means, we must use them. Joshua had made it possible for each individual tribe to obtain its inheritance — but each tribe, and each family, had to "go in and possess it". If they did not move in the matter, they would fail to obtain their inheritance. Jesus Christ (the antitypical Joshua) has likewise accomplished everything whereby his followers can gain their inheritance, but they must fight the good fight of faith with courage and determination to win it. Paul told the believers of his day that they must "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). They must do that even though the Lord Jesus, like Joshua, has destroyed "him that hath the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). Thus there is a wonderful type between the work of Joshua, and that of the Lord Jesus. As the one destroyed the organised resistance of the mighty Canaanites, and made it possible for each family and tribe in Israel to defeat its individual enemy; so the other has conquered that which brings death to mankind, and thus made it possible for spiritual Israel to conquer its individual enemies and obtain the inheritance provided by Yahweh to those who "love and serve Him."



Hebron — City of Caleb appointed a City of Refuge.

An Early Geography Book

Now that the enemies of Israel had been sufficiently subdued to allow the individual tribes to obtain their inheritance, Yahweh showed, by means of the Lot, what He had selected for each. As we mentioned earlier, the Lot was not mere chance—it was the decision of Yahweh Who by His power controlled it. *The Book of Proverbs* declares: “The Lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing therefore is of Yahweh” (Prov. 16:33).

Judah was the first to possess their inheritance (Joshua 15). The two tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and half Manasseh) then occupied their section of land (Joshua chps. 16 and 17). But for some reason the rest of the tribes hesitated to do so (Josh. 18:2). This order of inheritance also types that of the future at the return of the Lord. For whilst he will restore all Israel “as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11), he will “save the tents of Judah first” (Zech. 12:7).

It was some time before the seven remaining tribes obtained their inheritance. Perhaps the difficulties that faced them appeared too great, and they lacked the faith or courage to grapple with them. In any case, they remained in an unsettled state at Shiloh, until Joshua rebuked them. “How long will ye remain idle to go in to possess the land?” he asked them.

He commanded them to select three men of each tribe to make a survey of the rest of the land, and to divide it into seven parts (Joshua 18:4-6). These men travelled the length and breadth of the land, mapping it for Joshua, describing its features, and setting it out in its divisions. These findings they recorded in a book (Josh. 18:9) which was the first Hebrew Geography Book ever to be produced.

They found that the Land of Promise was a most interesting country. Firstly, as befitting its name (for it is called the *Holy* Land, or *Separated* Land, as the word “holy” means), it was set apart from all other lands, being divided, or separated from them. On the west, the mighty ocean was its border; on the east, the vast Arabian desert held it apart from all others; in the north, a great range of mountains and the Euphratean River cut it off from Babylonia; on the south, the Red Sea, the Nile, and the Sinaitic desert separated it from Egypt. Though the Land of Promise connects the great Continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, it is apart from them all, like the Hebrews who came to inhabit it. Thus secluded from all other lands, Israel was able to “dwell alone” among the nations.

The Land of Promise has another wonderful feature. Not only is it separate from all countries, but in it there is such a variety of

different scenery as to give it a universal character. It is as though Yahweh took a little piece of every country in the world, and placed it in His land. On some of the mountains snow is seen throughout the year; and yet the Jordan valley includes hot, tropical regions. The Land has both salt and fresh-water lakes and seas; it has mountains, plains, deserts, fertile valleys, tropical vegetation, and springs. It has known earthquakes, and volcanoes. It is noted for its heat in summer, and, in parts, its chilly winter; and also for the sharp divisions that set off one state of the land from the other.

Thus this Holy Land is like the Holy People, who today, God is redeeming “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”, and making unto Himself a people for His name (Acts 15:14; Rev. 5:9-10). As His Ecclesia, they are separated from all other people, and yet, within their ranks, there are found people of all kinds and all nations. As we see in the Holy Land a great diversity of scenery and features, so we see in those who accept the Truth a great diversity of character and attributes. Yet all are brought “into one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

**“Go And
Possess Your
Inheritance . . .”**

With the description of the land, written in the book, and divided into seven parts, Joshua called the tribes before him, and with Eleazar the priest (Joshua 19:51), he

called upon Yahweh to make known which inheritance should be given to the various tribes.

God did this, as before, by the Lot. He showed, through the High Priest, what inheritance each tribe should have, thus indicating that no Israelite had any exclusive right to any part of the land, for the inheritance of each was selected by Yahweh.

But though the land was thus offered to each tribe, and they were told to “go in and possess it,” they failed to drive out the Canaanites who remained as thorns in their sides for years to come. Lack of faith, and faintheartedness, was the cause of this. If the Israelites had exercised faith and courage, God would soon have overcome their enemies. Through the Psalmist, He declared:

*“Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me,
and Israel had walked in My ways.
I should soon have subdued their enemies,
and turned My hand against their adversaries” (Psa. 81:14-15).*

But Israel lacked the faith, and because of that they suffered in after ages, as we shall see.

In this there is a great lesson for us. Jesus Christ, like Joshua, overcame the great enemy of mankind (Heb. 2:14), and opened the way for his followers to obtain their inheritance. But if they are faithless or fearful, if cowardice is shown instead of courage, they will be as the Israelites, and the Canaanites that remain (their own selfish desires) will defeat them at the last.

How the Gospel Was Preached Through the Cities of Refuge

“At last we have a chapter which Dad cannot call ‘one of the most dramatic chapters of the Bible’,” remarked Peter, after the Phillips’ family had finished reading Joshua 20.

“Why do you say that?” asked his father.

“Well it seems rather a dry chapter to me,” replied Peter. “It only concerns the appointment of Cities of Refuge.”

“That may be so,” answered Mr. Phillips, “but when you search the Bible deeply, you find that there is not a chapter that is not of great interest some way or other. As a matter of fact, there is much in this chapter that is of the greatest interest, and really is very dramatic”.

“The cities of refuge are also referred to in Numbers, chapter 35,” remarked Graeham.

“That is so,” said his father. “That chapter shows how Moses commanded that when the people came into the land, they were to provide six cities of refuge, that the man-slayer might go for refuge”.

“But why should a manslayer have any sort of protection?” asked Ann.

“Because there are two kinds of man-slayers,” replied her father. “A person could kill somebody by accident, and the Law of Moses made a difference between him and the murderer who slew his enemy on purpose. The Cities of Refuge were places where people who had killed anybody might flee for refuge, in order that they might have their cases judged properly” (Num. 35:12-25).

“What would happen if they did not do that?” asked Joan.

“If anyone were slain the Law of Moses allowed the next of kin to avenge the death by slaying whoever was guilty”, answered Mr. Phillips. “Therefore, if anyone killed another man, even though it was an accident, it was necessary for him to hasten immediately to the City of Refuge, because the next of kin could seek to slay him. However, if the killer came to a City of Refuge its walls would protect him until his case was justly considered. It was then decided whether the act was premeditated murder, or merely an accident. If it was a murder, the killer was put to death;

but if it was an accident he was protected from the avenger of blood. Nevertheless he had to remain in the City of Refuge until the death of the High Priest (Joshua 20:6), at which time he had his full liberty restored to him, and no one was permitted to harm him”.

“That seems a strange law”, remarked Peter.

“It was really a very sensible law, and particularly for those times,” answered his father. “It gave justice, and at the same time prevented bitter strife arising among the people, which often happens in small, rural communities. Besides all that, and more important also, it was a very dramatic way of preaching the Gospel”.

“How can you possibly say that the Gospel was preached by that law?” asked Peter.

“Because the state of the man fleeing to the city can be likened to our condition,” explained Mr. Phillips. “We are subject to death, and therefore need to hasten to a place that can save us therefrom. Our City of Refuge is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul likens those who have accepted Christ through baptism as having ‘fled for refuge’ by ‘laying hold of the hope set before them’ (Heb. 6:18-19). Likewise, in Proverbs 18:10 we read that ‘the name of Yahweh is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe’.”

“That is very good,” said Ann, her face lighting up as she saw the point. “But can we really be likened to as man-slayers?”

“Most decidedly we can,” answered her father. “When we come to a knowledge of the Truth in Christ Jesus, and realise that he died for us, we become guilty of his death, and must hasten to the City of Refuge if we would escape the judgment that will otherwise come on us. We are then like the man who accidentally slew his fellowman under the Law, and if we seek his refuge we will be protected from the punishment that will otherwise be our lot. But it is possible for a person to come to a knowledge of the truth, and by his folly, ‘to crucify to himself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame’ (Heb. 6:6). Such is a murderer (Acts 7:52), and will ultimately receive the just punishment for his folly (Luke 12:46-47), when he stands before the Judgment Seat (Rom. 2:6-9).”

“You said that the man who was acquitted gained his release on the death of the High Priest,” remarked Graeham. “Does that have any significance in the preaching of the Gospel?”

“Certainly,” replied his father. “We gain our release through the death of our High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ. The law concerning the Cities of Refuge taught that lesson to the children of Israel”.

"In Joshua 20:5, we read of the 'avenger of blood,'" said Peter. "Who was the avenger of blood?"

"The word in the Hebrew is *gael*, and it means the *next of kin*" replied Mr. Phillips. His next of kin was his closest relation. It points forward to Jesus Christ, who came in our nature, and who will ultimately avenge his blood on those who are guilty of it. Strangely enough, the same word is translated *redeemer*, in some places in the Bible (e.g. Job 19:25), teaching that the Lord is both a Redeemer and an Avenger (Rom. 12:19). He will redeem those who are worthy of being saved, but will avenge himself on those who deliberately reject his way. He will avenge all who are guilty of his blood, whether in the City of Refuge or not. Some imagine that if they are not baptised they can avoid the responsibility they owe Christ, and so escape the judgment of the Lord at his coming, but the lesson of the City of Refuge teaches otherwise. The 'avenger of blood' punished the murderer whether he was in the City or not — and so it will be at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Therefore we need to shelter in the haven he has provided, and make sure we do not thereafter 'put him to an open shame'."

"That is very interesting," remarked Peter, thoughtfully.

"Thank you, Peter!" replied his father. "I am glad that you can now see that this dull old chapter has some interest in it. While you are writing down the points I have given you, here are a few more you can note:

1. The Cities of Refuge were in places where they could be easily reached by those desiring their shelter (Num. 35:6; Deut. 4:41-43; Josh. 20:7-8).
2. They were to be found on both sides of the Jordan (Num. 35:14).
3. Special roads were to be constructed leading to them to make them more easy of access (Deut. 19:3).

Therefore, these Cities of Refuge were in very conspicuous places throughout Israel. Anyone in trouble knew that the roads leading to them allowed them to get there quickly and easily. In like manner, the Gospel is plainly set before men, and the road to it is made easy, for those who would seek it with the urgency it demands."

"In Joshua 20:7 we read that 'they appointed Kadesh' as a city of refuge," said Graham, "but in the margin the word is *sanctified*. I suppose that means that these cities were *set apart* from all others".

"That is so," agreed Mr. Phillips. "The meaning of the word 'sanctified' is *to set apart*. These cities were *set apart* from all others, as the Lord Jesus, our city of refuge is set apart from all men."

“Did all the six cities represent the truth in Jesus, or only one of them?” asked Ann.

“They all represented the Lord,” replied her father. “The very names of the six cities are significant, and tell a story in themselves. The cities selected were: Kadesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth and Golan. Kadesh means to *set apart* or *make holy*; Shechem means to *sustain* or *support*; Hebron means to *join in fellowship*, Bezer means to *protect*, Ramoth means *elevation*; Golan means to *deliver so as to cause to rejoice*. Set these names together, and you have a very interesting sentence. The names of the cities of refuge tell us that God will consecrate us, or make us holy, will sustain us, will unite us in fellowship, will protect us, will exalt us, will deliver us, causing us to rejoice. When you consider the work of our City of Refuge, the Lord Jesus, how well those names apply to him! He consecrates us, sustains us, unites us in fellowship, protects us, exalts us, will deliver us, and cause us to rejoice. So both the Law of the Cities of Refuge, as well as their names provide a dramatic picture of the Gospel. What do you think, Peter?”

“Well, Dad! I think you are right for once!” replied Peter, a little irreverently.

A Further 42 Special Cities

“Well, I think the next chapter (Joshua 21) is boring anyway,” said Joan. “It is only a list of names”.

“No chapter of the Bible is really boring if we approach it in the right manner,” replied Mr. Phillips. “Though it may not be very dramatic (for it merely names 42 cities that are appointed for the Levites in addition to the six cities of refuge), it is nevertheless very interesting”.

“One of the most interesting chapters of the Bible, I suppose!” murmured Peter, to the great indignation of his sisters.

“What is particularly interesting about it?” asked Graeham.

“Counting the six cities of refuge, there are 48 Levitical cities in all,” said Mr. Phillips. “Though these cities are described as Levitical cities, it does not mean that only Levites lived in them, but that the Levites were given houses and lands in them. The chapter shows that these cities were scattered throughout all the tribes of Israel. For example, verses 9-10 show that the two families of Aaron were allotted cities in the tribes of Judah and Simeon. In this, we see a remarkable example of foresight. The sons of Aaron constituted the priests, and their cities being located in those two tribes, placed them in close proximity to where the Temple was built some 400 years later”.

“That is *interesting*,” said Peter, “but I don’t think we can say

this chapter is a most interesting one just because of that!"

"We have not reached the end yet," answered Mr. Phillips. "You notice that the Levitical cities were scattered throughout all the tribes of Israel. By this arrangement, there was distributed throughout the land a separate people whose lives were given to the service of Yahweh. They had no special tribal inheritance of their own (Num. 18:20), for Yahweh was their inheritance. Their main duty was to study and expound the Law (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:8). They were thus an object lesson to all Israel as to what a true Israelite should be. By their example, they could lead others to do likewise".

"But people cannot leave off all their daily work and study the Bible!" exclaimed Peter.

"That is not required," answered his father. "We can serve God in our daily work — in the house, in the field, in the workshop, in the office, or in our studies. If we measure our conduct by His commands, we are serving Him better than if we gave all our time to study, and yet did not do the things He desires".

"Were others influenced by the example of the Levites?" asked Peter.

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips. "David was one who was so motivated. He prayed Yahweh: 'Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law' (Psa. 119:18). David was blessed in that way. He saw the meaning of these spiritual truths, and could say of himself: 'Yahweh is the portion of mine inheritance' (Psa. 16:5). He thus likened himself to the Levites, whose portion was Yahweh. David's action can also influence us. His example is one reason why before doing the daily readings from the Bible we first ask a blessing of Yahweh".

"The Levites were therefore a separate people in the midst of Israel," remarked Graeham, thoughtfully.

"That is true," said Mr. Phillips. "They occupied a position among their own people such as followers of the Lord Jesus do among the people today. As the Levites were an object lesson to the rest of Israel, so should believers be to the world about them. As the Levites were scattered throughout the whole of the land, so the Lord's people have been scattered among all nations (Rev. 5:9-10)".

"That is very interesting," remarked Peter.

"This chapter shows the responsibility that rests on those who accept the Truth," continued Mr. Phillips. "People observe their ways as the Israelites did that of the Levites in their midst; so that if God's people do not act wisely, they can bring reproach on the name they bear. You need remember that, though you are young; and whether you are at work, or at school, to so conduct

yourselves as to reflect honour upon the Truth, which we try to honour in this home”.

“The scattering of the Levites throughout the whole of Israel would also mean that each part of the nation would have the Law brought before them all the time,” said Graeham.

“That is true,” agreed his father. “The Jews claim that all these Levitical cities were lesser Cities of Refuge where any could go who wanted his case heard. The Levites acted as judges in Israel (Deut. 17:9), and the fact that they were found in all parts of the land meant that there would be no delay in obtaining a decision on any problem. They also taught people the Law, so that there was always someone handy to whom the more thoughtful could turn to learn more about God. In that regard, they are like followers of Jesus Christ in every age, for they have been found in all lands, and can easily be contacted by people if they desire to learn more about the Truth”.

How A Civil War Was Stopped Joshua 22

Now that the work of subduing the Canaanites had been completed, the time had come for the soldiers of the tribes that lived east of the Jordan to return home. Following Moses’ defeat of Sihon and Og, kings of the Amorites on the east of Jordan, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half Manasseh, had requested that they be allowed to inherit the beautiful fertile land of Bashan. Their request had been granted conditionally upon them helping the rest of Israel to overthrow the Canaanites in the Land of Promise.

They had done this work faithfully, and now that it was completed, Joshua called them before him, to publicly thank them. He exhorted them to continue faithful to God, and gave them permission to return home.

He warned them never to forget Yahweh, but always to keep Him before their minds. They were to believe Him as a Teacher; to love Him as a Father; to follow Him as a Master; to cleave unto Him as a true Friend, and to show their affection for Him with all the strength of their being (Joshua 22:5).

With this advice ringing in their ears, and greatly affected by all they had seen and done during the campaign in the Land of Promise, the soldiers commenced to return home. They experienced the joy of a united walk with the other tribes in their service to Yahweh! The more they thought upon this theme, and discussed it among themselves, the more they felt that they should erect some memorial to this unity. They decided to erect a great altar on the border of their inheritance, to remind their own people, that though they were separated from the rest of Israel by

the Jordan, they must never forget that they were only part of the nation.

The altar was built, but their intentions were misunderstood.

God had commanded that altars for sacrifice should only be built in those places where He manifested Himself (Exod. 20:22-23). When the tribes on the west of Jordan saw this great altar, they immediately came to the conclusion that their brethren in the east were disobeying God's commands. The Tabernacle altar was set up at Shiloh where the people assembled to worship Yahweh. When the eastern tribes erected another altar on the border of the land they interpreted it as a divisive move designed to save the people going to Shiloh who lived east of the Jordan. They were moved with burning indignation against their brethren, and decided that they would rebuke and punish them.

Gathering together at Shiloh (Joshua 22:12), the tribes of the west chose a deputation of ten princes representing the ten tribes, headed by Phinehas, the enthusiastic son of the High Priest. These were sent to the leaders of the tribes in the east, to reproach them for their folly in building an altar of sacrifice, when God had commanded such should not be done. They spoke to them bluntly, warning them that such actions would bring disaster upon the whole nation.

However, they had misjudged their brethren. In fact their thoughtless approach could have caused offence to those of the east and real trouble could have resulted. But instead of causing their feelings to get the better of them, the representatives of the east wisely remained calm, and quietly told those of the western tribes the real purpose of the altar. It was not for sacrifice, for they knew that such was not permitted. It was merely a memorial, an altar of witness, shaped like the one at Shiloh, to prove, in after years, to their children, that they had a right to the worship of Yahweh at Shiloh, that they should remain loyal to the tribes of the west, and that they should ever remember the service due to God. For those reasons they had named it the Altar of *Ed*, or *Witness* (v. 34).

This explanation fully satisfied the men of the western tribes. Their tempers cooled, and they became reconciled to their brethren. They doubtless were sorry that they had been so hasty in their judgment.

A valuable lesson was taught by this incident. It is so easy to misjudge the actions of others, and accuse them, either secretly or openly, of wrongdoing when an explanation will put the matter right. Those of the west were wrong in condemning their brethren; but they did, at least, allow them the chance to explain. Those of the east were foolish in not first apprising their brethren

of their intentions; but were wise in humbly explaining their motives and reasons for building the altar, instead of taking offence, and in their pride, refusing to submit to any questioning. Civil war, bloodshed and sorrow were thus avoided. If anger had been met with anger, and accusation with accusation, the result might well have been different. In our attitude one to another we need to be patient. If we imagine a wrong has been done, don't talk about it to others; go to the one concerned, and ask an explanation. On the other hand, if we are approached in that way, do not get upset and angry; the one approaching you may have your good in mind. Quietly reason the matter out, and you will make friends instead of enemies.

There was no real need for this altar. Unity in the Truth cannot be forced by externals. Where its knowledge exists, and its spirit prevails, unity will develop between those of the same mind, such as needs no forcing and cannot be destroyed. Why, then, did they build the altar called *Ed*? It was built because of a "fear" that one day, knowledge would not prevail in Israel, and that ignorance would drive the people apart, and destroy the nation (Josh. 22:24). That is what finally happened, and the Altar of Witness did not prevent it, causing the prophet Hosea to declare, "My people are destroyed through lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Fear had become a fact.

Joshua's Final Work

Joshua's work was almost complete. He could look back with pleasure on a life of active service in Israel's cause. He had subdued the enemies of Israel, and divided the land among the tribes. He was devoted to the cause of Yahweh and of Israel. As far as we know, like the Lord Jesus whom he foreshadowed, he never married. In every way he manifested humility. For example, one would imagine that he should have received his reward before the others, but, in fact, he waited until the requirements of all others had been attended to, before he made request for his own. In fact, it was as though he had been overlooked in the general excitement (Josh. 19:49-50). The place for which he asked was called Timnath-serah, and was about twelve miles (20 kms) from Shiloh where the Tabernacle was set up. It is a barren spot in an isolated part of Ephraim's territory, and it may have been chosen by Joshua to set an example to the people of the need of seeking the greater reward at Christ's coming, whilst recognising present possessions as brief, and comparatively unimportant.

He also arranged for the burial of the bones of Joseph, which had been brought up out of the land of Egypt. Joseph, who was an ancestor of Joshua, had refused to be buried in Egypt, knowing that Yahweh would deliver the people therefrom. He had

commanded the Children of Israel that when they left they should take his coffin with them, and bury him in the Land of Promise (Gen. 50:25). This they had done, so that during the long years of wandering, the heavy stone coffin of Joseph had been carried in the midst of Israel. They buried him at Shechem, in territory that became the inheritance of the tribes that came from him.

With these final duties completed, Joshua knew that his death was at hand. One thing remained — to impress the people with the need of faithfully serving Yahweh in Truth. Joshua knew that by so doing they would remain a prosperous and successful people (Josh. 1:8). Like the Lord Jesus, his great antitype, who after his death and resurrection gave his last message to the elders of the seven ecclesias (Rev., chs. 2 & 3), Joshua now called before him the elders, heads, judges and officers of Israel that he might pass on to them his final message.

So the leaders of the nation gathered before this great man who in earlier days had been a tower of strength to Moses, had led Israel in battle from the time of their deliverance in Egypt, and subsequently brought them over the Jordan to victory in the Lord. They could admire the selfless faith and courage they knew he possessed. They saw in him a man who was prepared to give everything he had that others may be helped; whose very presence stood as an example of what is right in the sight of Yahweh. Joshua could have reminded the people of what *he* had done, and they, doubtless, would have responded with words of praise. Instead, he directed them to God, reminding them of how Yahweh had cared for them (Josh. 23:3), drawing attention to the Book that had been so helpful to him, advising them to constantly meditate upon its pages, and obey its commands. He told them that if they remained faithful, Yahweh would help them drive out the enemy that remained in their midst. He exhorted them to keep strictly separate from the nations about them, and refuse to be drawn into their ways of worship. He warned them that if they failed to do this, the enemy in the Land would become such a snare and a trap, as to destroy Israel. He showed them that as Yahweh had done all He had promised Moses He would do, they could be sure that if they failed to keep the Word of Truth, the punishment concerning which He had likewise warned Moses would come upon them, and destroy them.

It was a very solemn occasion when Joshua spake to these leaders for the last time, and they must have returned to their homes much impressed by all they had heard. We learn, later, that those elders who had listened to Joshua, continued to wisely govern the people after the death of their great leader (Judges 2:7).

**Israel Covenants
to Obey Yahweh
— Joshua 24**

Having exhorted the leaders of the tribes, Joshua next commanded the people to appear before him at Shechem. Shechem was a place of great importance in Israel, particularly for such a solemn occasion as Joshua had in mind. It was at Shechem that Abram had received the promise: "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). It was here that Joshua had earlier taken Israel that the tribes might renew their covenant with Yahweh, repeating the blessings and cursings of the Law. And now, once again, in the lovely valley overshadowed by the Mounts of Blessing and Cursing (Gerizim and Ebal) and under the great oak that had stood there from the days of Abram (Josh. 24:26), Joshua called the people around him, and reminded them of all the goodness they had received from Yahweh, from the call of Abram to the time of their inheritance of the land.

These benefits revealed that it pays to serve Yahweh in sincerity and truth, declared Joshua in his address (Josh. 24:14-15). He called upon the people to show undivided loyalty to God. "Put away the gods which your fathers served . . . and serve ye Yahweh!" he exhorted. He then added words that must have sounded harsh to the Israelites: "If it seem evil unto you to serve Yahweh, choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . *but as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh*" (v. 15).

The people were horrified at the implication of Joshua's words. He had practically accused them of having false gods among them, and of forsaking the worship of the true God! They replied: "God forbid that we should forsake Yahweh, to serve other gods" (v. 16). They, too, spake of the great benefits they had received from God, and how they desired to continue to worship Him.

But Joshua replied that unless they gave complete, dedicated obedience unto Yahweh, they could not serve Him aright, for He is both Holy and Jealous (v. 19). By that he meant that Yahweh is unique and separate from all other gods, and that He demands the wholehearted worship of His followers. He will not tolerate anything that may interfere with that worship.

The people, perhaps, did not understand that idolatry is not limited to worshipping visible gods; but includes any form of selfish indulgence that hides God from view. It is a form of idolatry when we set worldly position, or the things of this life, before God. Many years later, Samuel told Saul: "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of Yahweh, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:23). Paul also taught that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5).

Joshua warned the people that the One whom they worshipped, and who had done such good for them, could also act against them if they did not closely obey Him (v. 20). Like the Apostle Paul, he called upon the people to “behold the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22), and to so live as to always receive good.

“We will serve Yahweh!” the people responded.

Joshua then prepared a sacrifice to impress the people with the solemn agreement they had made. He next took the Book of the Law, and wrote the terms of the agreement therein, and the form of punishment the people would suffer if they failed to carry out their promise. Then, as the people listened and watched him, he finally took a great stone, and setting it up under the oak at Shechem, close to where the Tabernacle had been temporarily erected, he called on the people to let this stone be a witness of all they had promised to do.

This oak, no doubt, was the tree under which Jacob had buried out of sight the household gods (or *teraphim*) when he prepared those with him to meet with God at Bethel (Gen. 35:1-7), and where he had been promised that his seed would inherit the land (Gen. 35:12-13). Now his seed was in the land, and recalling what Jacob had done at this spot, Joshua reminded them of their responsibilities to figuratively bury out of sight any household gods they may have!

With these solemn words in their ears, and the impressive ceremony they had seen in remembrance, the people returned to their homes, determined that they would follow the advice of their leader.

Death of Joshua

Shortly after this, Joshua died. He was buried in the border of his inheritance: a wild, barren, lonely part of the land. He was one hundred and ten years of age at his death; and he left an example of total dedication to the God whom he loved and served so faithfully.

His influence was great in Israel, and though he was dead, his advice and example remained with the people. “They served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, which had known all the works of Yahweh, that He had done in Israel” (Josh. 24:31). But, unfortunately, human memory is short, and it was not long before the people forgot. Then evil days came upon the nation and the land, as the book of Judges reveals.

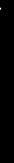
Sequel To The Book Of Joshua

The *Book of Joshua* concludes by recording the burials of three great men: Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar (see Josh. 24:29-33). The three burials conclude an epoch: the warrior leader; the faithful visionary; and the forthright priest, are laid to rest awaiting the resurrection. All three typed Christ in various particulars; all three will rise again to life eternal and a glorious inheritance in the Kingdom he will establish. Joshua signigies: *Yahweh will save*; Joseph, *Increase*; and Eleazar, *El (God) will help*. They proclaim the glorious message that Yahweh will save and increase the number of the redeemed through the help He will give.

Special inheritances are reserved for these three men; for they did not receive the fulness of the promise in their lifetimes. Joseph will be granted his inheritance under the shadow of Shechem; Joshua will receive his in Timnath-Serah; and Eleazar will "stand in his lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13).

The typology presented by Joshua and Joseph has been outlined in *The Story of The Bible*, but equally significant is that presented by Eleazar. His name signifies *El hath helped*. At the appointment of Aaron, and following the death of Aaron's two rebellious sons, he became High Priest elect. As such he typed the priesthood of Christ which was designed to replace the Aaronic Priesthood when it served its course (Heb. 8:7-13). The name Eleazar, or *El hath helped* points to the statement of Psalms 80:17: "the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself" that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, strengthened by Yahweh to redeem mankind (2 Cor. 5:18-21; John 1:14). The type is summarised in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. It is significant that Christ gave the poor man in the parable the name of this High Priest elect, for Lazarus is the Greek form of Eleazar. To the rich man who, in the parable, pleads that Lazarus be sent to preach to his relations, the answer is given: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets they will not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). This, indeed, proved true in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who became "poor" in order to redeem his followers (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8); for the Jewish leaders rejected the evidence of their eyes and refuted his Messiahship even after he had risen from the dead.

Though the Book of Joshua concludes with three burials, there is great consolation that those men did not die without hope. They will rise from the dead to eternal life. Their burials witnessed to the fact that "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable". But the hope of all true followers of the Lord is in the glorious future when the Messiah shall return to bestow a "crown of righteousness" upon all those "who love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Those three wonderful heroes of faith will then enter their inheritance, and the glory of immortality.



God gave Israel two grand leaders in Moses and Joshua. They not only taught and guided the people but also set down in writing, instructions for those who should come after. Following the death of Joshua, the people were left to follow those instructions. When they did so, and worshipped God in truth and sincerity, all went well; but when they forgot His goodness, and forsook His way, He abandoned them to their ways, and they suffered from the heathen that surrounded them.

Thus God tested His people, but time and again they failed. There was no visible leader in Israel, and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25) instead of following the instructions set forth in God's Book (Josh. 1:8). It was a period of lawlessness and often of great wickedness, so that many horrible things occurred, and great evils were experienced by the people. The Book of Judges reveals five great lessons:

1. It shows how Israel failed despite the great help that Yahweh gave the people, including the privileges they received.

2. It reveals that in the Bible we are dealing with persons similar to ourselves, men and women who were liable to do wrong if they did not closely follow God's instructions.

3. It provides an example for our times, for we live at a time when there is no visible leader, when the antitypical Joshua (the Lord Jesus) has left his people, and when those who enjoy the privileges of the Truth often "do what is right in their own eyes". In that sense, we can take many valuable lessons from the book of Judges and apply them personally.

4. Above all it illustrates the great mercy of Yahweh, showing that He is always ready to forgive and save those who humbly come unto Him.

5. Finally, it teaches that as SIN will bring SUFFERING, SEEKING YAHWEH will bring SALVATION.

Seeing that we live in times similar to those recorded in the Book of Judges, it is important that we try to understand its lessons, and learn to avoid the mistakes the people made in those days.

Chapter One

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Why The Book of Judges is Important

“The Book of Judges seems a strange book to me!” remarked Graeham thoughtfully, after the Phillips’ family had completed the reading of certain chapters

from the Bible.

“Why is that?” asked his father.

“There doesn’t seem to be any point or purpose in it,” replied Graeham. “It seems just a terrible record of failure on the part of Israel. It seems to be made up of all sorts of disconnected incidents just thrown together without meaning”.

“I find it that way, also,” remarked Peter. “We read of Judges arising to defeat the enemies of Israel, and then of times when the people were disobedient, during which some awfully blood-thirsty things occur. None of it seems particularly important to me!”

“In other words, it shows times of confusion and failure, when some people showed faith, but most proved disobedient?” suggested his father.

“Yes,” agreed Peter.

“Well, perhaps that is what God wanted us to particularly notice,” said Mr. Phillips, with a smile.

“What do you mean by that?” asked the two boys.

“We know that the work of Joshua was typical of the work of Jesus Christ in making it possible for his followers to obtain their inheritance,” answered Mr. Phillips. “In the same way, the setting up of the Kingdom under David and Solomon pointed forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth by the Lord Jesus. Between those two happenings, you have a long period of confusion, recorded in the *Book of Judges*, when ‘every man did what was right in his own eyes’ (Judges 21:25). Such a period of confusion came after the death of the Apostles who followed the Lord Jesus, and will continue until his coming again.”

“Do you think the book is typical of our times?” enquired Graeham.

“Paul tells us that those things are recorded as examples, or types, for our benefit,” replied his father (see 1 Cor. 10:11). “In reading these books, we must apply the lessons to ourselves”.

“And how does the lesson apply to us?”

“These books set out for us in outline, and in order, the purpose of God”, said Mr. Phillips. “Joshua weakened the power of

the Canaanites, and made it possible for each Israelite to go in and obtain his inheritance, and the Lord Jesus did the same for us. Joshua set up elders who wisely guided the people after his death (Josh. 24:31), and the Lord Jesus did likewise when he appointed the Apostles and elders to follow him (Eph. 4:11-12), and whose writings we have to guide us. Joshua's time was followed by a period of confusion recorded in the *Book of Judges*, a period of alternating success and failure, when the people drifted from God; and after the death of the Apostles, the history of believers has been very similar. We read the *Book of Judges*, and we wonder at a people with such opportunities as had Israel becoming so careless and wicked towards God; and God must view the history of believers since the first advent of His beloved Son in a similar way. It has been a time of confusion and evil. We can see mirrored in the *Book of Judges* a picture of believers during Gentile times, and thus we can learn to beware lest we follow a lead that is not good".

"But people don't worship pagan gods today!" protested Ann, who was listening to the conversation.

"We don't need pagan gods to become worshippers of idols," answered her father. "We become just as bad as Israel when we let anything — pleasure, or business or friends — take the first place in our lives. God must have that place! Unfortunately, people don't realise that, and often give Him second place. That is what Israel did, and it is idolatry".

"Why should God allow these things to happen?" asked Graeham.

"It gives each one a chance to show his loyalty to God," replied his father. "The *Book of Judges* teaches us that we must not look to man, no matter how important he may appear in the eyes of others, but ever seek the way of God in His Word. Even Gideon, one of the greatest Judges, did foolish things which led others astray (Judges 8:27)."

"It certainly teaches us to be careful," remarked Graeham, thoughtfully.

"It also teaches another lesson," continued his father. "It clearly shows us that in the Bible we are faced with men of like passions as ourselves. The acts of violence, and personal failings therein revealed might come as a shock, but they show that whilst the Truth is Divine, those who accept it are all too human. The writer of this book has faithfully recorded the imperfections, barbarities and sins of his people, and it is our wisdom to faithfully study it, that we might avoid the mistakes, and learn by the experiences of the times (see 2 Tim. 3:16)".

"Who was the author of the book?" asked Graeham.

"We do not know for sure," replied his father. "It is thought to have been Samuel. It was certainly written after the setting up of the first king (see Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1), but before the reign of David, for it speaks of Jerusalem as still being in the hands of the Jebusites (Ch. 1:21). Samuel lived at this time, and could have written the book, though its true author is God. The important thing to note, is that out of all the confusion and evil of the times, the Kingdom was finally set up in glory under David and Solomon. In like manner, out of the confusion and evil of these times, when, even among believers, 'every man does what is right in his own eyes', the glorious Kingdom of God will finally be set up under the Lord Jesus, the greater than David and Solomon".

"I begin to see what you are driving at now, Dad!" exclaimed Graeham. "In the *Book of Joshua* we have the work of Christ at his first advent; in the *Book of Judges* we have the attitude of believers since Christ ascended into heaven; in the *Book of Samuel* we have (in the setting up of the Kingship) the work of Christ at his second advent".

"That is right," agreed his father. "And as we consider the confusion and evil of the Book of Judges, when 'every man did what is right in his own eyes,' we can learn the value of avoiding those mistakes, and seeking what God would have us do".

"That's very good," said Ann, who was listening intently to the discussions.

"Just a moment," argued Peter. "You forget that the *Book of Ruth* is between Judges and 1 Samuel. How does that fit into the picture?"

"We have the key to the answer in the first verse of the *Book of Ruth*," answered Mr. Phillips. "That reads: 'Now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled' (Ruth 1:1). The *Book of Ruth* shows us what went on in the minds and lives of individuals in Israel, during the time when officially the nation was in a state of turmoil, as we see it in the *Book of Judges*. In that time of vexation, apostasy, bloodshed and wrongdoing, there were men and women in Israel like Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, who were living quiet and peaceful lives trying to obey their Creator in accordance with the Truth as they saw it. The same has been true in the communities of believers since the days of Christ. In all the troubles and evils that have affected them, there have been those who quietly lived a life of faith before God, and whom He will reward when the Lord Jesus returns".

"That reminds me of what you often say, namely, that salvation is an individual matter," said Graeham.

"That is true," agreed his father. "Our salvation depends upon how we live before God, and not on how others do so. If they

choose to follow ways of evil, we must not do so. In fact, we must be led by God and not by man. Men can help us, so long as they lead us to the Bible, and show us what is revealed therein. But if we follow them in what *they* think is best, we will be led astray. If we follow the way of God, we will have great peace of mind, no matter what others might think or do. We need to heed the words of King David in Psalm 119:165: 'Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them'. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz found peace in a time of evil; and we can do likewise".

Why Israel Failed "What was the cause of Israel's failure?" asked Ann.

"They failed because they compromised the instructions of Yahweh", answered her father.

"What do you mean by 'compromise'?" asked Ann again.

"To 'compromise' is to alter or fall short of doing what God wants. Israel did not oppose God's commands, but they did not fully carry them out".

"Why should one want to 'compromise'?"

"Usually because it appears that there is an advantage by so doing," answered Mr. Phillips. "You have a case of 'compromise' in Judges 1:28: 'It came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out'. Now God had commanded that they should utterly destroy the Canaanites (Deut. 7:2), and Israel had the power to do it. But they thought that they would be enriched if they made the Canaanites work for them instead. They partly obeyed God's command by defeating them, but instead of destroying them utterly, they made them slaves. In the first chapter of Judges, we read many times of the Canaanites being allowed to remain, and, sad to say, many of the sites there referred to, were places where Joshua had won great victories. The value of his work was lessened by the folly of those Israelites who came after him. Read Psalm 106:34 for me please, Joan. God there shows the cause of Israel's disgrace".

Joan looked up the place, and read as follows: "They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom Yahweh commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood".

"Thank you, Joan", said Mr. Phillips. "That explains to us the cause of Israel's failure and disgrace. Now read Hosea 5:15 for me, Joan. This shows us Yahweh's attitude towards His people".

Again Joan scrambled around the Bible, and after a little bit of

prompting on the part of Peter, finally found the prophecy of Hosea towards the end of the Old Testament. Turning to Chapter 5:15, she read: "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face. In their affliction, they will seek Me early".

"Thank you, Joan," said Mr. Phillips. "That verse explains what God did time and again. When Israel offended, Yahweh hid His face from them until they acknowledged their offence. When they sought Him, He was always ready to forgive and help. He is the same today. Thus this important Book teaches us to heed the character of God. It shows that we need never despair, whatever we have done, for He is very merciful. If we forsake our ways, and turn to Him, He will accept us. On the other hand, it reveals that He is just, and will punish those who turn from Him. Thus we are taught not to presume on His goodness".

**Four Principles
Revealed in the
Book of Judges**

"There are four great features that occur time and again in this book," continued Mr. Phillips.

"Don't go so fast, please Dad!" protested Peter. "I am trying to write these points down."

"I wouldn't worry much about Peter's writing," said Ann, with a chuckle, "it is one long scrawl anyway! Fast or slow, it doesn't make much difference to him!"

"When these young people stop arguing, perhaps we can get on with the study," suggested Graeham, a little loftily.

"Don't take any notice of them, Daddy," said Joan. "I am listening anyway."

"I'm all ready, now," said Peter, cheerily. "What are the four great features?"

"The Book of Judges tells how the people departed from the ways of God and enemies rose up to trouble them," said Mr. Phillips. "Time and again this happened. And each incident can be divided into four parts. First the people SIN, then as a consequence they SUFFER, then they SEEK GOD, and He SAVES them. Those are the great features of life. SIN brings SUFFERING, SEEKING GOD brings SALVATION. The book of Judges shows the people: 1. SINNING. 2. SUFFERING. 3. SUPPLICATING. 4. SAVED.

"And that is the lesson that we, too, must learn".

"That is a very good point," remarked Graeham.

"I am glad you were able to show these boys that it is not strange that the *Book of Judges* is in the Bible, after all!" said Ann, with a grin, as she began to put her books away.

**How Judah
Punished the Lord
of Bezek
— Judges 1**

Joshua left no successor. And, for a while, after his death Israel was at a loss as what to do. "Who shall go up first against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" they asked Yahweh.

The task was given unto Judah, and with Simeon (whose territory was placed within the borders of Judah — Josh. 19:1,9), their men of war marched forth against the Canaanites.

They had a very easy victory, showing that if the rest of Israel faithfully and courageously did the bidding of God they would succeed. Conquering the Canaanites within their own borders, the men of Judah drove them north to the city of Bezek in the ter-



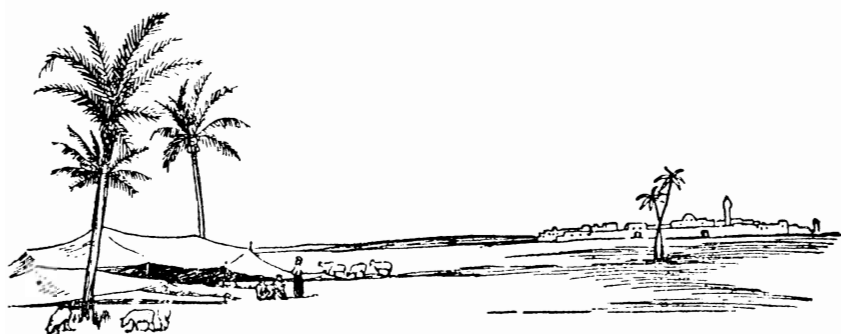
The Lord of Bezek having his thumbs and great toes removed. As he did to others so it was done to him.

ritory of Ephraim. Here there dwelt a very powerful King called Adoni-bezek, or the Lord of Bezek. He had defeated many of the cities round about, and extended his power on every side, so that he was feared by the people of the land. He lived in great state in Bezek, and to show his power to all the world, he kept in his palace seventy kings whom he had conquered. He had cut off the thumbs and great toes of these kings to show that they had been defeated by Adoni-bezek (Judges 1:7), and could no longer go forth to battle.

But the mighty Adoni-bezek found the men of Judah too powerful for him to overthrow. Yahweh fought for them, and all the skill and prowess of Adoni-bezek and his Canaanites were in vain. Thoroughly defeated, he fled from the city, but was captured by the Israelites.

But then Israel made a sad mistake. Yahweh had commanded that they should utterly destroy all the Canaanites (Deut. 7:2). Joshua had given an example of what should be done to the wicked kings of the land, when he publicly executed those he had conquered (Joshua 8:29). Yahweh hated the wicked, sinful practices of the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:5-6), and knew that if they were not completely destroyed they would, in time, influence Israel to sin — the same as bad habits will affect us, if not ruthlessly suppressed.

But when the triumphant Israelites saw the glory of Adoni-bezek's court, and how he lorded it over the seventy mutilated kings he had conquered, they thought they would like to have a little glory of their own. They decided, therefore, to treat Adoni-bezek as he had treated the kings he had conquered. They cut off his thumbs, and his great toes, so that he could no longer draw a bow in war, or pursue his enemies. Then they brought him to Jerusalem (part of which they had conquered) that others might see him and praise them for their wonderful victory. There, Adoni-bezek remained until the day of his death.



In that way, the men of Judah took the glory of the victory to themselves. They compromised God's commands in keeping this king alive, and this one act of disobedience led to others, until Israel was overwhelmed by their enemies. Instead of valiantly attacking the Canaanites, and ridding the land of them, as they had the power to do (Judges 1:28), they put them to tribute, making them their slaves. God was displeased with this disobedience, and He allowed the Canaanites to gradually become powerful again. Sad to say, many of the towns which saw wonderful victories won by Joshua, were soon dominated by these enemies of Israel. Soon the Canaanites were putting the Israelites to tribute, and driving them from their inheritance (Judges 1:27-36).

These incidents of the past are recorded to teach valuable lessons. Believers have a battle to fight and a victory to win. It is against the Canaanitish enemies of sin and disobedience. If, through laxity, they compromise the commands of their Captain, they will be overcome of the enemy at the last. Their Joshua — the Lord Jesus — has made it possible for them to conquer, but to do so they must follow his instructions to the very letter; they must faithfully and courageously do battle under his flag. Paul reminds them of this when he wrote:

"Therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always, and watching with all perseverance . . ." (Eph. 6:13-18).

If this armour is used correctly a believer will not fail. In the battle of life that God has set them, they must not compromise His commands as did the men of Judah when they led Adonibezek to Jerusalem with his thumbs and great toes cut off. The rejoicing of Israelites, on that day, soon turned to ashes, when a few years later, those whom they had conquered, themselves brought Israel under the yoke.

Paul likened the walk in Christ to a warfare against the forces of the flesh in which the armour of faith is required.



Chapter Two

THE EARLY JUDGES

The Warning at Weepers (Judges 2:1-5)

As soon as the people of Israel sinned by compromising God's commands regarding the Canaanites their troubles began.

Nevertheless, Yahweh, who is very merciful, and bears long with His children (Psalm 103:8-14), sent a messenger* to warn them of the folly of their ways, and provide them opportunity to repent. The name of this messenger is not recorded. He came from Gilgal and went to a place afterwards named Bochim (meaning *Weepers*). Here he reminded the people that they had failed to carry out the terms of the agreement they had made with God (Judges 2:2-3), and warned them that they would be punished unless they changed their ways.

Gilgal means *rolling*. It was the place where God "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from the Israelites who had passed over the Jordan (Joshua 5:9). The fact that the messenger came from Gilgal could remind the people of that solemn occasion, and of their good intentions at that time.

The people hearkened to the messenger, and recognised how far they had departed from God. In sorrow of heart they wept bitterly, promising to change their ways. Because of this, the place was called Bochim, which means *Weepings*.

And, for a while, the repentant people exercised care, and all went well. But then they forgot their previous sorrow and weeping. They again took notice of the ways of the Canaanites in their midst, and gradually began to follow them in their wickedness. It was not long before the worship of Yahweh again was forsaken by many; and other gods, such as Baal and Ashtaroth were worshipped (Judges 2:13).

Othniel Delivers Israel from Cushan the Horrible (Judges 3:9-11)

The sin of Israel was followed by suffering. Yahweh permitted the land to be invaded. A large force of Syrians crossed the River Euphrates, and invaded the northern portions of Israel, destroying cities and murdering the inhabitants as they came. Down south

* The Hebrew word "malak" rendered "angel" in Judges 2:1 undoubtedly refers to a mortal messenger from Gilgal, and not an angel from heaven. The word is used for both mortal and immortal messengers and is frequently translated *messenger* as well as *angel*. See 1 Kings 19:2; Isa. 42:19; 2 Kings 6:32; Judges 6:35; 7:24, etc.

throughout the land they marched invading even the tribe of Judah. They were led by a cruel prince named Chushan-rishathaim, which means *Cushan The Blackness of the Double Wicked*. Through him Israel was made to drink the cup of bitterness. The people had deserted Yahweh, and now found themselves under a master who was harsh and unmerciful. For eight long and weary years, the Syrians ruled over Israel, causing the people to regret the way in which they had deserted God.

There were a few, however, who still remained faithful in Israel. Among these was the valiant Othniel, who had shown such courage and faith in taking the powerful fortress of Debir at the request of Caleb (*Story of the Bible* p. 144). With other faithful men he pleaded with the people to turn back to God, and seek His help. His words made a good impression. The people, wearied by the suffering and hardship they experienced under Cushan turned to Yahweh once more, pleading with Him to help them. A new spirit began to move among the Israelites. Encouraged by Othniel they reformed their ways. Meanwhile Othniel commenced making preparations to throw off the yoke of the Syrians. Guided by Yahweh, he called upon the people to follow him in war against the invader. An army was raised and Cushan the Double Wicked was met in battle. A great victory was won because Yahweh fought for His people. Israel had learned a lesson. The true worship was restored. Othniel was made Judge among them, and for forty years the land had rest.

Thus Israel went through the circle of SINNING, SUFFERING, SEEKING Yahweh, and finding His SALVATION.

How much trouble they would have saved themselves if they had not departed from His ways in the first place! How much trouble we will save ourselves if we learn that lesson!!

**Ehud Rids Israel
of Eglon the Fat
(Judges 3:12-30)**

Human memory is short, and a new generation arose that forgot the lessons of the past. Again the worship of Yahweh was forgotten, and idolatry reared its head. Again God was forced to punish His people for their good. In the land of Moab, east of the river Jordan, there arose a king who extended his power over the neighbouring countries of Ammon and Amalek, and now looked enviously towards the rich and fertile land of Israel. Perhaps he remembered the manner in which Israel had overthrown the Moabites under Moses, and decided he would avenge the defeat. In any case, he gathered an army together, crossed the River Jordan, and set up his power at the site of ancient Jericho (v. 13)*.

* The city of Palm trees (Judges 3:13) was in the valley of Jericho (Deut. 34:3).

From here he ordered that the people of Israel obey him. When they refused, he invaded the territory of Benjamin and Ephraim, plundering it until the people promised to obey him. He compelled them to pay him heavy tribute.

Thus SIN again led to SUFFERING; but when the people of Israel came to their senses, they found a merciful Yahweh ever ready to help.

Meanwhile, Eglon set up his palace in the Jordan valley, close to the portion of Israel he had conquered, and not far from his own country of Moab. He was a fat, burly man, who sat sprawled out upon his throne, whilst the princes of Israel were forced to humbly bow before him.†

Eighteen years of oppression and misery passed over a people who were blind to the benefits that obedience to God brings. At last their sufferings reached a stage when they were compelled to turn in desperation to God. And again in His mercy He raised up a deliverer for them.



Ehud delivering tribute to King Eglon before assassinating him in preparation for deliverance of Israel from the oppressing Moabites. Ehud's name means United or Strong. He proved to be strong and helped to unite his people.

† According to Josephus, the Jewish historian.

This was a young man called Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin. Like many others of his tribe (Judges 20:16), he was a left-handed warrior, a feature that brought him into prominence amongst his fellows. Although only young in years, he was recognised as a man of importance, and was selected to present to Eglon the rich tribute that Israel had to pay.

God was with Ehud. He put it into his mind to rid Israel of the hated Moabites, and particularly the fat, evil Eglon, their leader. He decided that he would attempt to assassinate him next time he took the tribute to him. At the same time he plotted with the tribe of Ephraim to assist in overthrowing the Moabites, and expelling them from the land. "When you hear the sound of the trumpet," he told them, "then know that Eglon is dead, and come, follow me".

Arming himself with a short dagger which he hid under his cloak, Ehud in company with his attendants, went to the court of Eglon, to offer him the tribute of Israel.

In the palace they were ushered into the presence of the king. He was surrounded with his attendants. There was no opportunity of using the dagger there! Somehow Ehud must get the king on his own. He presented the tribute to the king and with his companions was dismissed from the presence of the Moabites. The opportunity had not yet offered itself. The Israelites commenced to return to their homes, and reached a place called "The Quarries". As the name in Hebrew suggests, this was an enclosure where graven images were set up for worship. As Ehud saw these, he suddenly thought of a plan. He decided to return to Eglon, pretending to have an important message from the gods, that must be given to the king in secret. By such means he would get him on his own. Ehud had a reputation for prophecy,[‡] and believed he could get the king to listen to him.

Returning to the palace, Ehud found that Eglon had retired to his Summer Room. This was just what he wanted, for whilst such rooms were connected with the main residence, they had a separate entrance through which Ehud could make his escape, if his plan proved successful. The fat, unwieldy Eglon was reclining on a couch in this room, seeking some coolness in the hot, sultry atmosphere of the Jordan valley, surrounded by his attendants. He was surprised to see the young, active Israelite, whom he knew was a man of some importance among the people of the land. "I have a secret message for thee, O King!" explained Ehud.

On hearing this, the King commanded that he should be left

[‡] See Judges 3:17. Eglon means "young calf", and perhaps related to his fondness for food!

alone with Ehud. As soon as this was done, the Benjamite continued:

“The message I have comes from God!”

As he heard these mysterious words, Eglon arose from his couch. This was what Ehud desired. As the King approached to pay his respects to the prophet, and receive the message, Ehud’s left hand sought the dagger on his right side, and taking careful aim that he might slay the king with the least possible noise, he suddenly thrust it through the heart of the hated Moabite, killing him instantly. Then, quietly closing the doors of the Summer Room, as though the king were resting, and locking them, he calmly, without panic, made his escape.

Out of sight of the palace, he hastened to Seirath, a well-wooded part of the land where many men could hide. There he blew his trumpet, and was soon surrounded by the soldiers of Ephraim. “Follow me,” he commanded them, “for Yahweh hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand”. He led them past the camp of Moab, and to the fords of Jordan, that they might cut off the Moabites as they retreated from Israel to their own land.

In the palace, the attendants of Eglon impatiently waited for the King to summon them back into his presence. The doors were locked, and they thought he was resting. But time went on, and he made no appearance. They began to be alarmed. They remembered who last was with him. At last they decided to wait no longer. Getting a key they unlocked the doors, and there, lying full length upon the ground, was the body of the dead king in a pool of blood!

They knew what that meant! At any moment they would have the Israelites upon them. Fear took hold of them. The news of the murder passed from mouth to mouth. Soon the whole camp knew of it, and leaderless, the soldiers began to panic. They decided to retreat immediately, crossing the Jordan to their own land. Hastily packing their belongings, and retreating towards the fords of Jordan, they were suddenly surrounded by the soldiers of Ephraim, with the left-handed Benjamite at their head. A one-sided battle took place in which Israel won an easy victory. The Moabites were driven from the land, and for eighty years, Israel had rest.

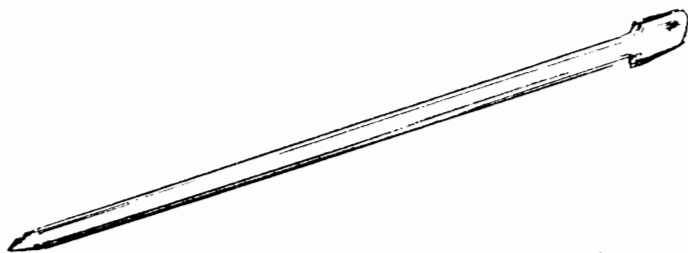
Once again SIN had brought SUFFERING, but the SEEKING Yahweh had resulted in SALVATION.

**How Shamgar
Punished the
Philistines with
his Ox-goad
(Judges 3:31)**

The invasion of the Moabites had involved the central eastern section of the Land of Israel, and it seems as though the Israelites in the west were not greatly affected. But now they suffered an invasion of a different kind. From the coastal town of Gath and its neighbouring cities, the Philistines began to oppress the Israelites. They took a delight in beating any Israelites whom they might see, and frightening the women. Soon the highways became deserted, because men feared to walk there. Instead they sought out secret paths that they might avoid the Philistines. Many villages also were deserted by their inhabitants. They never knew when a group of Philistine thugs might appear to vandalise their houses, and illtreat the inhabitants. Finally the Israelites retired to walled fortresses where they could find some protection (Judges 5:6-7).

But there was one man of faith and courage who refused to be frightened by the Philistines. He had great confidence in God, and worshipped Him in truth. His name was Shamgar. He was a farmer, a ploughman, who was used to driving his team of oxen with an ox-goad — a pike about eight feet long, sharpened at one end to prick the animal, whilst the other end was in the form of an iron spade for cleaning clay off the plough.

Wherever he went, Shamgar took his ox-goad. Not only did he boldly walk along the highways in spite of the Philistine bullies, but he waged a private war on them, seeking them out, and giving battle to them so effectively that soon he had destroyed some six hundred of them. Soon it was the Philistines who were avoiding the highways, for they feared Shamgar; and finally they were driven back to their own cities. The highways were safe once more for the people of western Israel, and they rested under the protection of Shamgar. Sin, suffering, supplication and salvation had again turned its circle.



The ox-goad was a rod about 8 feet (2½ m) long, sharpened to a point so as to prick the animal into activity. The wider end was often encased in iron, to clear a plow of clay. It could be a formidable weapon in the hands of a determined and courageous man.

Chapter Two

HOW TWO WOMEN HELPED TO DEFEAT A GREAT CAPTAIN AND A MIGHTY ARMY

Israel had enjoyed many years of peace and the people began to take it all for granted. Gradually they forgot how much they owed to Yahweh, and became lax in their worship. Soon they had drifted completely from His way, and were found seeking excitement in the unlawful worship of other gods.

Then their troubles began. As they turned from God, so He turned from them. Without Him to help they lacked power to defeat their enemies, and the latter were always ready to take the slightest advantage of Israel.

In the far north of Palestine, close to Lake Huleh where the Jordan has its source, there dwelt a king called Jabin, or *The Wise*. Joshua had earlier destroyed another king by the same name at this place, and who, like this second Jabin, was also head of a confederacy of nations§.

Jabin II had a very skilful commander, named Sisera or *War-like*, whom he set over his army. Sisera so organised and trained Jabin's forces, that in course of time, he conquered the Israelites and the surrounding nations. The pride of his army was some 900 chariots, armed with iron scythes, which protruding out from both sides of the wheels, cut down the enemy into whose midst they were driven.

Sisera became a familiar sight in the city of Harosheth, in the far north of Palestine. He was very imposing, as he returned home from his battles, standing upright in the leading chariot bringing with him the rich spoils of his conquests, including selected captives to act as slaves in his household. The people would applaud him, cheering him because of his success.

His conquests extended in all directions. His soldiers became fierce and brutal, and knowing that Sisera would protect them from any punishment, oppressed the people of Israel with great cruelty. Soon it became unsafe for Israelites to walk along the highways (Judges 5:6-7), and travellers had to use secret paths. The Canaanites, remembering how the Israelites had put them to tribute, now ill-treated them. The unprotected villages became

§ "Harosheth of the Gentiles" implies this. It indicates that Harosheth was the headquarters of a grouping of Gentile powers. See also Joshua 11:10.

deserted, and the people, in fear, flocked to the fortified cities, and the protection of their walls.

However, this suffering caused the people to remember the God they had deserted. Turning to Him again, they implored His help against the enemy.

God Calls Deborah to Help Israel (Judges 4:4-6)

And God provided help. In the southern part of the land, far from the headquarters of Sisera, in a city called Ramah, there dwelt a very faithful and courageous lady whose name was Deborah. This name signifies *A Bee*, and she was like a queen bee in the hive of Israel. She was saddened at the wicked ways of the people, and called upon them to return to the worship of Yahweh. In times of prosperity, the people did not heed her words, but now that they suffered, and daily their conditions became more horrible, they began to heed her words of wisdom. They realised that there was only one way out of their troubles: to turn to the God Whom they had neglected. This they did, and help was near to hand.

In Kedesh, a city of Naphtali, in the north of Palestine, close to where Sisera had his headquarters, there lived a faithful man whose name was Barak (*Lightning*). One day he received a most unexpected message from Deborah. He was told: "Yahweh of Israel has commanded that you go towards Mt. Tabor with an army of Israelites, and He will draw unto thee Sisera, his army, his chariots, and all his power, and he will be delivered into your hand" (Judges 4:6-7).

What a command! Barak knew that Israel was without adequate weapons to fight this powerful enemy (Judges 5:8); how then, would he be able to defeat Sisera? But he was a man of faith, an earnest believer in the God of Israel and, besides, the nation was desperate — something had to be done.

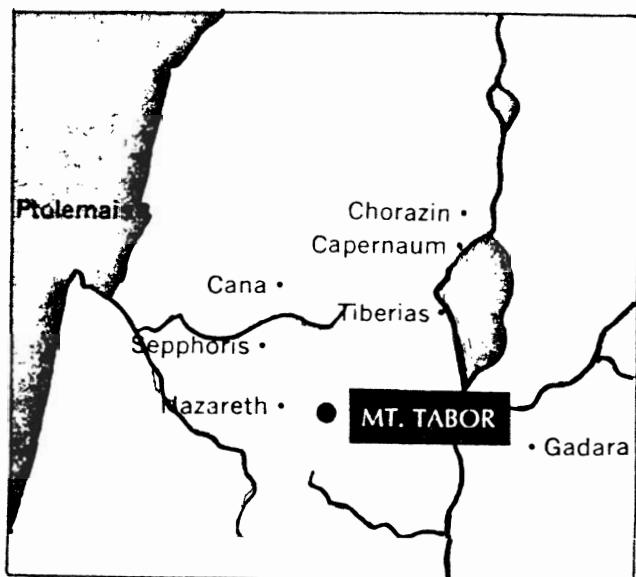
But Barak was timid and sought additional support. He was not prepared to go alone to the people. He also knew that Deborah was so respected by the people that they would heed her words. He therefore returned answer to say that he would only call the people together if Deborah came with him.

The reply came from Deborah: "I will go with you, but the journey shall not be for thine honour; Yahweh shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman".

The Call to Arms

From Kedesh, Deborah and Barak sent a joint summons to Israel, to have faith in God, and combine under Barak to destroy the power of Sisera and Jabin. As the heralds went from tribe to tribe with this mes-

sage, they were received in different ways. Naphtali (Barak's own tribe) and Zebulun instantly responded. They were closest to Sisera and had felt the oppression most. Chiefs of Issachar also presented themselves. The battle-cry of Benjamin was heard, and some of Ephraim and Manasseh answered the call (Judges 5:14). Barak soon found himself at the head of an army of determined Israelites, faithful men who were prepared to die for the cause. All classes of people were in his army, from military leaders to scribes not used to war, but who "handled the pen of the writer" (Judges 5:14).



Mount Tabor in the Valley of Esdraelon — Barak and Deborah with the lightly armed forces of northern Israel occupied its lower slopes immune from Sisera's chariots. Meanwhile Deborah arranged for Israelite support from the southern tribes including Benjamin. Their warriors took up their position behind the river Kishon, and in front of Taanach close to Megiddo. In attacking this challenge from the south, Sisera's chariots became bogged in the region of the Kishon, made swampy by a sudden cloud-burst, and were thoroughly defeated by the combined forces of the Israelites.

Sad to say, there were also many vacant places. Nothing was heard from Judah; Dan and Asher refused to leave their ships; the tribes east of the Jordan met by appointment on the banks of one of their swiftly flowing streams to consider the call of Deborah and Barak, and debated among themselves as to how they should answer it. Reuben decided against helping the cause, Gad and Manasseh followed this lead. The river was a natural barrier, and perhaps they thought that if they joined the revolt with Barak, and he was defeated, the powerful Sisera would invade

their fertile and flourishing territory, and bring them under the same reign of terror as the tribes in the west were suffering.

Sisera Hears of the Revolt

Nevertheless, a large company of men answered the call of Deborah and Barak, and gathered at Kedesh (a City of Refuge meaning *Sanctuary*) to consider their next move. They had very little to fight with, and they knew the strength of Sisera. But they had faith, and when they were told by Deborah that God desired them to go south to Mt. Tabor overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon, they marched forth from Kedesh for that purpose.

They were seen to go by Heber the Kenite. He dwelt not far from Kedesh, in a place called the Plain of Zaanaim meaning *The Oak of the Unloading of Tents*. Heber had no settled place of abode, no proper house, but with his family lived in tents. Under the Oak at Zaanaim, he had "unloaded his tent", and made his settlement. He was at peace with Sisera, and now, as he saw the men of Israel first flocking to Barak in Kedesh from all parts of the land, and then marching in military array south to Tabor, he sent and warned Sisera of the revolt.

That was what God required, for He had promised Deborah that He would draw Sisera down close to the town of Megiddo for destruction.

With grim pleasure Sisera heard Barak had led his forces to Mt. Tabor. This mountain overlooks the valley of Esdraelon; a wide, flat plain that leads in from the Mediterranean, ideally suited for chariot warfare. Sisera was certain that an easy victory would be his. Proudly, at the head of his nine hundred chariots, he drove from the city of Harosheth, accompanied by the cheers of the people confident in his success. Down the valley of Esdraelon drove the chariots of Sisera to halt opposite Mt. Tabor. Some ten thousand recruits from Naphtali and Zebulun had joined Barak and Deborah and occupied the easily defended slopes of Mt. Tabor (Judges 4:6). They dared not go down into the plain for they would be no match for Sisera and his formidable force of chariots.

Meanwhile, as arranged by Deborah, another force of Israelites was advancing from Ephraim, Benjamin and Issachar north to the town of Taanach close by Megiddo, adjacent to the River Kishon (Judg. 5:14-15). The presence of this hostile force was reported to Sisera, who with his well-armed forces, had no fear of the Israelites. Recognising that Barak was bottled up on the slopes of Tabor, he decided to move his mobile forces to meet the new threat at Taanach and Megiddo. He gave the order, and his chariots moved towards that area (Jud. 4:7). This took them to-

wards the River Kishon, and the marshy plain close to Megiddo and Taanach (Judg. 5:19). As he did so, black storm-clouds could be seen driving across the sky, blotting out the sun, to hang low and ominous in the heavens above.

How Sisera was Defeated

This was a sign from heaven that Deborah awaited (Jud. 5:20). She gave the order to attack, and the lightly armed Israelites on the lower slopes of Tabor moved swiftly and fearlessly towards the chariots of Sisera. Israel's defence was in Yahweh, not in the skill of its warriors, nor in their weapons of war. And now the sky above became most threatening. Black, heavy clouds hung low and menacingly over the land. The rumble of thunder echoed across the heavens, followed by angry flashes of lightning. Gradually, in the distance, there could be heard the noise of wind. Then, suddenly, the storm broke. The wing, developing into the strength of an hurricane, swept directly into the faces of the advancing Canaanites. From the heavens, the thunder crashed and roared, the lightning struck angrily down at the advancing chariots, the clouds poured out a frightening deluge of rain. It beat directly in the faces of Sisera and his forces, blinding them, leaving them to the mercy of the Israelites (Judges 4:15; 5:20-22, and Josephus).

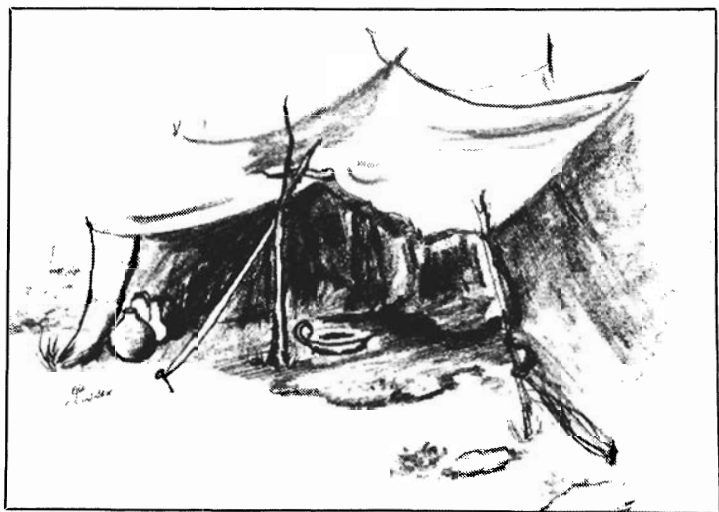
The heavy downpour of rain turned the brook Kishon into a raging torrent. Bursting its banks, the water spread over the surrounding plain, turning it into a sticky marsh, hopelessly bogging the heavy, iron chariots of the Canaanites. The roar of thunder, the unnatural darkness, the terrible downpour of rain, the bitter wind blown in the faces of horses and men, and the flooded river brought confusion and panic to men and animals alike (Judges 5:22). It allowed the lightly armed Israelites to leap on to the chariots, and successfully attack their enemies. The defeat of the Canaanites was complete. Panic-stricken, they left their chariots and arms, and fled in confusion from the awful scene, swiftly chased by the victorious Israelites. The pursuit took them past a town called Meroz. Here a messenger was sent by Barak calling upon the men to help complete the victory begun by Yahweh, but this assistance was refused. "Curse ye Meroz", declared Deborah later in the song she composed to commemorate the victory, "because they came not to the help of Yahweh against the mighty" (Judges 5:23). But though Meroz did not help, the whole of Sisera's forces was destroyed (Judges 4:16).

Sisera's Escape

Among those who fled was the great captain, Sisera. Slipping down from his bogged chariot, he sought to escape to some place where he might

hide from the wrath of the Israelites, and later build another army which he could lead to victory. He knew that it would be dangerous to return to Harosheth, along the way he had come, and therefore fled north towards the encampment of Heber whom, he hoped, might help him.

Sisera knew that Barak would try to capture him. He knew, also, that the Israelites would search the tents of Heber because he was friendly with Sisera. He therefore avoided Heber, and instead approached the tent of Jael, Heber's wife, to ask permission to hide in her tent. Men were not permitted in the tents of women, and he thought no one would think of looking for him there.



*The tent of Jael became
the scene of Sisera's doom.*

Tired, and depressed, and weak from want of food and the disappointment of his defeat, Sisera came to the tent of Jael. She came to the door and he pleaded with her to let him come in. Jael did so, inviting him to fear not. He then asked for some water, but instead Jael gave him some warm milk, and covering him with a blanket, she told him to rest. "Stand at the door of the tent," he told her. "And if anyone comes and asks if you have seen a man here, say no".

With that Sisera fell asleep, for he was tired out.

Terrible Death of Sisera

But Jael, taking a mallet in one hand, and a tent peg in the other, crept quietly up to the sleeping captain. Though the Kenites

were friendly with Jabin, Jael's sympathy was with Israel. She hated the arrogant Canaanites who had so terribly ill-treated the Israelites. In Sisera she saw the man responsible for all the violence and bloodshed that Israel had suffered for so many years. Lifting the mallet high, she dealt him a terrible blow on the head, and as Sisera rolled at her feet, fatally smitten, with blow after blow she drove the tent peg through his temples, so that he died.

She then fled from the tent to find Barak who was seeking for Sisera. "Come," she said to him, "and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest". Thus the glory of Sisera's defeat was taken from Barak and given to a woman, as Deborah had prophesied (Judges 4:9).

Meanwhile, in the city of Harosheth, the people were worried. It was long past the time when Sisera should have returned. They did not expect he would have any difficulty defeating the army of Israelites, which was mostly unarmed; but why did it take so long? In the palace of Sisera his mother awaited his triumphant return and wondered at the delay. "Why are his chariots so long coming?" she asked her worried companions, and then replied to her own question: "They must have waited to divide the spoil which we shall share when they return".

But soon the terrible news came to her of Sisera's defeat. Soon she learned that the power of Jabin was at an end. There was mourning in Harosheth when the results of the complete defeat of the powerful army of Canaanites became fully known.

Song of Deborah But there was joy in Israel. And the joy was celebrated in a wonderful song of victory sung by Deborah and Barak on that day of rejoicing (Judges 5:1). The song recalls the folly of Israel in following other gods (v. 8), the revival of faith in the land (vv. 9-12), the response that came to Barak's call to arms (vv. 13-15), the attitude of the faithless in Israel (vv. 15-17), the divine help that enabled Israel to gain a wonderful victory (vv. 18-22), the flight of the defeated army (v. 23), the death of Sisera (vv. 23-27), and the dismay in Harosheth (vv. 28-30). It concludes with the words: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Yahweh; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might" (v. 30).

The work of Deborah did not cease with this wonderful victory. She continued to judge Israel, wisely guiding the people so that "the land had rest forty years".

Chapter Three

GIDEON'S VICTORY OVER THE MIDIANITES

How Gideon Delivered Israel from the Midianites

It is usual for Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, together with their four children, and anyone else who may visit the home, to read the Bible each night. Usually the chapters selected are taken from *The Bible Companion*, a little book that lists daily readings of the Bible, so that a person reading therefrom covers the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice, during the course of a year.

When reading is finished, the family usually discusses what has been read. Often Mr. Phillips will tell the story again in his own words, whilst members of the family like to try and stump him with their questions.

The family had completed the reading of Judges 7 in the book-lined room which Mr. Phillips likes to call "the library", and where the family usually gathered after the evening meal.

"That is a dramatic chapter if ever there is one!" exclaimed Mr. Phillips, as Joan finished the last verse.

"It certainly is a wonderful example of faith", remarked Graeham.

"It is more than that," replied his father. "It is not only a story of faith, presenting an example to us, but it is also prophetic of the future".

"In what way is that?" asked Peter.

"The destruction of the Midianites by Gideon is used by the prophets as typical of Christ's coming victory at Armageddon," explained his father.

"What prophet are you referring to, Daddy?" asked Ann.

"In addition to other places, Gideon's victory is referred to in Isaiah 9:4; 10:26 and Hosea 1:11" replied Mr. Phillips. "But to understand all these examples correctly, we must first study the incident as it actually occurred".

The Midianites Invade Israel

"The first point we notice", continued Mr. Phillips, "is the cause of the trouble. Israel had sinned (Judges 6:1). They had departed from the true worship, and as a result, they suffered. As we have seen before, sinning always brings suffering.

"Perhaps Israel thought they had nothing to fear, for the last of the Canaanites had been subdued in the defeat of Sisera. They grew careless of God, and their troubles came from a different source. East of the Jordan dwelt the Midianites. They had joined with Moab in hiring Balaam against Israel, and Moses had waged war against them, destroying their kings and subduing the people (Num. 31:8). Now, having grown strong again, they sought opportunity to avenge what they then suffered. They decided to invade the land of Israel. Gorgeously robed Arabs of lordly and pagan appearance swarmed over the border, ruthlessly suppressing the people, holding them in a thalldom of fear and terror (Judges 6:2-5; 8:24-26). They were ruled by two kings called Zebah and Zalmunna, together with two inferior princes named Oreb and Zeeb, whose names signify *The Raven* and *The Wolf*."

"What do the names Zebah and Zalmunna mean?" asked Peter.

"Zebah means *Sacrificial slaughter*, Zalmunna means *Defence has been denied*," replied his father.

"What would those two names signify?" asked Ann.

"In using those names, the two kings were proclaiming that Israel would be given to slaughter like a sacrifice, because they had no defence," answered Mr. Phillips.

"Didn't the Israelites try to fight them?" asked Joan.

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips. "It seems as though there was a battle fought at Mt. Tabor, where Barak had his victory but on this occasion Midian prevailed and Israel was defeated (Judges 8:18; 6:2). Now, thousands of Midianites entered the land. They were seen riding on their camels, from way up in the north to down south at Gaza (Judges 6:5). Everywhere they went they brutally illtreated the Israelites. They burnt down cities, ransacked houses for spoil, murdered people, destroyed crops. So terrible were the conditions in the towns and cities that the people fled from them to the dens and caves in the mountains to hide from their oppressors. (Judges 6:2-5).

At last, in their misery, they remembered the One Whom they had forgotten. He is Yahweh, the God and Protector of Israel. Finally, in the fullness of their suffering, 'Israel cried unto Yahweh' for help (Judges 6:6). He sent them a prophet who reminded the people of the mighty acts of God in the past, and showed them the cause of their present miseries (vv. 7-10).

Gideon Selected As a Deliverer

"Among the notable men of Manasseh," continued Mr. Phillips, "there was one called Joash who lived at Ophrah. He had suffered terribly from the oppression of the Midianites. All his

sons, except one, had been slain at the battle of Tabor (Judges 8:18), so that his family was now looked upon as ‘the meanest in Manasseh’ (Judges 6:15). The cause of this disaster was not hard to seek. The house of Joash had become a centre of idolatry (Judges 6:27). Only one in his family stood out against this wickedness. It was his remaining son, Gideon.

“One day, as Gideon was threshing wheat secretly to hide it from the Midianites, an angel suddenly appeared unto him. ‘Yahweh is with thee, thou mighty man of valour’, declared the angel.

“Gideon could not understand the meaning of this greeting. ‘If He be with us’, he replied, ‘why is Israel so downtrodden? why does He not perform a miracle and save us? Yahweh has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites’.

“There was no need for the angel to answer such questions. Gideon should have realised the cause of Israel’s sufferings. So all the angel did was to steadily gaze at Gideon, until he was ashamed. Though he did not worship the pagan gods, the very place where he was threshing wheat was the headquarters of Baal worship in the district (cp. Judges 6:11,25). Such wickedness was the cause of Israel’s troubles.

“The angel then told him that he had been appointed to save Israel, and that God would bless him with victory (vv. 14-16).

“But Gideon was not satisfied. Though he now realised that the angel was a messenger of heaven, he desired a sign to prove that God would really be with him. The angel gave him a sign. Gideon had prepared a meal and set it out upon a rock, and the angel touched it with his staff. Immediately, before the startled gaze of Gideon, fire came out of the rock and consumed the flesh and bread as a burnt offering. When Gideon, in amazement, turned around to the angel, he found that he had vanished out of his sight. Now his astonishment turned to fear. He knew the wickedness of Israel and his own father’s house. He was afraid that the presence of the angel might destroy him. But God comforted Gideon, and instructed him what to do.

Yahweh’s Altar Again Set Up

“Not far from Ophrah there was a large altar built to Baal. God would not deliver Israel until this was destroyed, and the worship of Yahweh set up instead. The first work of Gideon was to do this. Fearing the anger of his father’s household, and the men of the city, he decided to do it at night. That very night, when all was still and quiet, he took ten of his trusted servants, a young bullock to help with the work (Judges 6:25, margin), another one of seven years old that, it seems, the people had re-

served for some Baal ceremony, to be offered as a sacrifice. With the first bullock he hauled down the altar of Baal, and the wooden image of the goddess* that stood above it. Then, with his servants, he built an altar of unhewn stones on the top of the rock, and called it Yahweh-Shalom, meaning: *He who will be Peace*".

"Why did he call it that?" interrupted Peter.

"Because only in the true worship of Yahweh can there be peace," explained his father. "If the people sought God, He would give them peace from their enemies".

"I remember you once telling us that the altars pointed forward to Jesus Christ," said Graeham. "That would apply to this altar I suppose?"

"Certainly," replied his father. "The Apostle Paul styles the Lord as 'our altar' (Heb. 13:10). Through Him, we can attain peace of mind if we worship Yahweh in truth (John 14:27). Through Him, also, will peace finally come to this world at his second coming, when it "learns righteousness" (Isa. 32:17). He will then be known throughout the world as 'the Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9:6)".

"Judges 6 verses 24 and 26 read as though Gideon built two altars," said Ann, who was studying the chapter carefully.

"It does read like that at first sight," agreed her father. "But when you study it a little more carefully, it appears that only one altar was built. Verse 24 says that Gideon built the altar, and verses 25-27 show how he went about it. I believe he only built the one altar. I cannot see any reason for two altars in the same place!"

Gideon Incurs the Wrath of the Israelites

"Having built the altar," continued Mr. Phillips, "Gideon then offered the second bullock, as a sacrifice. He chopped down the wooden goddess the people had erected, and used it as fire-wood on the altar. Having laboured all night to make atonement for his people, he returned home to await the events of the next day.

"What a surprise the men of Ophrah received next morning! The altar of Baal lay smashed upon the ground, and in its place on the rock elevation, was another altar built with unhewn stones. On this altar a sacrificial bullock smouldered on the ashes of the image of their goddess. They knew who was responsible for this! Gideon was known for his stern opposition to their

* "The Hebrew word *Asherah*, which is uniformly and wrongly translated 'grove', most likely denotes the wooden symbol of a goddess." — Preface to Revised Version. The worship of such was most crude and evil.

pagan ways! They determined to punish him. Angrily they made their way to the house of Joash, and demanded: 'Bring out your son that he may die'.

"But Joash was not prepared to comply. He had no real respect for Baal, and Gideon was his last remaining son. He reasoned with the people that if Baal was really a god, he ought to be able to look after himself. He argued that those who wanted to take revenge on Gideon should themselves be punished, for by so doing they implied that Baal had no power to defend himself! (Judges 6:31). The people recognised that this was reasonable. They pleaded for Baal to act, and when he did not (for, of course he could not!), they acknowledged that it was vain and foolish to worship so helpless a god!

"Gideon, whose name means *Great Warrior*, was now called Jerubbaal, which means *Contender with Baal*. He had shown himself to be a great warrior in the fight of faith; he was now about to show himself as a great warrior against the enemies of Israel. He was given a third name: Jerubbesheth, which means *Contender or Against Confusion and Shame*' (2 Sam. 11:21). He fulfilled this name by overthrowing idolatry and restoring the true worship of Yahweh.

Midian Prepares for War

"Meanwhile, the work of Gideon did not go unnoticed. The Midianites heard of it, and fearing that Israel had found a leader who could help them to successfully revolt, they gathered a huge army together in the valley of Jezreel. They had cause to be afraid! The spirit of god had come upon Gideon, filling him with courage and stirring him to action. He saw that the time was ripe to attack the enemy. He sounded the trumpet of war, inviting people to assemble together to fight against the Midianites, but only his own family answered the call. He then sent messengers throughout his own tribe, but only few responded. Finally he sent to the tribes close at hand, and gained a few more supporters.

"This tardy response was discouraging. Was he taking the proper steps to resist the Midianites? Gideon asked God for another sign, to confirm the action he had taken. He put out a fleece of wool requesting that if his action were in conformity with the Divine will, that next morning it be wet with dew whilst the ground around it remained dry. The sign was given. Next morning as he requested, he was able to wring the dew out of the fleece although the ground round about it was completely dry. The following morning the sign was reversed. The fleece remained dry whilst the ground was wet with heavy dew. Gideon knew that God was with him".

“What is the meaning of the sign?” asked Ann.

“We are not told,” replied her father, “but we know that sheep represent Israel. The shorn fleece, therefore, could represent Israel in a forlorn state, whilst the dew thereon could teach that the Divine blessing would yet be granted it (see Deut. 32:2).

On the same basis, the dew on the ground (the second sign) could represent that the prosperity of the Gentiles was a work of God, and therefore could be withdrawn. Again, the sign could apply to Gideon himself. With the blessing of God, he remained cool in the heat all around like the fleece in the first sign; or, to take the second sign, he remained dry when all around him were damp with fear”.



Gideon is given a sign from Yahweh. His task was a formidable one: 300 men to defeat 135,000 Midianites — but the sign showed the warrior that Yahweh was with him.

**The 300 Heroes
of Gideon's Army
— Judges 7**

“Meanwhile, some 32,000 Israelites had gathered unto Gideon. With him at their head they marched to the Well of Harod, not far from where the Midianitish army was encamped on the northern side of the valley of Jezreel, by the hill of Moreh. Upon the lower slopes of Gilboa, behind the well of Harod, Gideon could see the huge army of the Midianites, some 135,000 in number.

They outnumbered their opponents more than four to one! Many of the Israelites were convinced that they had joined a hopeless cause, and became frightened at the outcome. They began to panic, and so illustrated the meaning of the Well behind which they were gathered; for Harod signifies *Trembling*, and that described the state of many of Gideon's supporters at that moment!

"But Yahweh declared to Gideon, 'The people that are with you are too many for Me to give you the victory, lest Israel say, mine own hand hath saved me'.

"He commanded Gideon to follow the instructions for the conduct of war, as are set down in Deuteronomy 20:8. This required that the commander address the army and invite those who are fearful or afraid (the faithless and cowards) to return home. Gideon obeyed Yahweh's request, and the result was disheartening. No less than 22,000 soldiers deserted from the ranks of Israel, leaving a mere 10,000 to face the 135,000 well-armed Midianites!

"Imagine how discouraging it would be to those who remained to see such a large number as twenty-two thousand troops march away! And then to compare the size of the army that remained with the huge number of the enemy in the valley!

"But even these were too many for Yahweh!

"Gideon was told to take his followers down to the well to drink, and to observe how they did so. Those who calmly lifted the water to their mouths with cupped hands, and lapped it up like a dog does, with eyes alert and senses keen were to be set on one side; and those who rashly went on their knees, and placed their heads straight in the water to drink, blind or indifferent to their danger, were to be put on the other side. By that means the rash and ignorant were removed from the army of Gideon, and Yahweh said He would save Israel with the remainder.

"But when this test had been applied Gideon found that his army was reduced to 300 men!

"What tremendous courage and faith those 300 men must display!

"And victory was to be obtained without the use of any weapons!

**Fear in the Camp
of Midian**
— vv. 9-14

"With his forces so reduced Gideon was about to learn the truth of Psalm 33:16: 'There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength . . . Behold, the eye of Yahweh is upon them that fear Him, to deliver their soul from death . . .'

“Gideon, was invited to take his armour-bearer, Phurah, and creep down to the Midianitish camp and review the situation. In the dead of night, the two men did so, cautiously making their way to the outskirts of the camp where the enemy warriors were sleeping. The closer they approached, the clearer did they see how difficult was the task before them. The Midianites ‘were along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude’ (Judges 7:12).

“What could 300 men do against such an army!

“As they, hidden by the darkness of the night, quietly observed the strength of the enemy, Gideon and Phurah heard two soldiers speaking together in one of the tents. One was describing a strange dream he had had: ‘I dreamed that a cake of barley bread tumbled into the army of Midian, and hit a tent so that it overturned and fell’. Such an omen could mean only one thing. Already, though unaccountably, many in that huge army were fearful. Now the dreamer’s companion gave voice to his fears: ‘This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, a man of Israel. It means that God has delivered Midian into his hand’ he declared (v. 14).

“Crouching by the tent in the darkness of the night, Gideon was encouraged by this conversation. He realised that God was already working among the Midianites, and would deliver them into his hand. Gratefully he gave thanks to God, deciding to return to his waiting men, and to instantly order the attack as directed by God (v. 9).

Attack in the Night

“First Gideon divided the men into three companies, the better to encircle the army of Midian. To each soldier he gave a trumpet and an empty pitcher with a lighted torch inside. Then, at the ‘beginning of the middle watch’ (v. 19), that is at midnight, he led his tiny army quietly down towards the sleeping, Midianitish camp. Waiting until the sentries were newly changed, Gideon gave the signal. Immediately, as instructed, his soldiers started up from all sides of the camp, blowing the trumpets, smashing the pitchers, and shouting the war cry: ‘*The sword of Yahweh, and of Gideon*’. The sleeping Midianitish army was suddenly and fearfully awakened by this terrible commotion. They heard the blasts of the trumpets, the clashing of the smashed pitchers, they saw the sudden light of 300 torches, and trembled at the terrible shout of Israel: ‘*Cheran Yahweh Oolegideon!*’ (The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon). The Midianites, already troubled by dreams and omens, awoke to panic. The noise seemed to come from all sides. Fear gave way to confusion, disorder, dismay and panic. The Midianites ‘ran, and cried, and fled’

(v. 21). Believing themselves trapped, in the darkness of the night they could not distinguish friend from foe, and in confused fear turned their swords on each other. The slaughter was great as men lost all reasoning power and fought their way to be free. What remained of the huge army fled in panic from the awful scene eastwards across the Jordan.

“Now others joined in the attack. Men from the nearby tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Manasseh drove the disorganised Midianites eastward towards Bethbarah (“*The House of the Ford*” v. 24) at the Jordan where there were means to cross over the river. But other Israelites had made their way there. Gideon had sent a message to Ephraim appealing for help, and they had laid an ambush at Bethbarah. In the fighting that took place there, Oreb and Zeeb, (the *Raven* and the *Wolf*), the two lesser princes of Midian, were slain.

“However, some thousands of Midianites escaped and fled eastwards up the steep hills and down the deep valleys of Gilead. Though weary with long hours of tension and lack of sleep, Gideon, in faith, maintained the chase ‘faint but pursuing’ (Judges 8:4). He appealed to the men of Succoth, on the east of Jordan for help, but they refused, saying: ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand that we should help you?’ They showed indifference and contempt for the work of Yahweh. Gideon replied: ‘When Yahweh has delivered them into my hand, I will thresh your flesh with the thorns and briars of the wilderness’ (Jud. 8:7).

“He next appealed to the men of Penuel for help, but they repulsed him as well. They put their confidence in a great tower that formed part of the defence of their city, and which they believed would afford them protection from the enemy. Gideon had an answer for them as well. ‘When I come again to this place in peace, I will break down this tower,’ he warned.

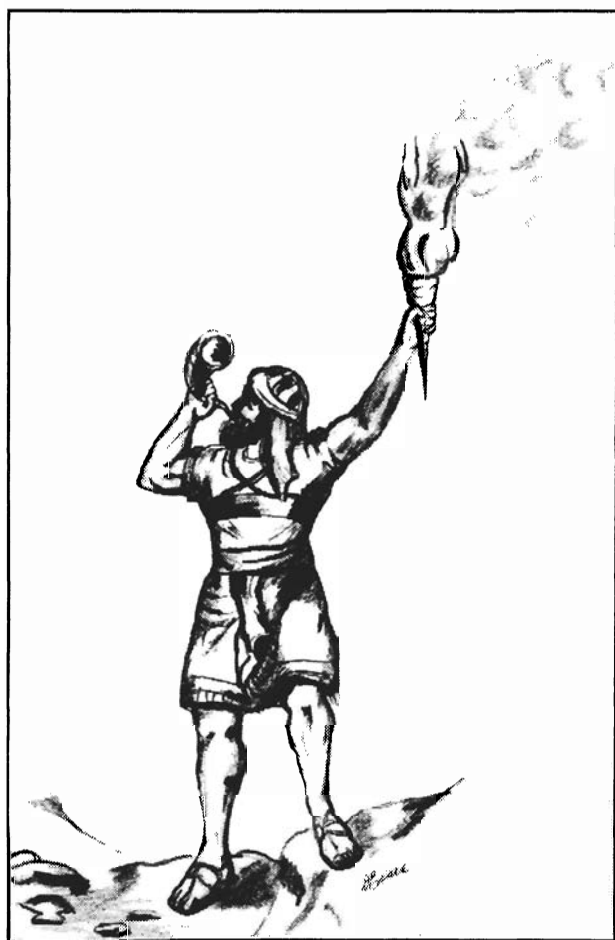
“The refusal of Succoth and Penuel to help allowed Zebah and Zalmunna to escape to a place called Nobah, about fifty miles east of the Jordan (Judges 8:11). Here they imagined they were safe*. But suddenly Gideon was on them. A battle was fought at a place called *The Ascent of Heres*†. The Midianites were completely defeated; Zeba and Zalmunna were captured to be taken back to Israel, and there executed because of their great cruelty to the people.

Israelites Punished “Fearfully the men of Penuel and Succoth saw the valiant Gideon return with the mighty Midianitish kings as his captives. What now of their faith-

* Judges 8:10 declares that they were “in Karkor”, but Karkor means *rest* and is so rendered in this place in some versions: “The army rested...”

† Judges 8:13 according to Revised Version.

lessness and cowardice! How they must have regretted their foolish words. Gideon broke down the tower of Penuel, and punished the leaders of both the cities for their folly in opposing the work of Yahweh.



Gideon's battle cry Cheran Yahweh Oolegidon — The Sword of Yahweh and of Gideon awoke the Midianites from their sleep, but to defeat and death.

“On arriving back home‡ he was met with another challenge. The leaders of Ephraim (one of the largest tribes) challenged him because he had not called them first to the battle. They were angry with him, and instead of thanking him for the deliverance that he had won in faith and courage, they denounced him for

‡ The protest of Ephraim, recorded in the beginning of Chapter 8, most likely occurred after Gideon returned from the capture of the kings. It is placed in its present order to complete the details relating to Ephraim.

acting as he did without conferring with them. But the valiant Gideon was equal to the occasion. The Bible says that ‘a soft answer turneth away wrath’. Instead of quarrelling, Gideon overcame the jealousy of the leaders of Ephraim by publicly commending them for the way they had fought, and for capturing the two princes of Midian. This, he said, completed the notable victory that had been won that day. The leaders of Ephraim could hardly remain angry when their work was thus praised, and so left off their complaints.

“By this diplomatic action, Gideon showed himself to be a great warrior indeed, for the Bible declares: ‘Greater is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city’. His actions, not only provide lessons of faith and courage, but of tact as well. Something we would all do well to learn.

Gideon’s Weakness

“Gideon’s wonderful victory, and great act of faith, caused the people to view him with great respect. In reward, they offered him something they had offered to no other: ‘Become our king and rule over us’, they invited him.

“Gideon refused. ‘I will not reign over you, neither shall my son reign over you’, he answered. ‘Yahweh shall rule over you!’ (Judges 8:23).

‘However, he did make an unfortunate mistake. He asked the men to give to him the golden ornaments they had taken from the Midianites, and with these he made an Ephod of great value which he put in his city of Ophrah. He never intended it to lead the people astray; but it did! They came to revere it more than the worship of Yahweh, and this was offensive to God. This glorious Ephod, and all that it meant, ‘became a snare unto Gideon and to his house’ (Judges 8:27). It is very sad to read this, for we like always to admire our heroes. The Bible reveals that all great men have their moments of weakness. It sets forth human nature as it really is, teaching us the need for care. It shows the importance of following God and not man, no matter how wise and good the latter might appear. We are safe if we hearken to God and heed His word.

“Gideon continued to act as judge in Israel, and the nation enjoyed quietness for forty years (v. 28). At the end of that time, Gideon died, to await the reward that will be his at the coming of the Lord Jesus of whom he was a type”.

Gideon A Type of Jesus Christ

“Why do you say that Gideon was a type of Jesus Christ?” asked Graham as his father paused.

“Because the victory of Gideon is referred to in the prophets as typical of Christ’s coming victory at Armageddon,” answered his father. “I have already given you the references: Isaiah 10:26; 9:4; Hosea 1:11, etc. There are many points of resemblance to the Lord Jesus in Gideon’s life”.

“What are they?” asked Peter.

“Here are a few points, and you will soon find more if you search these chapters of Judges,” replied his father.

“(1) He was faithful to Yahweh at a time of wickedness — so was the Lord at his first advent.

“(2) He incurred the wrath of the men of his city because he opposed their worship of Baal — the Lord incurred the wrath of Israel by opposing their worship.



*In the dead
of night, Gideon
and his ten
helpers tore down
the heathen idol,
and put an altar
to the God
of Israel.*

“(3) He laboured all night to overthrow the altar of Baal and set up again the Altar of Yahweh — so the Lord has laboured, through his Ecclesia, during the period of Gentile power, called by him “night” (John 9:4; 12:35).

“(4) The dawning of a new day (Judges 6:28) found the people asking the meaning and purpose of the Yahweh Altar — and the second advent of Christ, the dawning of a new “Day” for the world (Mal. 4:1-2), will find Israel doing the same in relation to he who is our Altar (Zech. 13:6; Heb. 12:10).

“(5) The army of Gideon, by which he destroyed the combined forces of Midian, had all the faithless, the cowards, and the rash first removed from it — and at Christ’s coming he will judge his household and select those worthy of life eternal. Into their hands, the powers of the Gentiles will be given (Psa. 149:5-9).

“(6) The Midianites, moved by fear and panic, turned their weapons on each other — so will the forces of the Russian Gog at Armageddon (Ezek. 38:21).

“(7) Gideon was despised by many in Israel (among them being Ephraim, Succoth and Peniel) but they were ultimately forced to submit to him — so it will be with Israel after the flesh at Christ’s coming.

“(8) Gideon was asked to be king — so also will Christ at his coming.

“(9) Gideon organised the priesthood — so also will Christ at his coming.

“These are a few aspects of Gideon’s life that type the Lord Jesus Christ”, concluded Mr. Phillips. “But the time is late. I suggest you carefully read these chapters again looking for other points of resemblance. You then will see what I mean”.

“Before you leave off, Daddy,” said Ann, “What is an Ephod?”

“The Ephod was part of the beautiful garments worn by the high priest of Israel,” explained her father. “Exodus 28:6-35 records the directions given by Moses for the making of such garments. In front of the Ephod was placed the breastplate containing the twelve wonderful gems representative of the tribes of Israel. As Gideon used the wealth taken from the Midianites to make an Ephod it must have been a very beautiful and costly garment indeed”.

“Did Gideon use it as a priest?” asked Peter.

“It does not say so,” replied his father. “The headquarters of the High-Priest at that time was at Shiloh, but as the altar called *Yahweh Shalom* had been built at Ophrah, Gideon perhaps arranged for the High-Priest to go to that city sometimes and officiate at the altar. An Ephod would be required on such occasions, and Gideon provided it. Whatever the motive, the rich garment became a snare to Gideon and his house”.

“In what way did it do so?” asked Graeham.

“We are not told,” replied his father. “Such things have a habit of becoming a snare, however. People worship symbols of God rather than God Himself. Later in Israelitish history we learn how the Temple became a snare to Israel. They gloried in it rather than in Yahweh to Whose glory it was built. As a result, God sent the Babylonians against Israel, and the Temple was destroyed. Men glory in external things, such as the show of wealth, or a large following, but the story of Gideon warns against such folly. But now the time is really late, and I have work to do. We must leave it there”.

Chapter Five

ABIMELECH — THE BRAMBLE KING (Judges 9)

Gideon's actions manifested faith and courage of the highest degree, but his successor introduced a state of idolatry, wickedness and base ingratitude. The circumstances show how short are the memories of men; how soon they forget a kindness that is done to them; how quick they are to do evil.

We learn with shock that following the death of Gideon, the people turned from the true worship of Yahweh, and made Baal-berith (*The Lord of the Covenant*) their god. They had forgotten what God had done for them, "nor did they shew kindness unto the house of Gideon, according to the good he had done them" (Judges 8:35). The full measure of their wickedness is revealed in the story of Abimelech. It is a record of gradual but increasing wickedness. It concerns God's people, illustrating that though a person may claim to be motivated by His Word, the genuineness of his interest is revealed by his actions. Israel was led astray by violent and evil leaders. They turned from God, and the people suffered in consequence.

Gideon had several wives, and a large family of seventy sons. He also had a concubine, or lesser wife, from whom he had another son who was named Abimelech. Abimelech means *My Father is a King*. Perhaps this lesser wife gave her son that name, to assert his claim to be descended from Gideon, particularly because he was the son of a concubine.

Abimelech developed what is today called an "inferiority complex". He imagined that men despised him because his mother was a concubine; and he felt awkward and out of place in the presence of his more legitimate half-brothers. In reaction to this he began to unduly assert himself, and act the part of a bully. Many people — both young and old — act like that.

Abimelech Seeks the Kingdom

Abimelech grew to hate his brothers. As soon as his father was dead, he returned to Shechem, the home-town of his mother, and secretly conspired with his relations to seize power in Israel. He urged them to seek the support of others, reminding them that it is better for one man to rule than for seventy. He also

reminded them that he was their relation. "You help me," he promised, "and when I come to power, I will promote you".

The men of Shechem fell in with his schemes. They gave Abimelech seventy pieces of silver out of the treasure house of their god, and with this money he hired worthless and evil men who followed him (Judges 9:4). He thus became the leader of larrikins in Israel, acting in a brutal and bullying way towards others.

First of all, he sent his followers to round up the seventy sons of Gideon. These he brutally murdered upon a rock, probably by flinging them from a high cliff, and so dashing them to pieces. One escaped, a young boy by the name of Jotham.

Abimelech next demanded the kingship. He had shown how bloodthirsty and brutal he could be by the horrible murder of Gideon's sons, and the men of Shechem now feared him. They readily agreed to make him king, and arrangements were made for a great ceremony to be conducted under an oak tree in Shechem*.

The place selected was a most important one, of hallowed memory in Israel; but nothing was sacred to the leader of the larrikins. It was the place where Abraham had first been promised the land after entering it (Gen. 12:6); where Jacob buried the household gods found among his family (Gen. 35:4); where the tribes had assembled to recite the blessings and curses of the Law when they first entered the land under Joshua (Joshua 8:30); and where they entered into solemn agreement to serve Yahweh (Josh. 24:1,26). Now this rabble gathered under the tree that had witnessed the last duties of the noble Joshua, to elect this brutal murderer as their king!

Jotham Mocks Abimelech

But Jotham, the young boy who had escaped, heard of their intentions. This remaining son of Gideon had inherited the courage of his father. He determined to challenge the claims of Abimelech. Unknown to the people stationed below at Shechem, he climbed to the top of a high mountain that overshadowed the city below. Shechem is in a lovely valley overshadowed by two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal, mounts of Blessing and Cursing. The site is so formed that a shouted voice will echo clearly through the long valley beneath. Above where the ancient city was situated there is a prominent cliff that rises abruptly from the slopes below. Perhaps it was from this steep cliff that the other sons of Gideon had been flung to their death. If Jotham selected this place from whence to shout his message,

* (Judges 9:6 — Margin). The "plain of the pillar" should be rendered the *oak* of the pillar.

he would clearly have been both seen and heard by the people below, and yet, at the same time, would be safe from capture at their hands.

The mocking voice of Jotham echoed down the valley:

"Listen to me, you men of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. Once the trees went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I give up my rich oil, with which God and men are honoured, to solicit the trees for my promotion?' Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and reign over us!' But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I give up my good sweet fruit, to solicit the trees for my promotion?'"

"They then asked the vine, but also in vain: 'Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man to be promoted over the trees?'"

"Last of all they asked the bramble. The bramble agreed to be



Shechem where Abimelech set up his power was between the mounts of Gerizim and Ebal shown above.

king, so long as the trees bowed down to it; if not, fire would come from the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon".

As the now silent people watched and listened from below, the mocking voice of Jotham paused. He continued to show that his parable was also a prophecy:

"If you have done truly and sincerely in making Abimelech king, and if you have done well to Gideon and his house, and as he would desire you to do (for my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; and you have risen up against his house and have murde-

red his sons, and have made Abimelech, the son of his handmaid, king because you are related to him), then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him rejoice in you. But if you have done evil, then let fire come out from Abimelech and devour you all”.

The voice ceased, and as suddenly Jotham was gone. He fled across the Jordan where he could safely hide. Meanwhile, the interruption had robbed Abimelech of any pleasure in the ceremony. He and his followers clearly understood the parable. Whereas Gideon could be likened to the olive, fig and vine, ministering to the benefit and pleasure of Israel, but refusing the kingship, he, Abimelech had been likened to the bramble that having nothing useful to do, eagerly grasped the chance to rule. Before all the people he had been called “the son of Gideon’s handmaid!” How he hated Jotham!

But though they understood the parable, the listening men may not have recognised that it was prophetic. However, they were soon to learn. God was using Abimelech to punish His people who had so basely deserted His way.

Friction in the Kingdom of Abimelech

For three years all went well for Abimelech. Then God sent “an evil spirit” between him and his friends (Judges 9:23).

This was the beginning of punishment that finally destroyed both Abimelech and the men of Shechem. When the Bible says that “God sent” this spirit, it means that He allowed circumstances to arise which destroyed the confidence of the Shechemites in Abimelech, causing dissension to rise between them, so that each became prone to take offence. Heated arguments arose between the loutish king and the larrikins he led. They, in turn, tired of his rule, determined that they would kill him as he had killed his half-brothers.

Meanwhile, Abimelech left Shechem, leaving Zebul his officer in charge. The larrikins of the city used his absence as an opportunity to revolt. They set up one of their fellows called Gaal, the son of Ebed* as their leader. Then they arranged an ambush outside the city with instructions to murder Abimelech if he returned. However, much of their time was spent in robbing travellers who passed that way (Judges 9:25). It became unsafe for people to travel on the roads by Shechem.

Conditions were even worse in the city itself. Gaal and his men gave themselves over to the most abandoned pleasures. Making themselves drunk with wine, they sent into the house of their god, feasting and cursing Abimelech. “Who is Abimelech?”

* “Gaal” signifies “loathing”, and “Ebed” means “a servant”. This name indicates the ignoble status of this leader of larrikins, who turned traitor to his master.

boasted the drunken Gaal, "If I were ruler I would soon deal with him! Let him increase his army and come and fight!"

Gaal's words were heard by Zebul, Abimelech's officer, who sent messengers privately to Abimelech to warn him of the threatened revolt. He told the bramble king to attack the city, and restore his authority that very night.

Civil War

Abimelech did not delay. He was not lacking in courage. Travelling by night from Arumah (v. 41) about 6 miles (10 kilometres) from Shechem, Abimelech divided his army into four companies and hid them in the hills overlooking Shechem where he could see what was happening below. Early in the morning, Gaal came out of the city with his men, followed by Zebul. This was Abimelech's opportunity. Ordering his men to conceal themselves as much as possible, he led them down the hill. Gaal saw some movement, but could not quite make out what it was. Turning to Zebul, he said: "There come people down from the top of the mountains". But Zebul replied: "You are seeing shadows as if they were men". As Abimelech's men came along the valley at the foot of the two mountains, Gaal could plainly see that they were men and not shadows. "They are men!" he exclaimed to Zebul. Zebul replied: "These are the people against whom you boasted! Go out and fight them!"

Gaal did so. At the head of his forces he emerged to meet the advancing Abimelech. As he did so, Zebul shut the gates of Shechem to prevent him returning. The battle raged all day, but Abimelech prevailed. The followers of Gaal tried to get back into Shechem, but the gates were closed, and they were slaughtered in front of the walls. Within the city a battle was also raging between Zebul and other followers of Gaal. They, too, were driven from the city, to die in the field.

Abimelech's power was restored to him. But like the bramble in the parable, he now began to burn the people who had helped him. He was filled with madness against Shechem, and though his enemies had been destroyed, he decided to completely destroy the city, and kill all within it. The people fought back but were no match for the brutal Bramble King. They had deserted God, and suffered as a result, as all do who turn from Him. Abimelech and his men laid siege to the city. Smashing its strong gates, they rushed into the streets, and began to put all the inhabitants to the sword. In terror, the men of Shechem shut themselves in the fortified stronghold of their pagan god (v. 46). This was too strong to be taken by Abimelech. Retreating to a mountain close by the city, Abimelech chopped down a branch of a

tree, and commanded all his soldiers to do likewise. Returning to the stronghold of Shechem, he set fire to it, burning to death its defenders.

Abimelech next heard that the city of Thebez was about to revolt against him. Mad with anger, he attacked the city which fell before his onslaught. The fear-stricken people gathered together in a strong tower, trusting in its walls for defence. Abimelech thought he would treat this tower the same as he had the stronghold at Shechem and led his men against the door to set fire to it. This proved to be his doom. A woman in the tower, seeing Abimelech below, cast a millstone upon his head, and mortally wounded him. To be killed by a woman was such a disgrace as Abimelech could not bear. Feeling that death was near, he called upon his armour-bearer to slay him, so that it could not be said that he met his end by a woman. Thus he died. But the action of his armour-bearer did not prevent his disgrace. The disgraceful deeds, and ignoble death of the bramble king, are recorded in the Bible for all to read and ponder.

Why is such a story recorded therein? It teaches many important lessons. It shows that God may use the ambitions of wicked men to fulfil His purpose. It teaches that sin does not go unpunished: the house of Gideon and of Israel had turned from Yahweh, and suffered as a result. It warns us not to put any confidence in men — for though Abimelech was a son of Gideon, he lacked Gideon's faith and goodness. It reveals that we should not seek the honour of men: one day Israel as for making Gideon and his son king (Judges 8:22); a short time later they were helping to kill his sons. Above all, it illustrates the folly of following the lead of men when they are not moved by the things of God. We must seek God's way, no matter what others might do. In that way alone is there true happiness and peace. Outside of that way is only wickedness and trouble. The Bible teaches that unreasonable hatred of one's brother is similar to murder (1 John 3:15). In that sense, there have been many bramble kings during the history of God's people, both in the nation of Israel, and in the communities of believers since the first advent of Christ. We must take care not to be found among their followers.

**A Time of Peace
and Quietness
— Judges 10:1-5**

Quietness leaves no records. War, bloodshed, victory, defeat, calamity, trouble are all reported in detail. People like to hear of these things, and they repeat them over and over again. But peace and quietness have no historian. There is nothing for men to remember. Yet, in such times, God's people are able to faithfully and quietly fulfil His will by perform-

ing the small duties of life. In more turbulent times when there is some great issue to be fought, men who are normally apathetic, can rise to an occasion. The excitement of some great crisis can sweep them off their feet; though, in normal times, when all is quiet and at peace, they manifest indifference to the requirements of God. How important it is, at all times, to learn to do little things well, so as to be ready, when the moment arrives, to assume greater responsibilities. Times of peace provide opportunity to consolidate our knowledge of God's Word and Will, so as to be ready to meet the tests and trials that will surely make themselves felt.

The terrible murders of Abimelech, and the fierce quarrels and bitter warfare that broke out among his followers resulting in the destruction of two cities, shocked all Israel. It caused many of the people to seek God's help to restore the standards of righteousness that are so desirable. They did not turn to Him in vain. From the tribe of Issachar, he raised up a deliverer by name of Tola, which means *Devourer*. Of his work in "devouring" the enemies of Israel we have no record. He judged Israel for a period of 22 years, during which time the nation had peace.

Jair the Judge

When Tola died, his place was taken by another judge called Jair, meaning *The Enlightener*. Jair was a wealthy man with a large family of 30 sons who ruled in 30 cities. As befitting their high position, they rode on 30 ass colts. Asses were very celebrated animals in Israel, and rulers rode them as a token of their high position. It was for that reason that the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass (Matt. 21:2). When the people saw him riding on the animal, towards their capital city, and observed his wonderful dignity, they were greatly impressed. Some spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and laid them in the path. As he rode into the city, the multitude cried: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!"

Why should the ass be honoured in that way? It is such a lowly animal! Indeed we despise the ass, as Gentiles often despise the Jews. But it is an excellent animal for working in the fields. It was so widespread in use by the people of Israel as to be considered by other nations as its national symbol (see Josephus *Against Apion* 1:7). Special animals of outstanding appearance, were chosen for the use of rulers (Judges 5:10; 10:4; 12:140 2 Sam. 16:1-4; 1 Kings 1:33,38, etc), so that to ride upon an ass became a status symbol in Israel (see Gen. 49:10-11).

Under the Law, the firstborn of all animals were given unto

God in sacrifice. The only exception was the ass. It could be redeemed by the sacrifice of a lamb (Exod. 13:13). But if the owner of the ass did not want to redeem it, its neck was broken. This sets forth the purpose of God with Israel. Jesus Christ was sent as “the lamb of God” (John 1:29), to redeem His people — the true Israel of God, Jews and Gentiles who obey Him (Gal. 6:16). But death is the penalty of those who are not worthy of redemption.

An ass can be a patient, hard-working animal in the field; or a stubborn, bad-tempered beast. Therefore, as an animal it fittingly symbolises the people of God. They can patiently work in His vineyard giving Him pleasure in that which they do; or they can be stubborn and disobedient, resisting His will and bringing suffering upon themselves as a result.

The sons of Jair, riding upon their animals, ruling their cities, symbolised the glory of Israel. It was a time of peace, and the people rejoiced in the prosperity that came with it. But, unfortunately their stubbornness was soon to bring changes to their conditions. They gradually forgot God, and began to worship the gods of the surrounding nations. Their wickedness became more blatant. Heathen idols were erected and worshipped with all the evil, degrading rites that were connected with them. The worship of Yahweh became neglected.

God punished His people by allowing the surrounding nations to invade the land. Israel was brought into subjection by the very people whose gods they had worshipped. Philistines from the south-west and the Ammonites and Moabites from the east, invaded their land. They “vexed and crushed” the people (Judges 10:8 — Heb.). Israel’s wickedness had exceeded all bounds, and Yahweh left them to their own resources, allowing them to suffer until they turned from their evil ways (Judges 10:13). This caused the people to recall the goodness of God, and seek to experience it again. They cried unto Him for help, but He answered: “Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation!” (Judges 10:14).

The senseless idols of the heathen could not help them. They turned from their false worship, gave up their evil practices, and sought Yahweh. They pleaded with Him as their heavenly Father to help them, seeking His forgiveness for their waywardness. And Yahweh, Who is ever merciful was “grieved for their sake”. He felt sorry for them as a father does his children. As Isaiah taught: “In all their affliction, He was afflicted; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them (as a father will a child), and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9). God determined to deliver His people.

Chapter Six

HOW THE DESPISED JEPHTHAH DELIVERED ISRAEL (JUDGES 11,12)

“Jephthah is one of the great heroes of the Scriptures,” remarked Mr. Phillips, after the family had read the chapters from Judges. “The story of how he delivered Israel, not only records Yahweh’s mercy to His people, but also shows how He taught them a lesson by making them dependent upon one whom they had wronged”.

“How was that?” asked Graeham.

“Jephthah was the illegitimate son of Gilead”, replied his father (Jud. 11:1). “As we have read, his half-brothers treated him cruelly, driving him out of his home after his father was dead, so that he could not inherit any of the property”.

“Why did they do that?” asked Ann.

“Because he was the son of a strange (i.e. a foreign) woman”, replied Mr. Phillips. “They probably used the Law (see Deut. 23:3) to justify their actions, but if so these words did not apply to Jephthah, who was an Israelite, even though he was the son of a foreign woman. Jephthah was a very powerful man (v. 1), and his brothers feared him. Joining themselves together in their evil work, they threatened to kill him. As a result, Jephthah fled to the land of Tob”.

“Where is that?” asked Joan.

“The Land of Tob was in the north east of Palestine. It was a very fertile part as its name signifies, for “Tob” means *Fruitful*. There Jephthah gathered around him a number of men who, like him, were poor”.

“It doesn’t say that in my Bible,” protested Peter. “It reads, ‘there were gathered vain men to Jephthah’ (Jud. 11:3)”.

“The word in the Hebrew signifies ‘empty men’” replied his father. Such describe men empty of good sense, or of money and goods. Jephthah was not the type of man to have hooligans about him, so that those gathered to him must have been poor people who needed his help”.

“What did the poor people do when they were gathered to Jephthah?” asked Joan.

“The Bible says, ‘They went out with him’ (Judges 11:3). That

is, they became his bodyguard. They banded together to help and protect each other”, answered Mr. Phillips

“Like Robin Hood?” suggested Joan.

“Jephthah was different from Robin Hood inasmuch as he was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32),” said Mr. Phillips. “His history shows that he never neglected the things of God. He brought his daughter up to reverence Yahweh; and when he came to power in Israel, he used his authority with courage, understanding and tact. He always thought of others as he went about his duties. His was a sad and yet noble life”.

“The first three verses of Judges 11 seems out of order”, remarked Graeham.

“Yes,” agreed his father. “In fact they should appear before verse 17 of the previous chapter. Israel had learned the folly of their wicked ways, and putting away the heathen gods they had been worshipping, they gathered together at Mizpeh to organise an army to overthrow the Ammonites who had invaded the land. Mizpeh (also known as Ramoth) was a city of Refuge in the land of Gilead on the eastern side of Jordan. It was there that the oppression of the Ammonites was felt most, and Mizpeh was one of the main cities of the eastern tribes. It was called Mizpeh because of its prominence, for it means *Watchtower*.

“But when the people assembled together they found they had no one to lead them to battle. It needed a man of faith and courage, one skilled in warfare, for that purpose. The people thought of Jephthah, in the land of Tob, who already had a band of followers, and had proved himself valiant in war (Judges 11:1). They decided to swallow their pride and ask him to help them.

“They were forced to turn for help to the one whom they had cruelly persecuted!

“Elders of Gilead were sent to him, ‘Come and be our captain that we may fight against Ammon’, they pleaded.

“Among these elders were the very ones who had earlier driven him away. Jephthah reminded them of this: “Are you not the men who hated me and drove me from my father’s house? Why come to me now, when you are in difficulties?”

“But the men replied: ‘We are in great difficulties, and we want you to help us fight the Ammonites. If you do so, you shall be head over all Gilead’.

“Jephthah returned with the elders of Gilead to Mizpeh, and there they presented him before the people who accepted him as their captain. Afterwards, in a religious ceremony before Yahweh, they solemnly agreed to accept Jephthah as their head.

War Declared on Ammon

“Jephthah wasted no time,” said Mr. Phillips, as he continued the story. “He sent a message to the king of Ammon asking why he had invaded the land of Israel. The Ammonites were related to Israel, being descendants of the younger son of Lot the nephew of Abraham (Gen. 19:38). They had originally occupied a tract of country east of the Jordan, separated from Moab by the River Arnon, but the Amorites had displaced them and occupied this territory. Israel had been ordered not to attack the Ammonites because of their relationship (Deut. 2:19), but the Ammonites had not returned this act of friendship (Deut. 23:3-4). Israel had asked Sihon, king of the Amorites, for peaceful passage through the land of Ammon that he had occupied, but this had been refused, and Moses had been forced to fight and take the land, which Israel had thereafter occupied.

“The king of Ammon replied to Jephthah: ‘I invaded the land because Israel took it away from us when they came up out of Egypt’.

“This was quite untrue, as Jephthah showed. With statesmanship and tact, he outlined the whole history of the matter. he showed:

1. The Ammonites had lost the land to the Amorites and not to the Israelites (v. 20).

2. Israel had conquered the land from the Amorites and not the Ammonites, when they (the Amorites) had waged unprovoked war on Israel (v. 20).

3. The friendly advances of Israel had been rejected by the nations east of the Jordan (v.17).

4. Yahweh had given the land as a Divine grant to His people; and Israel accepted His authority as Ammon and Moab did that of their god, Chemosh (vv. 21-24).

5. Israel had occupied the land 300 years (v. 26).

6. It had never been reclaimed by Ammon throughout that time; therefore the present claims of the king were not justified (v. 26).

“Whilst this message was sent to the king of Ammon, Jephthah rapidly travelled throughout the land of Gilead, calling upon the Israelites in the name of Yahweh to assemble at Mizpeh so as to repel the invader. Soon sufficient forces were gathered for his purpose, and he made preparations to march against the army of Ammon. Before going into battle, Jephthah made a solemn vow unto Yahweh. He publicly proclaimed: ‘If we are victorious, then whatever comes forth of my house to meet me, when I return in peace shall surely be Yahweh’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering’.

“How Jephthah was to regret this rash vow!

Victory is Turned into Sorrow

“Ammon was defeated,” continued Mr. Phillips, “and Jephthah came in triumph to Mizpeh.

“Meanwhile, the people had prepared a welcoming celebration for the conquering hero. They now desired to honour the man they had previously despised. They arranged that Jephthah’s only child, a daughter, should lead the dance of victory which should greet the army on its return. Not knowing of the vow that Jephthah had made, they decided that this dance should commence from his own house in Mizpeh.

“It was a happy day for Israel, and a proud day for the daughter of Jephthah as she prepared herself to lead the dance that would greet her beloved father on his return. The excitement grew when it was learned that the army of Israel was nearing Mizpeh, returning victoriously with Jephthah at its head. Then, as Jephthah approached his house, his daughter appeared at the door, playing the timbrels and proudly leading the dance of victory in honour of her father.

“But instead of joy and happiness on the face of the father she loved so well, she saw only anguish and grief. Jephthah rent his clothes in horror as he saw his daughter emerge from the house and recalled his vow. ‘Oh, my daughter!’ he exclaimed, ‘Thou hast crushed me! Thou hast crushed me! I have opened my mouth to Yahweh, and I cannot go back’ (Judges 11:35—Heb.).

“In sorrow Jephthah told of his rash vow. The victory had been a glorious one, the nation had been liberated from a ruthless and cruel enemy. But what a price to pay! Jephthah’s daughter, however, was equal to the occasion. Full of faith she gloried in the wonderful victory her father had won, and was prepared to lay down her life if it were required. She had but one request to make: ‘Let me alone two months, that I may go deep into the mountains, with my companions, to bewail my fate,’ she requested her father. Her petition was granted and at the end of that time ‘her father did with her according to her vow’.

“With the death of his daughter, Jephthah’s family came to an end. This terrible sacrifice made a great impression on Israel. For a while, it became the custom for the young women to yearly lament the ‘daughter of Jephthah’ though, in time, the custom seems to have faded out. Meanwhile ———”

“Before you continue with the story” interrupted Graeham, “do you think you are right in stating that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter? I read a different account of this some days ago. It claimed that he did not offer her for a burnt offering”.

“But it plainly says he did!” exclaimed Peter.

“In our version it does,” agreed Graeham. “But this article



Jephthah is met by his daughter on his return from battle

said that the word 'and' in v. 31 should read *or*. "It shall surely be Yahweh's, *or* I will offer it up for a burnt offering'. Instead of sacrificing her, he merely gave her up to the work of Yahweh, so that she never married".

"Surely Jephthah would not be particularly grieved if all that was going to happen to his daughter was that she would devote her life to the service of Yahweh!" exclaimed Peter.

"I am inclined to agree with Peter," replied Mr. Phillips. "If she was merely to be given to the work of Yahweh, there would have been no need for her to have remained unmarried.

Marriage is honorable in the sight of Yahweh (Heb. 13:4), and people devoted to God such as Samuel, practised marriage. I agree that if she were not put to death, there would have been no point in her 'bemoaning her virginity two months' because she could have done that for as long as she liked! Moreover, there was no provision under the law, for women to work in the Tabernacle, so what would she do? Further, the law demanded that anything devoted to Yahweh 'both of man and beast' must not be redeemed, but must be 'put to death' (Lev. 27:28-29). Finally, what would be the point of the daughters of Israel going yearly to '*lament* the daughter of Jephthah' (v. 40)? What would they lament?

"The margin renders the word 'lament' as '*to talk with*'," answered Graham. "They could visit her four days in a year for that purpose".

"Why limit it to four days in a year if she were alive?" asked Mr. Phillips.

"I cannot say," replied Graham.

"It is true that some teach that Jephthah never sacrificed his daughter," said Mr. Phillips, "but when the chapter is carefully considered, I feel that it gives us no choice but to admit that he did. I do not think that God approved such a vow but when such is made it must be carried out. It should be remembered, that whilst Jephthah was a faithful and courageous man, indeed a Godly man in every sense of the word, he was not perfect. He had made a rash vow, and in view of the wonderful victory, felt constrained to carry it out. Some think that his daughter was put aside in isolation, like a nun in a convent, but there was no provision for such restraint under the law. Those who were given to God, such as Samuel, did not hesitate to marry; so that if it were merely that Jephthah's daughter was called upon to devote her life to the service of God (and I fail to see what duties she would perform, because she would not be permitted in the Tabernacle) I do not **see why** such a fuss should have been made by all those concerned. Therefore, I believe that she was offered in sacrifice.

The word “custom” in v. 39 is really ‘ordinance’ or ‘law’ (see margin). One very ancient Jewish paraphrase on this verse adds the words: “And it was a statute in Israel, that no man should offer his son or daughter for a burnt offering as did Jephthah . . .”

“It seems a terrible thing that Jephthah should offer his daughter in sacrifice”, said Graeham.

“I agree with you,” answered Mr. Phillips. “But many men have sacrificed their daughters to a worse fate!”

“How do you mean?”

“When a parent urges his daughter to marry for money or position, or by wrong counsel encourages her to follow the ways of the world instead of the ways of God, he is virtually sacrificing her in a more terrible way than did Jephthah his daughter. He is directing her along a path of misery that will end in a hopeless death. On the other hand, there is no doubt in my mind that life eternal awaits the daughter of Jephthah at Christ’s coming”.

More Trouble for Jephthah

“Poor Jephthah!” continued Mr. Phillips.

“In the moment of victory he tasted such bitterness of anguish as few fathers have been called upon to endure. And then, as though that were not enough, the tribe of Ephraim now attacked him.

“Ephraim fancied itself as head of the tribes. It was not only larger than most of the others, but had been given the blessing of the firstborn by Jacob (Gen. 48:14). Moreover, Joshua was an Ephraimite, and the men of the tribe probably prided themselves as being superior to those of other tribes on that account. After the Midianites had been defeated by Joshua, men of Ephraim bitterly criticised Gideon claiming that he had failed to confer with them (Judges 8:1). Now they turned on Jephthah. They again acted as bullies, but this time they went too far.

“Gathering an army together, they marched over the Jordan, into the fertile lands of Gilead, and to the city of Mizpeh. ‘Why did you fight Ammon without calling us to go with you?’ they fiercely demanded of Jephthah. ‘We will burn your house with fire’.

“This was a very harsh attitude to adopt towards the man who had successfully defended Israel from a ruthless enemy; and Jephthah would have been justified in giving them an angry and bitter reply. But he did not. He was not only a man of faith but an outstanding statesman. He answered them thoughtfully and quietly. ‘I know that you are very powerful, and could have helped me’, he replied, ‘but when I called for help you did not answer!’

“This was true, and Ephraim could not deny it. Lacking a

sound argument they restored to ridicule, and in doing so went too far. They goaded Jephthah and the Gileadites to fury by their insolent taunts. They said: "You are but fugitives of the tribes; ill-born, ill-bred. Ephraim won't have you! Manasseh won't have you! You are playing between the two and are fugitives of both! Away with you!"

"Such hurtful words to a man that had done so much for Israel, and who had suffered so keenly, were too much. Jephthah led his men against the army of Ephraim, and won a further victory. He occupied the passages of the Jordan over which the fleeing Ephraimites had to pass to reach their own territory, and there he meted out terrible punishment against this overbearing and insulting tribe. Some two thousand and forty men were slain*.

"The boasting of Ephraim ceased. As the men of the tribe came streaming back defeated from the field of battle to cross the Jordan, they were met by Jephthah's men who asked, 'Are you an Ephraimite?' If they answered, 'No', they were put to a further test. They were asked to say, *Shibboleth* (which means *a river*). The Ephraimites could not pronounce this word properly. Their accent was different from that of the Gileadites, and instead of saying *Shibboleth*, they said *Sibboleth*. This revealed their true identity and showed that they had lied to Jephthah's men, and they were punished accordingly.

"By this simple test," continued Mr. Phillips, "the Ephraimites were shown to be liars as well as insolent boasters. It was but a little thing they were called upon to do — the pronunciation of a single letter — but their failure to do so revealed much. Life is like that. It is in the little things that we show our true character. It is how we conduct ourselves in small matters — in our homes, or at school, or at work — that reveals our true characters. It will be upon our *Shibboleths* that we will be judged at Christ's second coming; and if we are found to be liars, like the Ephraimites, we will suffer a similar fate. Many use this incident as relating to doctrines of religion. They ridicule the need for purity of belief, by claiming that to demand such is like the Gileadites insisting on the Ephraimites pronouncing *Shibboleth*. But God demands purity of doctrine; He requires that we correctly pronounce the things He has set down in His book. The test that Jephthah made revealed that his enemies were lying to conceal their true identity, and the fact that they could not pronounce this letter showed them up for what they were. The lesson to us is, Be careful of the small things of life.

* The *Companion Bible* suggests that the number 42000 should be amended to this number.

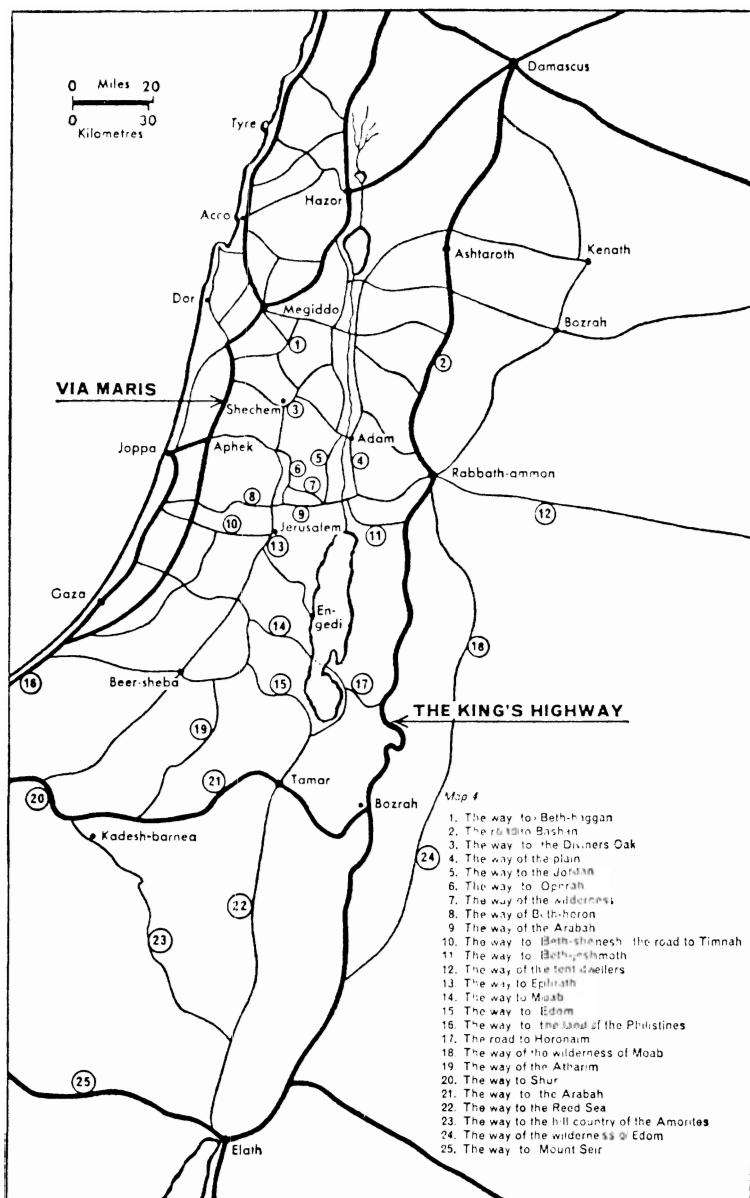
“Jephthah continued to judge Israel for a further six years, and then was laid to rest in one of the cities of Gilead, awaiting the reward that will surely be given him and his daughter at the second coming of Christ. What a wonderful reunion that will be for those two faithful people. How delightful it will be for father and daughter to be clothed upon with immortality, and to rejoice in the wonderful sacrifices that both made to honour their vow to Yahweh. People would have said that Jephthah was justified in ignoring his vow, and avoid fulfilling it on the grounds that God does not require such sacrifices; but like the pronouncing of the word *Sibboleth*, he was determined to carry out his responsibilities to the letter! He will be wonderfully rewarded for so doing in the Age to come”.

The Statesmanship of Jephthah

Jephthah was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32) who acted circumspectly before both God and man (Judges 11:11). Immediately upon his elevation to power, he took all the problems associated with it to Yahweh in prayer: both his acceptance of the office, and his execution of the duties associated therewith. He leaned not on his own understanding, or courage, but on God, seeking His favour. In all his ways he acknowledged Yahweh, and sought His directions. Accordingly he opened his military campaign with prayer.

He was a man of peace, but was projected into war. This is shown by his action towards the King of Ammon. In accordance with the requirements of the Law, he set before him an offer of peace (see Judges 11:12; Cp. 20:10-11). But the Ammonites refused this and were put down by force. Nevertheless, Jephthah acted with moderation, refusing to be incensed by the Ammonite king's stubborn refusal to concede facts.

He was meticulous in his preparation. He studied well the records of Moses, and therefore clearly understood the facts of the matter. His arguments, as presented to the King of Ammon, were clear and specific, and his demands reasonable. He only requested that the Ammonites cease harassing his people, for they had neither injured them, nor intended to do so. He spoke with the authority of Yahweh, acknowledging that He guides the destiny of nations (Dan. 4:17; Acts 17:26). He explained that Moses had not invaded the lands of the Moabites or Ammonites, but only those areas then occupied by the Amorites; and this at the directed of God.



Main highways of the Ancient Middle East.

The Importance Of The Campaign

It would have been folly for Jephthah to concede the demands of the Ammonites. To have given way would have placed Israel under a dire threat. Ammon was in a strategic and geopolitical position of the first importance, due to its command of a section of the Kings' Highway. This international artery linked Syria with southern Transjordan, whence it continued to the Gulf of Elath and the Arabian Peninsula; whilst another branch ran across the Jordan Plain into Western Palestine. Ammon's domination of this cross-section of main highways gave her considerable political power, and unusual economic advantages, particularly in bringing under control the caravan trade of the desert tribes.

On the other hand, because of its precarious, isolated, geographical position, and lack of "strategic depth", and because of the frequent pressure of marauding desert tribes to the east as well as more settled nations to the west and south, the Ammonites were compelled to fortify their borders far more thoroughly than their neighbours, who could rely partly on natural defence lines. The great organisational and technical capabilities of the Ammonites are clearly evidenced in the chain of border fortresses surrounding Rabbath-Ammon on the west and south (Num. 21:24), the ruins of which were discovered during the archaeological surveys of the 30s, and again, in the 50s and 60s of the present century by Glueck and others. They were constructed on a square or rectangular plan, that provided for close co-operation, or on a distinct circular pattern that offered an efficient means of communication vital in foiling attempts of penetration into the heart of the country.

These facts of history and archaeology help to emphasise the importance of the work done by Jephthah in defeating the powerful enemy of Israel and freeing the nation of its burden.

Jephthah's Successors

"Jephthah's ministry is followed by three other judges: Ibzan, Elon and Abdon. Ibzan signifies *Active*; Elon's name means *Oak* or *Terebinth*, a symbol of strength. Abdon the son of Hillel means *A servant full of Praise*. Ibzan signifies *Active*. Obviously their names are indicative of their labours" remarked Mr. Phillips as he explained these events to his children. "They were *active* in the work of God, they developed *strength* within the nation, and caused the servants of Yahweh to *lift up their voices in praise* to Him. They judged Israel for about twenty-five years in all (Judges 12:8-15).

Nothing is recorded of their times. They were apparently un

eventful and prosperous years, during which the nation flourished. Those three judges seemed to have ruled in the northern portion of the country which was free of invaders.

"In the south, however, a very powerful nation, the Philistines had invaded Judah and Dan, and their iron grip on the country brought very bitter servitude to the southern tribes. God was about to provide another remarkable man to help Israel in its warfare against the Philistines, and we will read about him in our reading from the Bible tomorrow night. Meanwhile, are there any questions you would like to ask upon tonight's reading?"

"Yes, I have one," said Ann, "In Judges 12:9 it says that Ibzan had thirty daughters whom 'he sent abroad'. What does that mean?"

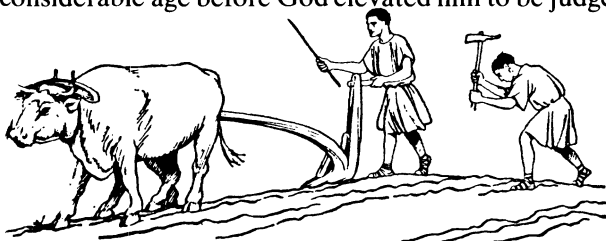
"It means that he gave them in marriage to men outside his own tribe," answered her father. "Notice that he also had thirty sons, and for them he took in 'thirty daughters from abroad'. In other words, he selected wives for them from the other tribes".

"Abdon the judge seemed to have lived in state," remarked Graeham. "He had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on seventy ass colts. He was evidently like Jair (Judges 10:4) about whom you told us earlier".

"Yes," answered Mr. Phillips. "God uses all types of men and women when His purpose requires it. Abdon was evidently a wealthy prince in Israel, and thus could afford to conduct his household in state. How different to Jephthah who was of humble birth, and a fugitive from his brothers. Yet he was used equally by God as was the lordly Abdon. Before Yahweh all men are reduced to a common level. Wealth or position mean nothing to Him; it is faith, and courage, and understanding that makes a man valuable before God".

"I notice that the word 'nephew' is translated *sons' sons* in the margin," said Peter.

"Yes," replied his father. "They were his grandchildren. Those few verses describe conditions of peace and prosperity, with the lordly Abdon governing the northern parts of Israel, and living in state with his numerous family. The fact that his grandchildren are referred to as mature men, shows that he must have been of considerable age before God elevated him to be judge in Israel".



Chapter Seven

SAMSON: THE STRONG MAN OF ISRAEL

It has been said of Samson that he was “one of the giant failures of history”. We feel this is unfair to this “man of faith” (Heb. 11:32), who tried so hard but received very little help from his own countrymen in the work he had to do. It is true that he did not completely deliver Israel from the Philistines — but it was not intended that he should; his work was merely to “begin to deliver Israel” (Judges 13:5). It is true also, that he was guilty of sad mistakes — but so are we all. It must be remembered, that the Bible only outlines a few incidents of Samson’s life; but he is commended of God in Hebrews 11:32, so he must have revealed qualities of faith, not recorded in Scripture. The few incidents brought to our notice show him in an unfavourable light, and we might ask, Why are they recorded in the Bible? There are two main answers to that question. Firstly, the story of Samson teaches that we should not rely upon physical strength alone, but rather seek the spiritual strength that comes from resting on God and obeying His laws. The last incident recorded in the life of Samson is one of great faith. It depicts him blinded and humbled in the Temple of Dagon, mocked by the Philistines who gloried in his downfall, and his degraded state, and yet in faith and courage triumphing over his enemies. Other incidents in his life, however, show how he failed to “rule his spirit”, and thereby failed to attain unto the perfection of faith to which he was called.

In Samson, Israel has a mirror reflecting its own state and illustrating its own failures. He was a Nazarite (one separated from others) from birth — so also was the nation of Israel. He had God-given strength — so did Israel. It was beyond the power of his enemies to harm him, so long as he kept his vow — that likewise was the state of Israel. The Philistines could not understand wherein the great strength of Samson lay — nor do the Gentiles understand the source of Israel’s strength. He was constantly being led astray — so also is Israel. His folly caused him to break his vow of separateness — so also did the folly of Israel. His sin led to blindness — and Paul declares that “blindness hath happened to Israel” (Rom. 11:25). In ill-treating him, the Philistines suffered — and any nation that has cursed Israel has always

been punished by God (Gen. 12:3). Though he died with the Philistines, he had the assurance of a great future (Heb. 11:32) — and that is true also of Israel (Jer. 31:3).

In this mirror that Yahweh set before the nation, the Israelites could see their own failings, and, if wise, they would avoid them. We can do likewise. Instead of relying upon our own strength, and blindly going our own way, without heeding whether our actions conform to the will of God, let us look in that mirror, and decide to seek a greater strength than that of mere flesh. Let us say, with Paul: “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). In that strength, we can do greater things than even Samson — we can learn to conquer self, and render unto God, a humble obedience which is well-pleasing in His sight.

Israel Invaded By the Philistines

The victory of Jephthah had driven the enemies of Israel from the north-easterly section of Israel; but in the south, the Philistines still remained to ill-treat the people of Israel. They were a brutal and powerful race, who harshly oppressed the Israelites whenever they gained ascendancy over them. They came originally from the island of Crete, or Caphtor (Amos 9:7), and having invaded Egypt (Gen. 10:13-14) were driven out of that country, northwards to occupy the sea coast to the south-west of Canaan. They governed from five cities: Ekron, Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, and Gath. These they built into powerful forts, each with its ruler or lord who joined with his fellow lords, to attack or resist any enemy (1 Samuel 29:2-3).

Moreover, the Philistines held and carefully guarded the secret of iron-smelting, and therefore were able to make iron weapons superior to anything the other nations had (cf. 1 Samuel 13:19-22)†. When the Israelites deserted God, and He withdrew His protection, they were no match for the Philistines. They feared their iron weapons and their formidable chariots with iron scythes fitted to their wheels; and for long periods of time they were brought under the brutal attacks and harsh reign of the Philistines. Not until the days of Hezekiah, hundreds of years after the time of Samson, were they finally and completely overthrown (2 Kings 18:8). Meanwhile, the term *Philistine* came to mean a bitter, implacable enemy. Because of their dominance, the Land of Canaan became known as *Palestine*, or the land of the Philistines until changed to Israel in recent times.

The word *Philistine* means *A Wanderer*. It is significant the

† This is confirmed by archaeological research. See *Westminster Historical Atlas of the Bible*.

Land of Israel should have been called Palestine or the land of the *Wanderers* because, through disobedience, Israel became as Philistines or *Wanderers* driven from country to country, having no place of their own in which to dwell (Deut. 28:64-66).

The Philistines in the land hated the Israelites, and made their lives bitter through cruel oppression. This opposition caused the Israelites, as they had done so often before, to turn to Yahweh Whom they had neglected for so long. The result was that He began to move for the help of His people.

**A Strange Visitor
to the House
of Manoah
— Judges 13**

In the city of Zorah, which overlooked the broad plains of Philistia, there lived a man by name of Manoah. Manoah and his wife had no children which was a cause of great sorrow to them. They prayed often to God that He might bless them with a family. But sadly this was not granted them. However the time came when God did grant their prayer. Manoah's wife was busy working, when she was startled by the sudden appearance of a man who addressed her. She noticed that he was of a most striking appearance and she was startled when he told her that God had hearkened to her prayer, and she would bear a son who would help to deliver Israel from the Philistines. The man told her that she must bring up her son as a Nazarite. That meant that he must not drink the juice of the grape, even though his home was amongst the vineyards, nor certain kinds of food, and that no razor must touch the hair of his head or face.

As the wife of Manoah pondered these tidings, the man suddenly left her. She told her husband of the strange message and he, being a man of faith, prayed unto God that He might again send the messenger to instruct them as to how they were to bring up the child when he was born.

God answered the prayer of Manoah. One day, as his wife was working in the field, the strange man again appeared unto her. This time she knew what to do. Making haste, she ran and told her husband, saying: "Behold the man that came to me the other day, has again appeared!" Manoah returned with her, and saw a man of impressive appearance. His face was bright and intelligent. He was an angel, but Manoah did not realise this. He said to the man: "How shall we order the child when it is born, and what will be the work that God would have him do?"

The angel repeated to Manoah that which he had told his wife. The boy to be born was to be a Nazarite, separated from all other men, devoting his life unto God. He was not to drink wine, nor eat food condemned by the Law of Moses, nor permit his hair to

be cut. If he followed these instructions, he would “begin to deliver his people from the Philistines” (Judges 13:5).

These were strange but wonderful tidings! Whilst Manoah and his wife rejoiced at the prospect of having a son, they were overwhelmed to think that their son would be a deliverer appointed of God for such a wonderful purpose. This was an honour they had never contemplated! Manoah was anxious to know more, and attempted to keep the strange visitor with him long. He said: “Before you go, I will make ready a meal for you”. But the angel refused the invitation. He told Manoah that if he wished to thank anybody, it must be Yahweh, and he could do that by offering a burnt offering.

Manoah, however, wanted to honour this wonderful messenger. “Tell us your name”, he pleaded, “that when this son is born we may do you honour”. The angel replied that his name was called *The Wonderful* (Judges 13:18 — margin).

Excited at God’s goodness in granting them a son, Manoah hurried to prepare a sacrifice, as a thanksgiving to God. A rock close by provided a satisfactory altar; and a very happy, if somewhat mystified little group stood around the sacrifice, as it was consumed into smoke. As Manoah and his wife were watching,



*Manoah,
the father
of Samson
offering up
a sacrifice
prior to
the birth
of the
great judge
of Israel.*

the messenger suddenly disappeared towards heaven in the midst of the flame.

Manoah and his wife immediately realised that this man was an angel of Yahweh. In fear they bowed to the ground. Manoah was humbled by the experience. He felt uneasy, and filled with fear. "We shall die", he declared, "because we have seen God"[‡] But his wife answered: "If God is going to kill us, surely He would not have accepted our burnt offering, nor revealed to us His future purpose". Manoah's wife showed good sense. God does not desire our destruction. He reveals His will unto us not to destroy us, but to make Himself known to us, that we may worship Him in truth. If He desires our worship He must be willing to overlook our sins and is mindful of our welfare. The logic of Manoah's wife is very comforting in times of doubt and fear.

In due time, a baby boy was born to Manoah and his wife, and they called his name Samson. As the little boy grew up, it was clear that he was a most unusual child, one especially blessed of God. Faithfully his parents educated him in the way of Truth, and thus prepared him for the great work he was to do.

Samson's Work Begins

The word "Samson" means *The Strong One* according to some authorities.

Others render it as *The Sun*. He appeared as the sun, shining forth in its strength, illuminating the spiritual darkness in Israel. Seven curling locks of plaited hair which hung over his shoulders, gave him a distinction apart from others, and, perhaps, could be likened to the beams of the sun (Judges 16:13). They framed a face from which strength and brightness must have shone forth. The sun is likened to "a strong man" (Psalm 19:5), and this Samson soon showed himself to be. The coarse, stupid and brutal Philistines became the butt of his wit and humour. He drove them asunder as the sun does the darkness causing them much fear.

Above all (and this we must not forget) Samson was a man of faith (Heb. 11:32). Though he revealed many failings, he also manifested qualities of virtue that are not particularly mentioned in the record of his life.

As Samson grew into manhood, he became impatient with the degrading condition into which Israel had fallen. The Bible says that the "spirit of Yahweh began to move him" (Judges 13:25). The word "move," in the Hebrew, signifies to *strike*. The Spirit of God struck him, as one would strike a bell, until the sound was echoed throughout the whole of Israel. Unfortunately, it did not awaken all Israelites to their responsibilities toward God.

[‡] The angel was a manifestation or representative of God, and that was what Manoah meant. See 1 John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16.

Meanwhile, Samson became a familiar figure to the Danites, particularly those living in the area between Zorah and Ashdod. The Philistines learned to fear the strong, powerful young man who was ready to vigorously protect his people. Like the bullies they were, when he was about, they withdrew.

But Samson also had his weaknesses, and these soon became evident. As the angel had told his mother, his work was to “begin” the deliverance of Israel; but he was not destined to finish the work. That privilege was given to others.

**The Woman
of Timnath
— Judges 14**

On the borders of Judah and Dan there was a town called Timnath, then occupied by the Philistines. Visiting this place on one occasion, Samson saw a beautiful Philistine maiden, with whom he fell in love. As was the custom in those days, he asked his father and mother to go and arrange for her to become his wife. But the request filled Manoah and his wife with sadness. They were Godly people, and knew that it was



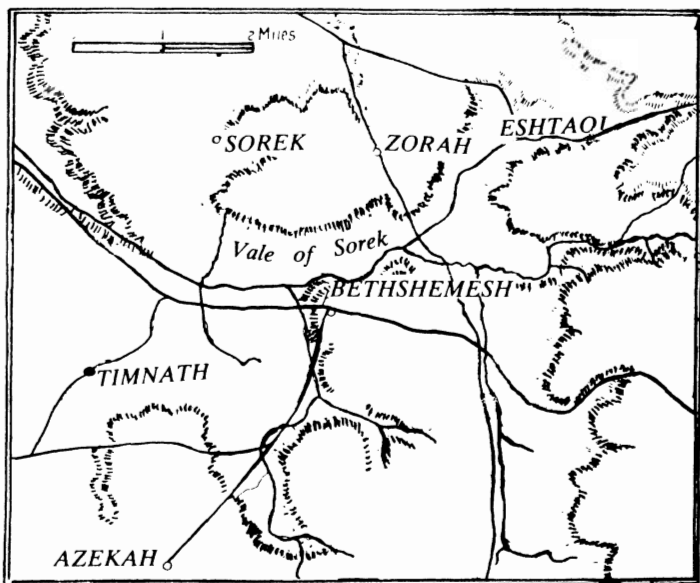
Samson slaying the Philistines.

wrong for Samson to marry outside of Israel (Deut. 7:1-3). "Is there not a woman among the daughters of thy people that thou should go to these Philistines for a wife?" they asked.

But Samson replied: "Get her for me, for she is right in my eyes" (Judges 14:3 margin). Thus the desire of his eyes, led Samson into trouble).

God did not prevent Samson fulfilling his will. Instead, He used Samson's folly to punish the Philistines. God will not stop us sinning; at the same time He will not allow our folly to defeat His purpose.

Overcome by love for the Philistine maiden, Samson went to visit her at Timnath. As he passed through the vineyards that surround the city, he heard the low-throated roar of a lion, and as he turned, the lion leapt out at him. Samson had no weapon to beat off the savage and powerful beast, but he had the tremendous strength that the Spirit of God gave him. Boldly grappling with the lion, he rent it as he would have rent a kid, and soon the lion lay at his feet, dead. Samson knew that it was not his strength, but the strength of God that had wrought this wonderful victory. He told nobody of the incident, because he did not want to boast of his strength. There was no vanity in Samson in that regard. Meanwhile, arrangements were made for the marriage between Samson and the maid of Timnath.



Timnath — The homeland of Samson and Delilah.

The Riddle

Time passed by. Perhaps a year later, and Samson returned to Timnath for the purpose of marriage. As he passed the vineyard where the lion had attacked him, he turned aside to see if its carcase still remained. He discovered the skeleton of the lion, and saw that a swarm of bees had made their home in it, so that it was rich with honey. Taking some of the honeycomb with him, he gave it to his father and mother who likewise had gone down to Timnath in order to arrange the marriage.



This little incident was to prove of ominous importance in the days that followed.

It was the custom in those days, for a bridegroom to select a number of companions, to act as his assistants, during the week of feasting and merriment which took place at wedding celebrations. When the Philistines saw how powerful a man Samson was and heard of his exploits in protecting his fellow-Israelites, they arranged for thirty companions to be with him (Judges 14:11). Josephus says that these *pretended* to be his companions, but in fact they plotted to attack him should he attempt any disturbance.

Thus the wedding commenced, with the Philistines fearful of the formidable man in their midst, and Samson infatuated with his bride, but viewing her countrymen with contempt. In the east, it is common to ask riddles one of another, and during the feast Samson presented one to his companions. "I will put forth a riddle unto you," he said to the thirty men; "if you can answer it within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments, and thirty changes of raiment."

The thirty companions were eager to try their hand at Samson's riddle. "Put it forth that we may hear it," they replied.

Samson answered: "Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness".

The riddle was a most difficult one, and they had no hope of solving it. The companions knew nothing of the lion Samson had slain, nor of the honey he had found, so they did not have a clue to its meaning. It was quite unfair of Samson to ask such a question, but he was only mocking them. He had no love for the Philistines, and delighted to see them grow irritable and angry as they discussed among themselves the riddle and its meaning. As day followed day, and they realised that they would have to give Samson the expensive prize he demanded, they became even more angry. They went to Samson's wife, and demanded that she find out the answer, and tell it to them. "If you do not do so", they threatened, "we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us here to make us poor?"

Samson's wife wept before him, begging him to tell her the answer to the riddle. "You do not love me," she complained. "You have put forth a riddle to my people, but have not told it to me!"

"I have not told it to anyone", replied Samson, "not even to my father and mother".

But because his wife continued to worry him, he finally told her the answer, and she passed it on to the thirty companions. At the end of the feast, they triumphantly replied to Samson: "What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?"

Samson knew at once that his wife had told them, and that he would have to give them the clothing he had promised. His anger against the Philistines grew. The spirit of Yahweh came upon him, and he went down to the city, and slew thirty men in it, taking their clothes to give to the thirty companions of his marriage. Still angry, he left his wife, and went back home to his father's house. Meanwhile Samson's wife was given to the chief of the thirty companions, whom Samson "had used as his friend".

This statement does not mean that he was really Samson's friend, but merely that he had been used as such, during the marriage celebrations (Judges 14:20).

Samson's Revenge — Judges 15

Samson was really fond of his wife, the Philistine maiden who lived in Timnath; and when his anger cooled, he decided to take a present, and seek reconciliation with her. But when he arrived at Timnath, he heard, to his surprise, that she had been married to another man.

Her father explained that he thought Samson must have hated

his daughter, and left her for good, therefore he had given her to his companion.

“But I will give you her sister, who is more beautiful than she,” he said to the angry and powerful young Israelite.

Samson had no desire for the sister of his bride, and refusing her planned his revenge. He caught 300 jackals, and joining them tail to tail, he tied a firebrand, or blazing torch between each pair, and drove them through the fields and vineyards of the Philistines. The frightened jackals zigzagged their way through the fields of standing corn, setting them alight. The vast Philistine plain, that stretched along the valley of Zorah, the home town of Samson, became a raging inferno, consuming the corn, grapevines, and olive trees.

As the smoke rose high over the towns of the Philistines, they angrily enquired: “Who has done this thing?”

They were told that it was Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife and given her to another.

The furious Philistines rushed to the house in Timnath, and set it on fire, together with the man and his daughter.

But still Samson was not satisfied. Single-handed he attacked the Philistines, smiting them “hip and high” (Judges 15:8). This was bodily warfare which they did not like. The powerful Samson bodily grappled with them, knocking them about so that a great number were killed. When he had finished he climbed to the top of a rock called Etam, which was on the border of Judah. And there he defied the Philistines.

But this did not please the men of Judah. They were fearful that the Philistines might invade their territory to take Samson. They were quite faithless, and were frightened of the weapons of war that their powerful neighbours used. They preferred to live in peace with these enemies of God, rather than be disturbed by the presence of His minister, Samson. A deputation of the men of Judah approached the judge. “Don’t you know that the Philistines are rulers over us?” they complained.

“I have only repaid them for what they have done to me,” answered Samson.

The men of Judah were cowards. Instead of assisting Samson in his contest with the Philistines, and relying upon God to help them, they made ready to betray this great protector of Israelites. They told Samson: “We have come down to bind you that we might deliver you unto the Philistines”.

Samson decided to play another joke on his enemies, and punish them further. “Swear unto me that you will not kill me yourselves, and I will allow you to bind me,” he told the men of Judah.

Samson did not fear the Israelites. He had the strength to destroy them as easily as he had the Philistines; but he was a man of faith, and a true Israelite at heart, and desired the good of his people. He could not bear the thought of fighting his fellow Israelites. He told the men of Judah that if they would merely bind him and lead him to the Philistines, without trying to kill him themselves, he would submit to them. They agreed to this, and binding Samson with two new cords, they delivered him to the Philistines, at a place called Lehi which means *jawbone*. As they saw their formidable enemy bound, and apparently helpless, in the midst of his own countrymen, whom they imagined were cowardly betraying him to their oppressors, they shouted in triumph. They viewed it as a wonderful victory. As long as Samson lived they feared Israel's intentions should the nation rally behind his leadership. But the sight of him, humbled before his own countrymen, caused them to fear him no longer. Triumphant they took possession of him from the men of Judah. But no sooner was he in the midst of the Philistines than the Spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon him. Snapping like string the strong, powerful cords that bound his arms, he seized a jawbone of an ass that was lying nearby, and boldly attacked his enemies. The rejoicing of the Philistines turned to fear as they were vigorously attacked by Samson wielding the weapon in his powerful hands. He rushed upon them, crushing their heads with frightful blows. Soon a thousand of their soldiers lay dead before the champion. In panic the rest fled from the spot, leaving him the victor of Lehi.



Philistine warriors as depicted on stone inscriptions.

“With the jawbone of an ass, I have slain heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass I have slain a thousand men,” said Samson.

This was a boast. Samson had gained the victory only with the help of God. His strength had come from the Spirit of Yahweh that rested upon him so mightily, and to Him he should have given the praise. Therefore, as he uttered those words, the Spirit of Yahweh was withdrawn from him. He suddenly felt tired, worn out, and dejected. He was consumed with a great thirst, and could find no water to satisfy it. He thought he would die. Thus humbled, he called upon God, and prayed: “Thou hast given me this great victory, and now I die for thirst, and will fall into the hands of the Philistines”. He thus recognised that his strength came from God, and acknowledged that without it he would easily have been destroyed. God opened a hollow place that was in Lehi[†], from which came a spring of water. With this water Samson was refreshed; his strength restored, and he was saved to continue his work in Israel. As a result, the name of the place was changed from Ramath-lehi (meaning *The lifting up of the jawbone*) to En-hackor (meaning, *The well of him who cried*).

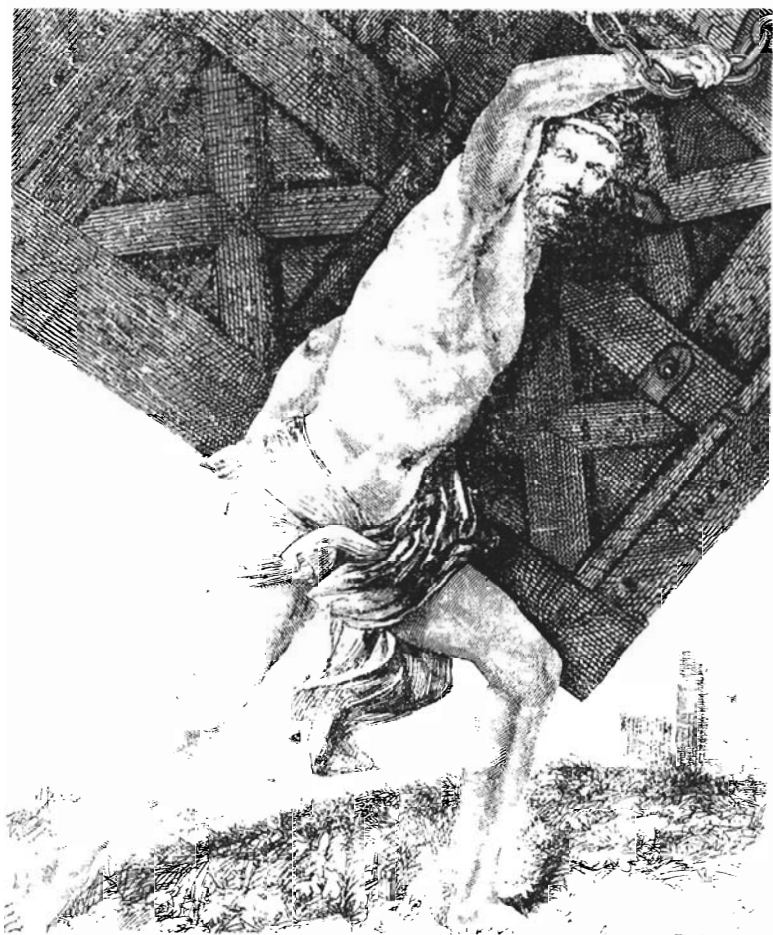
There is a very important lesson for us in this incident. Life is made of peaks and shadows. Sometimes we feel “on top of the world;” at other times, we find ourselves in the depths of despair. One day we are enjoying the fruits of victory, the next day we are lamenting a defeat. Occasionally we feel like Samson: able to face powerful opposition, filled with strength that the knowledge of God brings; and then we are depressed with the consciousness of weakness and failure. When that happens faith is needed to lift us out of our depression, and elevate us in God’s way of life. We need to follow Samson’s example, and cry unto Yahweh for the refreshing water of life that He can give. In fact, it is always available, for the Bible is a well of water available to all those who seek its true significance (John 4:14).

Samson judged Israel for twenty of the forty years of Philistine oppression (Judges 13:1; 15:20). Therefore, the words of the angel, to his mother proved he merely began to deliver Israel from their hands (Judges 13:5). He did not complete the work; it was left for Samuel to do that. Nevertheless, the terror of Samson’s name hindered the progress of the Philistines, and encouraged the disheartened Israelites. The few incidents recorded in the Bible concerning him, do not include the full measure of his faithful labours (Hebrew 11:32); they probably record only the opening and closing acts of his ministry.

[†] Not in the jawbone as reported in the Authorised Version, (see Judges 15:19), but in Lehi, which means “jawbone”.

The Gates of Gaza

About 35 miles south of Zorah, the hometown of Samson, there stood the powerful city of Gaza, with its massive walls, and strong, iron doors. It was one of the headquarters of the Philistines, and was built like a fort. Visiting the city, Samson again fell in love; this time with a woman of Gaza, a Philistine. His fleshly inclinations led him to do that which was condemned by the law of God: he entered into friendly relations with her. Apparently Samson could rend a lion, but not his own desires; he could break his bonds, but not his habits; he could conquer the Philistines, but not his passions.



Samson carrying the doors of the gate of the Philistine city of Gaza, as recorded in chapter 16 of Judges.

He went to visit the maiden in Gaza, and was seen entering the city. His enemies planned to secretly lay in wait for him, and attack him as he left. To prevent his escape, they closed the gates, and hiding, waited for him to leave, intending to murder him. However, they did not realise how great was the strength that Yahweh had given Him.

About midnight Samson made his way to the gates of the city. He found them closed, but this did not deter him. Taking hold of them, together with the posts by which they were held into place, he tore them from the walls, and carried them away from the city, to the top of a hill that led to Hebron.

The Philistines were amazed and disturbed by his outstanding strength. How could they possibly overcome one so powerful as he! Why, even their fortified cities were of no avail, no protection against him! They felt helpless and frustrated, as they met in council to discuss how they could bring about his fall.

**Delilah the
Traitorress
— Judges 16**

For the third time Samson fell in love with a Philistine maiden. He was becoming more careless and sinful, and this led him into danger and misery (Proverbs 6:20-29). The lords of the Philistines saw in his latest infatuation an opportunity of ensnaring him. They knew not the secret of his strength, and believed that if they could discover this, they would be able to control him. Probably Samson was no bigger physically than other men physically, and this made the secret of his might all the more remarkable. The maiden's name was Delilah. The Philistines told her: "Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him". They offered her a bribe of eleven hundred pieces of silver if she would betray her lover.

The Philistines possibly believed that Samson's remarkable strength was due to some charm. They felt that if they could learn the secret of this they would be able to capture and destroy him.

Samson played upon their superstitions. He fooled Delilah at first, pretending to reveal unto her the secret of his strength, secretly laughing at the Philistines. In this he was foolish, because it led to his final undoing.

On the first occasion, Samson told Delilah that if the Philistines bound him with seven green withes, which had never been used, he would become weak as any other man. These were strong ropes made of pliant, tough wood, twisted together. Laughing to himself, Samson allowed Delilah to bind him with these tough ropes, but as soon as she exclaimed: "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" he broke them as string, and strode out

of the house in the fulness of his strength! Thus his secret remained unknown.

"You have mocked me, and told me lies," cried Delilah to Samson. "Tell me how you might be bound as other men".

Samson answered: "If they bind me fast with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall be as weak as other men".

Delilah did so, but when she cried: "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" he broke the ropes as one would thread.

A third time Delilah enticed him to tell her the secret of his strength. And again Samson played a joke upon her. He told her that if she would weave the seven long locks of his head with the web, or part of the loom by which thread is spread out, and then fasten it with a pin to the wall, he would become as other men.

In telling Delilah this, Samson's fooling became more dangerous. His strength lay in his hair which he wore as a Nazarite, and directing her to it was not wise.

Delilah did as Samson suggested. Then when he slept, she cried: "The Philistines are upon you Samson!" This time Samson tore the pin from the wall, and prepared to defend himself against the Philistines as previously.

Realising that he had been mocking her, Delilah lamented: "How can you say 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me?" Day after day she tearfully begged him to tell her his secret. She bothered him so much, that at last he gave way, and told her that he had been a Nazarite to God ever since he was born, and that his hair had never been cut for it was the token of his vow of separateness. "If I be shaven," said Samson, "then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man".

How foolish Samson was in revealing his secret to such a woman! "With her much fair speech, and her flattering lips," Delilah had "caused him to yield" (Proverbs 7:21-27). Samson had forgotten God, and God now forsook him. His strength was not really in his hair, but in his vow, of which the hair was but a token. Now the fatal secret of his might was revealed to Delilah whose name, some suggest, means *Traitress*, and he paid dearly for his folly. Delilah had spoken of her love and loyalty for him, but her words were false. Once she had him in her power, she eagerly rushed to the lords of the Philistines to tell them the news, and demand her price of betrayal. They paid her the money, and this wicked woman returned to pretend a love she did not feel. With caresses and words of affection, she soothed Samson to sleep, and whilst he lay before her, she shaved his head, and binding him with cords, roused him with words that this time spelled his doom: "The Philistines are upon you Samson!".

Drowsy from sleep, feeling the cords upon his arms, not realising that his hair had been cut and that his strength had gone, Samson went out of the house to shake the cords from him as before. He knew not "that Yahweh had departed from him". But soon learned that such was the case, and that his normal, physical strength was not sufficient to gain for him the victory. The Philistines caught him, put out his eyes, brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass. Thus the great deliverer of Israel was humbled before his enemies, grinding in the prison house like the other slaves.

The mighty Samson, the man of strength who had so valiantly defeated the Philistines, now became the butt of the mocking wit of enemies who previously had feared him. As he listened to their cruel gibes and mocking laughter he lamented his folly, and felt that his life of usefulness was at an end. The "sun" had been darkened in Israel, as Samson, with sightless eyes, was led from place to place by a boy provided for that purpose.

Samson's Death

But Samson's hair began to grow again. More importantly still, he had time in his hours of darkness, in the Philistine dungeon, to recall the past, remember his own folly, and pray unto Yahweh. He began to prepare himself for one great act of revenge.

A great day of celebration was at hand. The Philistines wanted to honour their god, Dagon, because Samson had been delivered into their hands. "Our god has gained us this great victory," they boasted. They crowded into a temple of their god for this purpose. The temple was a flat-roofed building, opening on to a courtyard. On important occasions, the notable people of Philistia took their places on the flat roof above, whilst the lesser ones stood in the temple beneath. Thus both were able to see what went on in the courtyard. On this occasion, Samson was brought before them, and commanded to make sport for their entertainment. The sight of the champion of Israel so humbled was greeted with wild glee by the Philistines. They cruelly mocked and ridiculed the blind Samson. But though he could not see, Samson remembered the God Whom he had betrayed, but Whom he knew to be loving, merciful and forgiving. In his humility, his faith revived to develop renewed confidence in himself and in Yahweh. He prayed that God might give him strength, that he might be avenged of the Philistines. He then asked the boy who was guiding him, to take him between the two main pillars upon which the temple rested, and which, in the manner of Philistine buildings, were set close together. Standing between the pillars, he prayed: "O Yahweh! Remember me, I pray Thee,

and strengthen me only this once, that I may be avenged of the Philistines, for one of my two eyes" (Judges 16:28)*.

So saying, he grasped the two pillars, and exerting all his strength, he pressed upon them with all his might, uttering one last prayer: "Let me die with the Philistines!" The mocking laughter of the vast crowd in the temple was silenced and their joy turned to terror, as they saw their enemy using his great strength to such purpose. The two pillars shook, and tottered, and swayed, as Samson brought his God-given strength to bear upon them. Then, suddenly, with a mighty crash they were down, and the heavily laden temple with it, crushing and killing the Philistines gathered therein. Thus, it came to pass, that Samson killed more in his death than in his lifetime, for among those now destroyed were the lords, or rulers of the Philistines (Judges 16:27).

This terrible calamity the Philistines left leaderless. In this weakened state, for a while at least, they feared to oppress Israel. Indeed, they made no protest even though Samson's family visited Gaza to claim his body to give it honoured burial in the family sepulchre (Judges 16:31). No doubt, if the Israelites had turned in faith to their God at that time, they could have won complete deliverance. But they did not. The death of Samson left them leaderless as well.

Summary Of Samson's Life

Samson, like the nation of Israel was granted great opportunities, but failed to make the most of them simply because he did not rule his own will (Proverbs 16:32). His life began in marvel, but ended in tragedy. He manifested great faith in an environment of apathy and cowardice in Israel. Amazing strength was granted to him, but in general it was wasted. He received little help from other Israelites, so that the nation failed to secure the deliverance that it otherwise could have enjoyed.

God strengthened Samson, as He strengthened Paul (Philippians 4:13), and will strengthen all who turn to Him in faith. Those who do this, humbly seeking His help and guidance in life, trying to keep His way as revealed in His word, shall receive Divine help (Philippians 2:13). Without this God-given help and strength, however, the strongest among us are abjectly weak in spiritual attainments. Even with God's strength many fail like Samson.

* This is according to the literal Hebrew. Samson's revenge was not complete, and could not be until the enemies of Israel were completely overthrown. Until that happened only one of his two eyes had been avenged.

Chapter Eight

ANARCHY IN ISRAEL

The Story of Two Levites

The remaining chapters of Judges describe how sadly and completely Israel departed from the ways of God. They record the experiences of two Levites. The first is a story for public discussion, for it shows how men, in the name of religion can pervert the truth of God. It is the story of a thief who became the founder of a church and it foreshadows the decline in Christendom since the days of Christ. The second is a story to be thought over in privacy because of the gross wickedness, and violent murder and bloodshed it records. These are matters it is best not to ponder. However, the self-induced punishment that was experienced by the men who caused this frightful scandal in Israel is never to be forgotten. The world is on the eve of a similar, though more widespread, disaster, for it is following a cause of similar wickedness. Through the disaster caused by the incidents recorded in these chapters the tribe of Benjamin was reduced from one of the largest tribes in Israel, to the smallest.

We join the family of Mr. Phillips as he outlines the story of how Micah the robber tried to set up a new religion in Israel, as recorded in Judges 17 and 18.

"These last chapters in Judges always bore me," said Ann, when the family had completed the reading of Judges 17 and 18.

"Don't you know that these are some of the most dramatic chapters of the Bible?" said Peter, cheekily imitating his father.

"They may not be that, Peter," answered Mr. Phillips, "but nonetheless they contain some most interesting and powerful lessons. There is warning and exhortation in these chapters. They reveal human nature in its true light, and show how greed can lead men to sin".

"Well, these chapters ought to be excellent for Peter," suggested Graeham, with a grin.

"They can be good for us all," remarked his father. "The marvel of the Bible is that so many interesting and significant lessons are hidden beneath the surface of what appear to be just commonplace stories. In these chapters we not only learn how a thief became a builder of a church, but also how a Levite disgraced the

name of one of the greatest men who ever lived”.

“Well, I did not see that in the chapters!” exclaimed Ann.

“Let us study them a little more closely”, suggested her father.

**How A Petty Thief
Became the
Builder of
A Church**

“Micah was a man of some importance in the tribe of Ephraim”, said Mr. Phillips, as he commenced the story. “His mother had put aside a large sum of money, and Micah, coming upon this money, had stolen it. But he was a superstitious man, as well as being a thief, and when his mother asked him in the name of God† if he had taken the money, he confessed that he had done so, and restored it to her. She was very pleased at his confession, and blessed him in the name of Yahweh.

“‘I have dedicated this money to Yahweh,’ she told her son, ‘in order that you might make a graven image and a molten image, and that we might worship God in our own home’. Taking part of the money, she made a graven image and a molten image, and they were set up in the house of Micah.

“This, of course, was contrary to the Law of God (see Exodus 20:4; Leviticus 19:4). But it was only the beginning of wickedness. Yahweh had decreed that all Israel should worship at His Tabernacle, but instead, Micah built a private church, a ‘house of gods’ (Judges 17:5), in which he put the images. Having also made an ephod, he appointed one of his sons as priest, and consecrated him as such by offering a sacrifice unto God (v. 5).

“Thus the robber became the builder of a church, and the founder of a religion. The same thing has often happened since, for throughout the ages men have imagined that they can buy their way to God’s favour or atone for misdeeds by helping to build a church. Micah, of course, believed that his actions were righteous. He was mistaken in what God required, and thought he was doing Him a service. Many men are like Micah in that, regard, whereas what God really wants, is humble obedience to His will. Micah had made his son a priest, and that was wrong. God had commanded that only sons of Aaron should be priests, and later He condemned Jeroboam the King, for doing as Micah now did (1 Kings 13:33).

“But though Micah had his images, his church, and his priest, he still was not satisfied. He knew that his son was only a makeshift priest, and that to elevate a son above his father in such a way is unnatural. Such a priest was too close to the family to

† The word “cursedst” (Jud. 17:2), signifies “adjure” in the same sense as the word is used in Matthew 26:63, where the high priest “adjured” the Lord in the name of God to say whether he claimed to be Christ.

demand and receive the respect required.

"One day, there arrived at the house of Micah, a wandering Levite, seeking a place in which to dwell (Judges 17:9). His attitude was like that of some priests of these days who seek a 'calling of God', but are very careful to see that the so-called 'calling' has a good reward attached to it! This wandering Levite was not satisfied with the work that God had given him to do, but sought a position that would bring him greater honour and glory.

"He was the answer to Micah's hopes, and eagerly the Ephraimite agreed to hire the Levite as his priest. He offered him security, a church of his own, food, clothing, and money to spend; and for these the Levite forsook the true calling of God to become Micah's priest.

"Now Micah was happy. Previously his conscience troubled him. He realised that his son was not a true priest, and he had no right appointing him as such. But now, 'Yahweh will do me good,' he declared, 'seeing I have now a Levite to my priest'.

"How often have men thought in similar terms. They imagine that the presence of a priest, or a man educated in God's word, will 'bring them good', no matter how they themselves may disobey God. They follow the advice of men instead of the Voice of God, and wonder why it is they do not receive the good they expect. The answer to Micah's words is given in the next chapter in the Book of Judges".

**The Heavenly King
that Israel
Deserted
— Judges 18**

"Before we continue on with the story of Micah," continued Mr. Phillips, 'I want you to notice the important statement found in Judges 18:1. Read it for me, please Joan".

Joan read: "In those days there was no king in Israel . . ."

"That will do, thank you, Joan," said her father. "You will notice that the same statement is said several times in these closing chapters of the book of Judges (see Ch. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), sometimes with the added comment that 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes'" (Ch. 21:25).

"What is so significant about that?" asked Peter.

"It is the key to all the violence, evil and unhappiness of these times," replied his father.

"Why should that be so?" asked Graeham, thoughtfully. "There was no king in Israel in the days of Joshua, yet the land was subdued, and the people entered into their inheritance".

"Oh yes there was!" answered Mr. Phillips, with a smile.

"Who was King?"

"Yahweh was King," answered Mr. Phillips.

“But there was no visible king,” said Peter.

“True,” replied his father, “but in the incidents we are now studying even Yahweh was not viewed as King. He should have been King to the people, as Gideon reminded them (Judges 8:23), but they had rejected His rule, so that complete lawlessness reigned. There was no public rejection of Yahweh, of course, no open and boastful atheism, but something deadlier. The people were religious, but they viewed God only as a sign or symbol. They worshipped Him in outward forms, but paid Him no tribute as King. They did according to their own thoughts, and not according to His will. That is shown in the story of Micah, the thief who founded a religion, and in the attitude of the Levite who was prepared to do the bidding of Micah because of the money he received for doing it. Thus, we read, ‘There was no king in Israel’ — not even Yahweh!”

“There is a very important lesson in that,” said Graeham, as he thought over what his father had said. “We can be guilty of the same thing — of rejecting Yahweh as King”.

“That is true,” replied Mr. Phillips. “We must give Yahweh His rightful honour, and pay Him the tribute due to Him in loving and obedient service. Israel failed to do that, and their sin brought suffering and sorrow in its train. Micah thought God would do him good because ‘he had a Levite for priest’ (Judges 17:13). He forgot that his heart must also be right with God, and that he must do the things that God requires. Unfortunately, Micah, like so many in Israel at that time, did not understand what God really wanted. They were ignorant of His will, which was, perhaps, their greatest sin. Meanwhile, Micah soon had his answer as to whether Yahweh would do him good merely because he had a Levite for a priest. It came in the adventure that is recorded in the 18th chapter”.

Spies From The Tribe of Dan

“One day, a little group of five men were seen approaching the house of Micah (Judges 18:2). They were spies from the tribe of Dan, sent by their leaders to explore the northern parts of the Land of Promise where the Jordan has its source. Though the tribe of Dan was among the largest in population, the territory given it was among the smallest in extent: a strip of territory between Judah and Ephraim, most difficult to defend against raiding Philistines and other enemies. Hemmed in by other, larger tribes, and squeezed even smaller by the invasion of Amorites and Philistines the area was too small for the number of people (Joshua 19:40-48). To relieve the pressure of population, these spies were sent out to search for more territory.

“On their way they stopped at the house of Micah, in the isolated mountainous territory north of Ephraim. Micah was a wealthy man, with a large establishment, close by which was a lodging place for travellers.

“As the five men prepared to rest for the evening, they heard the voice of the Levite, doubtless as he ministered in the chapel that Micah had built for the purpose. They could tell by his accent that he was a stranger to Ephraim (cp. Judges 18:3 with Ch. 12:6), and as they observed the private church that Micah had built, together with the image he had set up, and the priestly garments he had provided, their curiosity was aroused.

“‘What are you doing here?’ they asked the Levite.

“‘Micah has hired me and I am his priest,’ was the reply.

“‘Ask God whether we will be successful in our search,’ demanded the five men of Dan.

“‘You will be successful,’ answered the priest.

“Cheered by this assurance, the Danites left on the morrow, and in due course came to a city called Laish. It was situated in a lovely fertile part of the country, from where can be seen the snow-capped summit of Hermon and the green fertile plain of the well-watered Huleh. The people were prosperous and contented, living in luxury and affluence. Moreover, the Danite spies were confident that it could be taken with ease, and that it would provide them with just the territory for which they were seeking. It seemed to them like an answer from God.

**The Danites Set
Out to
Capture Laish
— Judges 18:8-13**

“The five spies returned to their tribe,” continued Mr. Phillips, as he outlined the story, “and gathering the people together, told them that God had guided them to a most desirable spot, ‘a place where there

is no want of anything that is in the earth’ (v. 10).

“A large company including six hundred armed men, together with their families, set out from Dan in the south, with the five spies leading the way. Once again they came upon the house of Micah, and again they camped there for the night. The five spies told the others about the Levite that Micah had hired, and how he had built a church, set up an image, provided him with priestly garments, and thus founded a religion. Not only so, but he had blessed the spies in their work and they had succeeded in their mission. Learning this the other Danites determined that the Levite must go with them. Like Micah, they thought that ‘God would do them good, if they had a Levite as priest’ (Ch. 17:13).

“The plan was decided upon and put into effect. The six hundred warriors, with drawn weapons crowded in at the entr-

ance to Micah's large house. The five spies went into his church and gathered up the graven image and the priestly garments. The Levite saw them. 'What are you doing?' he enquired.

"'Hold your peace', they replied. 'Come with us and be a father and a priest to us! Isn't it better to be priest unto a whole tribe than merely to the house of a man?'

"The priest was ambitious, and money-hungry. He realised that he would be better off as priest to an entire tribe rather than to a mere family. Like many clergymen today, he deluded himself, into imagining that this was 'a call of Providence', opening up for him 'a larger sphere of usefulness'. He ignored his responsibilities toward Micah. He believed that the Danites would pay him a greater hire than Micah could pay him. 'His heart was glad' (Judges 18:20), and he went with the men of Dan.

"When Micah learned how these men had robbed him of his priest, and his images, he called his neighbours together, and they pursued the Danites. They soon caught up with them, for the Danites, burdened with their children and household goods, could only move slowly onwards. Angrily Micah accused them of robbing him of his priest and his gods. They could not deny it, for in the very centre of the army could be seen the craven priest (v. 20), hiding from the anger of his previous employer. But the six hundred men of Dan were well-armed warriors. They were more



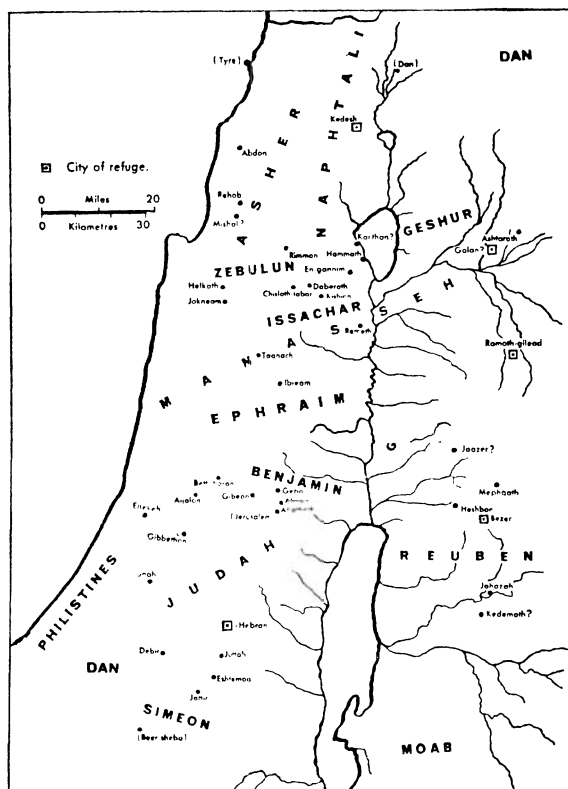
*Micah implores the men of Dan to restore
the Levite to him.*

than a match for Micah and his neighbours. 'Be careful', the leader of the Danites said to the angry Micah, 'There are some nasty-tempered fellows among our number who might attack you if you do not keep quiet. Then you will not only lose your priest, and your gods, but your life also'.

"Micah saw how hopeless was his state, and sorrowfully he turned back to his empty church.

"Meanwhile, the Danites moved north until they came to the lovely valley of the upper Jordan in which stood the quiet city of Laish (v. 28). Unbeknown to its inhabitants, the soldiers of Dan prepared to attack. The people lived quiet and secure lives (v. 27), and suspected no such trouble. But suddenly the Danites attacked, and Laish was overthrown. The Danites occupied the city and called it after their father Dan. The story of Micah and his priest concluded with Dan established in the north," said Mr. Phillips, as he finished the story.

"I suppose that is why the tribe of Dan is found both in the north and in the south on maps of ancient Palestine," said Peter.



Here Dan is shown as being situated in both the north and south in Palestine.

“That is so,” replied his father.

“Is anything more known about the Levite who left Micah?” asked Ann.

“Yes,” answered her father. “There is another detail, which is a very sad one. We learn his name, which was Jonathan (v. 30); and we also learn, with much sadness, that he was the grandson of Moses. How unlike his grandfather was this hireling, who thought nothing of perverting the ways of Yahweh for reward, or of running away from his master to get more pay!”

“Just a moment,” protested Peter. “It says nothing about Moses in v. 30. My Bible says he was the grandson of Manasseh”.

“Yes, but in the original language the word is Moses,” explained his father. “The Jews deliberately altered this place from Moses to Manasseh, for they could not bear to hear their great leader’s name used in such a connection. They added one letter (the letter *n*) to the Hebrew word, which changed it from Moses to Manasseh”.

“How do you know that?”, demanded Peter. “It happened a little before your time I think!”

“The Jews not only did this but recorded that they had done so”, replied Mr. Phillips. “They took great pains to preserve the Bible in its original form, and noted whenever any such alterations were made. From this we learn that this Levite was a grandson of Moses! How frail is human nature! Every person is treated by God as an individual. The fact that Moses was the grandfather of Jonathan did not guarantee the spiritual virtue of his grandson. It is obvious that he ignored the example set him!”

“Peter better keep that lesson in mind,” remarked Ann, as the talk came to an end.

The Story Of The Second Levite — Judges 19 to 21

And now we consider a most terrible story of sin and suffering; one that reveals how the heartless inhumanity of many of the people, and their total disregard for what God requires, turned the Land of Promise into a land of sorrow and shame.

It is the record of a terrible tragedy that almost destroyed an entire tribe, and brought death and mourning to many of the others.

We are again reminded that it was a time of anarchy — a time when there was “no king in Israel” — for not even Yahweh was respected by many of the people.

The story relates to a Levite of Mount Ephraim whose wife had left him. The cause of their separation is not told. Some translations of the Bible (such as *The Septuagint*) state that she was

angry with him for some unknown reason. Josephus declares that she disagreed with him, in consequence of which she returned to her father's house. She became very angry with him over something or other; they had arguments; she lost her affection for him and returned home.*

Whatever the cause, it was evidently the Levite who was mainly at fault, for after a long time had passed by without her returning to him, he went to her father's home, to seek reconciliation. His father-in-law greeted him with joy, glad that they were to be reconciled. So pleased was he that he could barely let them leave the home. For five days they stayed at Bethlehem, at the home of the Levite's father-in-law and then, late on the fifth day, they left for their home in the north.

About six miles from Bethlehem was the strong city of Jebus, today called Jerusalem (Judges 19:10). Though Joshua had defeated the King of Jebus, the Jebusites had regained control of the city, so now it was controlled by Gentiles. Night was almost upon them when the Levite and his company traverse the steep, hilly country by Jerusalem. It was dangerous to travel alone in those parts after dark, and the servant of the Levite pleaded with his master to stay at Jebus. But he would not do so. "We will not turn aside into the city of a stranger," he declared, "We will stop the night at Gibeah".

Little did the Levite realise the terrible consequences of his decision. So, the little company slowly travelled past Jebus, and continued some 2½ miles (4kms) to Gibeah — and to bloodshed and tragedy.

For in Gibeah they found no lodging place. Tired and dejected, they waited in the street for somebody to invite them home, according to the custom of the time.

But the people of Gibeah ignored them in their plight. It was a sinful, violent city and its citizens were not interested in helping the little company of dismal people waiting forlornly for assistance as the darkness of the night gathered in. It was left to another stranger, a man of Ephraim, who had set up his home in Gibeah of Benjamin, to invite the Levite, who was also of Ephraim (v. 1), to his home for the evening. This Levite not only gave them shelter, but insisted on providing them with food at his own expense and also provender for their animals (vv. 19-21).

This Ephraimite of Gibeah, was evidently as lonely in that wicked town as Lot had been in Sodom. And Gibeah was not

* In view of the context of the Chapter we consider this a more natural explanation than the statement of the Authorised Version. Some copies of the Hebrew render Judges 19:2 as "She was angry with him". Her husband would hardly have sought her out if the A. V. were right, and she had acted unfaithfully towards him.

much different from Sodom. It was populated by rascals of the worst kind, vile brutes who were a disgrace to humanity, and not fit to live†. These evil men were homosexuals, and desired to molest the Levite, as the men of Sodom did the angels whom Lot entertained. Dominated by lustful violence, they surrounded the house, and demanded of the Ephraimite that he bring the Levite out to them. This the Ephraimite refused to do; but, unfortunately there were no angels there to punish the wicked men of Gibeah as there had been in Sodom.

As those evil brutes of Gibeah banged on the door and demanded entrance, or that the Levite be brought out to them, the little company inside the house were filled with fear. They trembled as they heard the evil threats that were shouted at them. Then, under frightful pressure, the Levite did a shocking thing. Forcibly dragging his wife,‡ to the door, this cowardly and ungracious man thrust her out of the house, hoping to save his own skin at the expense of his wife.

He succeeded in doing this. A shocking crime and murder were committed that night in Gibeah. When the cowardly Levite arose next morning, he found his wife dead on the threshold of the house. Lifting her up, he fled from the vile city, back to his home in the mountains of Ephraim.

Revenge

The Levite returned home embittered by the awful tragedy. Fierce hatred burned in his heart. He was consumed with determination to have his revenge upon Gibeah. He wanted to see that town a smoking ruin, and its inhabitants put to the sword. He forgot his own contribution to the tragedy; he ignored his neglect of his wife: the manner in which he gave her over to the evil brutes at the door of the house. He should have protected her from their vile actions and murder. His mind was filled with dark thoughts of violence as he made his way northwards with his terrible burden. This built up in him such a consuming desire for revenge as to make him insanely angry.

Who could punish the guilty men of Gibeah? There was no one

† They are described as “sons of Belial” (Judges 19:22). The word signifies “worthlessness”. “Son of” in Hebrew signifies *filled with*. These men were mean, worthless and wicked. They had nothing of good in them. Belial is translated *wicked* in Nah. 1:15. It is derived from a root signifying extreme wickedness and destruction, the latter indicating the destiny of those who answer to the former. In 2 Cor. 6:15, Belial is used to personify *impure religion*. It is suggested that in its original form, the word possibly signified *Lord of the Forest*, implying actions hidden from view, and identified with the impure rites of paganism. The phrase frequently occurs in Scripture.

‡ The Hebrew *yachazeh* rendered “took” (v. 25), signifies *to take* or *seize by violence*. Moffatt renders: “the man seized his concubine and thrust her out”.

exercising authority to whom the Levite could turn for help, no central committee over the land. He realised that revenge must come from his own action. This led him along the path of further evil, causing him to perform a vile deed that horrified and humiliated the whole of Israel. He took the body of his dead wife, and dividing her into twelve pieces, he sent a piece to every tribe in Israel, calling upon them to avenge the murder.

When these terrible parcels reached their destinations, the leaders of the tribes were shocked by what they saw and heard (Judges 19:30). They could look with indifference upon the way Yahweh's truth was ignored and His name blasphemed, but the dramatic action of the Levite stirred their imagination and emotion. They were filled with indignation. There was a call for punishment, and it grew into a nationwide demand that the murderers of Gibeah should be immediately and ruthlessly punished. A general gathering of the nation was proclaimed, and representatives of the tribes met at Mizpeh. Only one tribe was not represented — the tribe of Benjamin, of which Gibeah formed a part.

Brought before the representatives of the people, the Levite gave an account of all that had happened, carefully hiding the fact that he had been party to the murder by thrusting his wife out of the house (Ch. 20:5). As they listened to his story, the indignation of the hearers rose until there was no holding it in check.

They overwhelmingly agreed to punish Gibeah. They joined forces (v. 11) by an oath, to destroy all who would not co-operate with them in punishing the wicked city (Judges 21:1,5). But first they tried negotiation. As Gibeah belonged to Benjamin, the responsibility lay with the men of that tribe to punish the rapists and murderers. But when the leaders of Benjamin refused to act against Gibeah, only one course remained. War was declared on that tribe.

Civil War — Judges 20

Meanwhile Benjamin did not remain idle. When war was declared they were ready for it. They were confident that they could defend Gibeah, which was situated in a mountainous area high above a deep valley, through which the attacking Israelites would have to make their way. The army of Benjamin included seven hundred veterans expert at slinging stones; so skilled, that they could throw these at terrific speed, projecting them with deadly accuracy over a distance of 600 feet (183 metres). With such forces ready to defend the strong walls of Gibeah, the Benjamites had little to fear.

Meanwhile the rest of the tribes assembled at the Tabernacle,

or House of God at Shiloh, to seek Divine counsel. They knew Gibeah should be punished for its wickedness, so they did not doubt the justice of their cause. But they did not pause to consider that the action of the men of Gibeah was indicative of the state of immorality and wickedness manifested throughout the land. They did not realise that, in some ways, they were as guilty as the Benjamites, and that they should humble themselves before Yahweh, and confess their own sin before attacking their brethren. Instead, a condition of self-righteousness motivated them as they met at Shiloh. They were not humbled and contrite before God, but assembled merely to enquire who should have the glory of leading the army to battle.

And God determined to punish them; to humble them for their good.

Meanwhile, Judah was given the honour of leading Israel to battle. At the head of a large contingent of warriors, leaders of the tribe led the marching troops up the valley towards the hill of Gibeah. As they neared the city, the army of Benjamin emerged from its gates, prepared to fight under the protection of its walls. A hail of stones, the lethal bullets of that age skillfully projected from the slings of expert slingers, fell with devastating effect on the advancing Israelites. Terrible havoc was wrought, whilst under cover of the barrage the Benjamites moved forward to complete the rout. By the end of the day, instead of victory for the Israelites, some 22,000 of their number lay dead on the field of battle.

Confused and dismayed at the unexpected defeat, the children of Israel again approached Yahweh. "Shall we go again to battle against the Benjamites?" they asked God. The answer came: "Go up against them".

Gibeah deserved to be punished; there was no doubt about that. But first, Israel also had to be taught a lesson. The whole nation was in a state of anarchy and wickedness; and whilst it was right that Benjamin should be punished, Israel must first be humbled before God.

On the second day they again attacked up the slope towards Gibeah. Again the Benjamites issued forth from the gates of the city, and fought under the protection of its walls. Once more the victory was with Benjamin: eighteen thousand Israelites were slain upon the field of battle.

Why should victory be granted to a people so completely wicked as the Gibites? As the men of Israel pondered this question, the answer gradually dawned upon them. They must first put themselves right with God before they could execute judgment on others. It is a lesson that we all must learn. It is so easy

to see faults in others, and yet excuse our own. It is so easy to condemn our fellows, and yet be blind to our own sins. The Lord Jesus taught this lesson. To his followers he said: "Why beholdest thou the splinter that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matt. 7:3).

Israel was now thoroughly humbled. The people fasted all day before Yahweh, and then offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. In doing so, they recognised their own failings, and proclaimed their intention to do better.

And now the promise of Yahweh came to the people through Phinehas the high priest: "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver Gibeah into your hand".

But though God had given His assurance of victory, it still became necessary for Israel to use proper precautions. God will help us if we help ourselves. We must use the talents He has given us if we would be successful in our walk to His kingdom. A new plan was decided upon in this third attack. The army was divided into three parts. One part was hidden in a valley behind Gibeah; the second part was hidden in a forest of palm trees in front of the city; the remainder marched up the valley towards the city as the full army had done on the two previous occasions.

As the Benjamites saw these Israelites approaching in military formation, they again issued forth from the city full of confidence, certain that victory would again be theirs. Fiercely they attacked, and for a moment it seemed that their expectations would be fulfilled. A few Israelites were slain, and the army began to fall back and then turn to retreat. Confidently the Benjamites determined that they would make an end of these continuous attacks by completely overwhelming the Israelites. Throwing caution to the winds, they boldly emerged from the protection of the city to chase the retreating enemy. As they did so, those lying in wait in the valley behind the city, arose from their hiding place, and entering Gibeah, slaughtered the inhabitants, and set the city on fire. The smoke of the burning city alerted the Benjamites to the fact that they had made a fatal mistake in following the enemy. Now themselves fearful, they commenced to retreat. As they did so, the second company, hidden in the forest not far from the city emerged, and vigorously attacked them from the rear. Meanwhile, the retreating Israelites, seeing the smoke of the city, realising that their plan had been successful, reformed and boldly returned to attack the Benjamites. Surrounded, the army of Benjamin suffered a decisive defeat: eighteen thousand of their number were slain. The rest fled pellmell from the battlefield, with the Israelites in strong pursuit, cutting them off as they caught up with them. A further

seven thousand men were destroyed. Finally, only 600 men remained of the army of Benjamin. They fled to the rock Rimmon, a steep hill of limestone about three and a half miles east of Bethel. Rimmon is separated from all approaches on the south, north and west by deep ravines which made it easy to defend. Being a place of caverns, the six hundred refugees of Benjamin found both safety and shelter.

**The Senseless
Slaughter
Continues
(Judges 20:48)**

Rankling over the large numbers of their own warriors who had been slain, and having tasted the heady wine of victory, the spirit of revenge now dominated the Israelites. Not content with punishing the men of Gibeah and those who defended them, they ruthlessly determined to destroy the whole tribe! Forty thousand of their own number lay dead upon the field of battle, and like most civil wars, the lust for violence now overstepped the bounds of discretion and decency. Blood-thirsty men, with fierce and cruel passions uncontrollably stirred, gave themselves over to an unrestrained orgy of genocide. The whole tribe of Benjamin, without discrimination of age or sex, was given over to slaughter. A terrible lust for blood dominated men, and caused them to march through the tribal inheritance of Benjamin, burning the cities and murdering the inhabitants. Its land became a smoking ruin. Cities lay devastated, their inhabitants ruthlessly given to the sword without sense or mercy, as men mad with the fury of revenge set about unrestrained in their terrible work of vengeance. Finally only the 600 men on the Rock Rimmon remained of Benjamin.

Some people wonder why such an account is recorded in the Bible. But the answer is, The Bible reveals life as it is, not as people would like it to be. Such things, terrible and evil as they are, are part of the pattern of history. What happened to Benjamin is no worse than similar incidents recorded by history. It finds a place in the Bible, not because God caused it, or commended the action taken, but because it not only reveals the pattern of righteousness, but also records the evil of flesh when it is unrestrained. It shows what can happen when men forsake God (Isaiah 59:1-3).

But, some ask, if God is all-powerful, why does He permit such senseless slaughter? The answer is that God has given to mankind the privilege of free will, and many abuse it. Man is responsible for the evil that ensues, not God. And it must ever be remembered that in spite of all the wickedness and evil that man has committed throughout the ages, history also reveals its

Abrahams, Davids, Joshuas, Hezekiahs, Daniels, Jobs, and greatest of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, a company of righteous ones, so great that “no man can number” will be gathered together in him (Revelation 7:9-17).

How much better is such a result attained by the exercise of freewill than by compulsion. God could have made man a mere robot, so that he could not sin — but what a sterile, loveless world of mankind that would produce! Men and women would be mere machines, obeying thoughtlessly the dictates of their Creator like mechanical toys. No real pleasure would accrue to God from beings such as that, or from those who obey Him because they are compelled without reason to do so. If a person, knowing he can disobey, yet in love obeys his heavenly Father, it is pleasing to God.

God has described Himself as a Father. And what delights parents most? They find greatest pleasure in the loving obedience of their children. In manifesting such an attitude children can return some of the self-sacrificing love their parents have bestowed upon them when they were too young to appreciate it. Our heavenly Father finds similar delight in the loving response of those who are His sons and daughters in truth. Meanwhile we must realise that God does not approve all the incidents recorded in the Bible. Both good and evil actions of men and women have been recorded as examples, that we might follow the first and avoid the second.

**When Tempers
Cooled
— Judges 21**

The Levite’s dramatic revelation of the murder of his wife, and his demand for revenge had stirred the nation to its depths. On a surge of emotionalism the people had extended the horror until the tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed, and its territory had been turned into a smoking ruin. Now people paused to count the cost. As their tempers cooled, and they saw what they had done, they gave themselves over to misery and regret. “The people wept”. They assembled at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, to consider the matter, and to beseech the forgiveness of God. “Why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking?” they asked (Judges 21:3).

This question reveals the full measure of their sin. It shows how completely blind the people were to their own faults. They should have known “why” the tragedy had happened. The answer is given in verse 25 of the same chapter: “There was no king in Israel (not even Yahweh), every man did that which was right in his own eyes”.

At Mizpeh (Judges 20:1), the people had bound themselves by a solemn and terrible oath to:

1. Slay the guilty men of Gibeah (Judges 20:9-11).
2. Slay those of Benjamin who supported Gibeah (Judges 20:13).
3. Slay those of the rest of the tribes who did not support Israel in punishing Gibeah (Judges 21:5).
4. Cut Benjamin off from the rest of the tribes by refusing to allow any of their daughters to marry a Benjamite (Judges 21:1).

Now that their tempers had cooled they regretted this terrible vow. They sought some way of avoiding it. Only six hundred men remained of the tribe of Benjamin, and if they were refused marriage, the tribe would gradually die out. As they discussed the problem, somebody recalled that the men of Jabesh-Gilead had not helped Israel against Gibeah. They had vowed that they would punish any such and this provided them with a solution to their problem of providing wives for the remaining Benjamites without breaking their vow.

In accordance with the vow that they had made, they marched against Jabesh-Gilead, and put all to the sword with the exception of four hundred young unmarried women. These they captured and gave to the Benjamites who meanwhile remained in their place of refuge on the Rock Rimmon.

But still two hundred Benjamites remained without wives. Once more the leaders of Israel pondered the problem, seeking how they might legally circumvent the vows they had made. They remembered that there was an annual feast held at Shiloh. Part of the celebrations included a public dance by young, unmarried girls. This was held in a lovely valley, about four miles distant from Jerusalem, the slopes of which were covered with grapevines.

The Israelites agreed that though they had vowed they would not give their daughters to Benjamin, the men of Benjamin could take these daughters for wives! This convenient solution of how to get around an awkward vow without actually breaking it pleased them. Accordingly, they invited the two hundred men of Benjamin who remained without wives, to hide in the vineyards by the valley where the dance was conducted, and at an appropriate time to seize every man his wife. The elders of Israel promised that they would protect them against the relatives of these young women.

The men of Benjamin acted on this advice. They hid in the vineyards, and when the girls came out to conduct their dance in the valley below, they suddenly rose up from their hiding places, and snatching each man his bride, returned to their land there to

rebuild their homes, and re-establish the tribe. But Benjamin never fully recovered from this disaster, although it produced some great men, among whom were Saul the first king of Israel, and Paul the Apostle.

Meanwhile, to the angry parents of the two hundred brides who were forcibly taken at the dance, the elders of Israel said: "Allow Benjamin to do this, for we reserved them not wives when we declared with an oath that we would not give our girls to them in marriage. You have not broken the oath for you have not given them up, but they have seized these young ladies, therefore you are not guilty!"

On this hypocritical note of immorality, bloodshed, and broken vows, the *Book of Judges* ends. It forms an important link in the history of Israel. It presents a lively description of a unsettled nation subject to both victory and defeat. But it was not, as many think, a time of continuous war, for when all the periods of violence are added up, they only amount to a third of the full time occupied by the records of this book. It is summed up by the concluding comment of the book: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Ch. 20:25).

"What an awful story that is," remarked Ann, as the Phillips' family completed reading the last chapters of Judges.

"Well, I certainly agree with Dad in that it is a very dramatic book" said Peter, "although I cannot see much sense or reason in parts of it".

"It is not only a dramatic book," said Mr. Phillips, "but as I have told you before, it teaches a very important lesson; for we live in similar times to those".

"In what way do you mean?" asked Graeham.

"In the days of the Judges there was no open authority in Israel", explained Mr. Phillips. "Yahweh had put the Law before the people, and He expected them to obey it, but there was no one to compel them to do so. It was left to their individual sense of duty to keep it or ignore it. If they obeyed the Law, they would experience a happy and contented existence, living in peace and prosperity; but because of their disobedience; they became subject in turn to four things: Sin, Suffering, Supplicating help and Salvation. It provided a pattern of life. Sin was punished by suffering; but when the people learned their lesson, and supplicated Yahweh for help they found salvation. Thus time and again we have brought to our notice: SIN brings Suffering; Supplicating to God brings SALVATION. We can learn the same lesson today for as it was then we have no open authority who can speak directly to us from God; it is left to each individual to 'work out

his own salvation'. Unfortunately, some act as did Israel and refuse to be governed by the Word of Yahweh. They do 'what is right in their own eyes'. God has declared: 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word' (Isa. 66:2). The person who '*trembles* at Yahweh's word' sets Yahweh as king in his heart, and will not be found wayward like Israel".

"Just a moment, Dad," interrupted Peter. "What you are saying is quite obvious, but what lessons are taught in these last chapters of Judges? There is only murder, bloodshed, civil war, and evils of every kind".

"True," agreed his father. "And what was the cause of these things? It was due to what Paul calls 'a zeal but not according to knowledge' (Rom. 10:2). The people were religious but not according to Truth. Zeal is an excellent thing, but it must be motivated by the Word of God. It wasn't so in the times of the Judges, and it often is not so today. Spiritual anarchy then follows, a condition that we have been reading about".

"But those sorts of things do not happen today!" protested Ann.

"In measure they do," answered Mr. Phillips. "The Bible teaches that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5), and hatred is as murder (1 John 3:15). When these things are allowed to continue unchecked in our midst, there is little difference in the sight of God between the times of the Judges and now. Therefore we must avoid those ways, and seeking the way of Truth, walk therein. We will find true peace and happiness by so doing. Young people tend to mock at the advice to follow the ways of God. They are very headstrong, and imagine they know best. They want what they call 'a good time', and sometimes elders encourage them in this. But their so-called 'good time' often leads them into dangerous ways, and habits, and finally into great misery. Nobody is too young to start learning about God, and seeking to obey Him".

"Are there any other lessons to learn from these last chapters?" asked Graeham.

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips. "As we read through the Bible, do not overlook the development of God's great plan. The things He has recorded are set down as a type for all time. We have:

1. The people of Israel as slaves in Egypt, wearing out their lives in bondage that brings nothing but suffering terminating in death.

2. God invites Israel to make ready to leave Egypt — an antitype of the present-day call of the Gospel — Acts 15:14.

3. They are separated from Egypt by a national baptism in the Red Sea typing a believer's baptism into Christ (Romans 6).

4. Israel is educated in the way of God by the Law given at Sinai — as Christ has his Law for believers (Matthew 5,6,7).

5. Israel wanders in the wilderness for forty years; typical of believers today.

6. Joshua overcomes the Canaanites, making it possible for Israel to enter into their inheritance. Typically, Christ does the same. (See Heb. 2:14-15).

7. The Book of Judges describes the state of anarchy of those who do not subject themselves to Divine discipline and guidance — The records of Ecclesiastes reveal a similar state.

8. Though the nation falls into disorder and anarchy, individuals within it — like Ruth, Boaz etc. — live faithfully and righteously before God. There always has been a faithful remnant throughout the centuries (Rev. 12:17).

9. This state of lawlessness ended with the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth under David. A similar course of events will occur in the future under Christ.

“All this,” continued Mr. Phillips, “is typical of our state in Christ Jesus”.

1. Those who do not believe and obey Christ are described as “the slaves of sin” (Rom. 6:17).

2. The call of God through the Gospel invites them to separate themselves from this state of servitude to become bond-servants to righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

3. The first act of obedience is to submit to baptism.

4. This must be followed by continued observance of the Word.

5. This requires “patient continuance in well-doing” (Rom. 2:7).

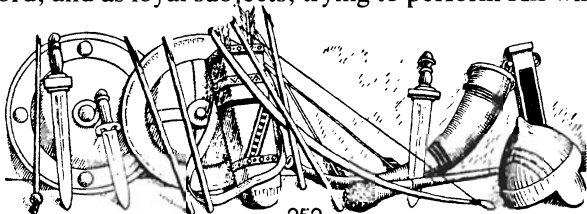
6. Whilst Christ made it possible for us to succeed (Heb. 2:14), we must “labour to enter into our inheritance” (Heb. 4:11).

7. We must make the most of our spiritual opportunities.

8. We must not be deterred by the inconsistent attitude of others, or become discouraged by evil conditions that may exist. Like Ruth and Boaz, we must live our individual lives faithfully and righteously before God.

9. The present state of lawlessness will end in the establishment of the Kingdom of God under Christ.

“There is much we can learn in these stories,” concluded Mr. Phillips. “If we seek the deeper meaning of them, we will see that they are not disconnected records of hate and violence, but reveal in type God’s plan with man. But it is now late enough, and we must end the discussion here. Before doing so, however, notice the divine summary of the Book of Judges: ‘In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ (Jud. 21:25). Never let that be said of us. Always remember that we respect the King of heaven, by hearkening to His word, and as loyal subjects, trying to perform His will”.



The Book of Ruth

This book provides a delightful story of love, faith and fidelity, teaching the wonderful principles of redemption. It is particularly interesting for its background is "when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1), which was an epoch of licentiousness, wickedness, violence, bloodshed and anarchy.

The Book of Ruth forms a bridge between the Book of Judges and the First Book of Samuel. The former presents a lively description of an unsettled nation: the disorders and dangers of a people without a visible head, who have forgotten God, or merely worship Him in a faithless and fatal formalism; of the contest between true and false religion; of epochs of bloodshed and misery when unbridled savagery brought mourning to thousands.

Disgusted by some of the things that we read, we turn with relief and joy to The Book of Ruth. The sad record of Judges might cause us to wonder that if this be the way God's nation manifested His influence, there is little hope for the human race. The Book of Ruth however, reveals that we do not have to capitulate to our environment. We learn how individuals manifested faith and love in spite of terrible conditions that surrounded them; how in humble, self-sacrificing service, they rendered to Yahweh that which He desired.

The dedication and character of Ruth herself enlightens an otherwise dark and gloomy epoch. Her experiences teach that salvation is an individual matter; and that the depressions and frustrations of life are challenges to faith. In gentle, self-sacrificing Ruth there are qualities to emulate, and wonderful examples to follow; so much so that her name has been incorporated into the English language as expressive of those attributes of tenderness, compassion and love. To be destitute of those qualities is to be "ruth-less" indeed.

We enter again the home of Mr. Phillips as he discusses this beautiful book with the members of his family. It is a cold, bleak night. The wind roars off the ocean that faces the Phillips' home, and swirls around the house as though it would delight to tear off the roof. But inside it is warm and cosy, and the howling of the gale is forgotten as the family considers together the experiences of warm-hearted Ruth, and the love she displayed for the things of Yahweh.

Chapter One

DISCUSSING THE STORY OF RUTH

"I always love the story of Ruth," remarked Ann as the family completed the reading of the fourth chapter.

"Yes, it is a great favourite with most people," remarked Mr. Phillips.

"It reminds us of what you once told us," said Graeham. "You said that the Bible contains all kinds of stories — mystery, adventure, drama. Well, here we have a love story".

"The only important point in the book, as far as I am concerned, seems to be the fact that Ruth was the great-grandmother of David (ch. 4:21-22)," said Peter.

"There is much more in it than that," replied his father emphatically. "If you were to ask me what is the most . . ."

"I know what you are going to say, Dad," interrupted Peter rather irreverently, "it is the most dramatic book in the Bible!"

"No," replied his father, "I was going to say, 'If you were to ask me what is the most important teaching in the book, I would say that it was in the duties of the redeemer that are so clearly set out, and the way it points forward as a type to the work of the Lord Jesus among the Gentiles'".

"When did Ruth live?" asked Joan.

"We are not told," answered her father. "It was during the time 'when the judges ruled' (Ruth 1:1). As a matter of fact, the last chapters of Judges (from chapter 18 onwards) are not in their right order. They, like the *Book of Ruth*, occurred sometime before the days of Samson. For example, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron was living in the time of civil war (Judges 20:28) which therefore must have been just after the death of Joshua. But Ruth though a Gentile, rose above the evil conditions of her surroundings. The book of Ruth opens with a record of trouble and distress, but it closes with one of joy. There are four chapters, and they can be divided into the following headings:

Chapter 1 — *Love's Resolve*: Ruth cleaves to Naomi in her sorrow;

Chapter 2 — *Love's Response*: Ruth's faithful service;

Chapter 3 — *Love's Request*: Ruth's loving appeal to Boaz;

Chapter 4 — *Love's Reward*: Ruth the redeemed, and Naomi the joyful.

"It opens in a time of famine," continued Mr. Phillips. "There

was a man named Elimelech, of Bethlehem, who left the famine-stricken lands of Israel, for the prospect of better things in Moab. He took with him his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. There his two sons obtained wives of the Moabites, and for a time all seemed well. But then disaster struck. Elimelech died, and later the two sons died also. Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law. She was not only lonely, but destitute, and having heard that her own country was in a flourishing condition again, she decided to return”.

“The Bible puts that in a very interesting manner,” remarked Graeham, who was following his father’s comments with his Bible open at the place. “It says that ‘she heard how that Yahweh had visited His people in giving them bread’ (Ch. 1:6)”.

“You will find some very delightful sayings in this beautiful book,” said his father. “For example, Naomi describes the troubles she experienced as ‘the hand of Yahweh is gone out against me’ (Ch. 1:13), expressive of the Father’s love in punishing a disobedient child, correcting it for its good. Boaz describes the action of Ruth in returning with her mother-in-law, as ‘under Yahweh’s wings thou art come to trust’ (Ch. 2:12); suggestive of helpless chickens trustfully sheltering under the outstretched wings of the mother bird who is prepared to defend them. In Chapter 1:6, to which you have referred, the breaking of the drought is described as ‘Yahweh visiting His people’. Men would call such things as drought ‘the laws of nature’, but God’s Word expresses it differently. It teaches us to appreciate the good things of life, as the gifts of Him Who is the Giver of perfect gifts (James 1:17). It was He who at times brought famine on Israel (2 Kings 8:1; Lev. 26:18,21,26), and He who was responsible for the blessings of rain and good seasons. The Truth teaches us not only to appreciate these things as coming from God, but to use the blessings He gives us in His service. So we are told: ‘Honor Yahweh with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of thine increase . . . (Prov. 3:9)’. If we do so, we shall receive greater blessing in return”.

“That is all very interesting,” remarked Peter. “But I suggest you get on with the story, Dad. When Graeham introduces these side-issues we tend to spend the whole night on them”.

“Peter is anxious to get on with the love story,” said Ann with a chuckle.

“Many more wise-cracks like that,” said Peter to his sister, “and you will learn the meaning of Dad’s graphic phrase, ‘Then disaster struck’.”

“Never mind them, Daddy,” interrupted Joan, “tell the story to me!”

“Naomi thus decided to return to Bethlehem,” continued Mr. Phillips. “She told her two daughters-in-law of her intention, and invited them to return each to her mother’s house. ‘You will be able to find husbands in Moab,’ she said to them.

“But they did not want to leave her. ‘We will return with you to your people’, they replied.

“But Naomi felt she had nothing to offer them in the land of Israel. She was poor, and could give little hope to the two young women. Elimelech had done wrong in going to Moab, her sons had done wrong in marrying outside Israel, the law decreed that Moabites* were not allowed in the congregation of Israel (Deut. 23:3), and Naomi did not want to bring any further trouble upon the two girls.

“Orpah decided to act upon Naomi’s advice, and return, but Ruth in her loving kindness to her destitute mother-in-law, said: ‘Do not drive me from you. I desire to stay with you. Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; nothing but death will part us’. Naomi was deeply touched by the love of the beautiful Ruth, and so they returned to the land of Israel together.

“They came to Bethlehem where Elimelech had been well known and respected, and as Naomi and Ruth entered its gates, the women came up eagerly to greet them. They saw the marks of suffering on Naomi’s face, and realised that she had been through great trouble. ‘This is not the Naomi we knew!’† they remarked. Naomi replied, ‘Call me not Naomi (which means *pleasant*) but call me Mara (which means *bitter*), for the Almighty hath afflicted me. I went out full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty, and in doing so, He has testified against me’ (v. 21).

“Naomi did not blame God in so speaking. She had no complaint to offer to Him. Rather did she acknowledge that her family had been at fault, and her reduced state was a Divine witness against the action of Elimelech in deserting Bethlehem for Moab which had proved a Land of Death.

“It was in ‘the beginning of barley harvest’ (v. 22) when Naomi returned. That is approximately March, spring time in the land of Israel; a very beautiful time when the green fields, bright flowers,

* The Law stated this but Ruth joined Israel, not as a Moabitess, but as an Israelite. In this she was like Rahab, and like Gentiles today, who embrace the hope of Israel, and in doing so, cast off their Gentilism and identify themselves with the commonwealth of Israel (Acts 15:14; 28:20; Ephesians 2:11-13). They follow Christ beyond the scope of the Law (see Hebrews 13:11-14).

† See Ch. 1:19. “They” is feminine in Hebrew, indicating that it was the women of the city who asked the question. The question, in Hebrew, is literally “*the* Naomi? — Is this *the* Naomi we knew?”

and singing birds rejoice the heart (Song 2:11-13). Moreover, it also is the time of Passover which proclaims the goodness of Yahweh in His deliverance of His people. Probably Naomi timed her return to synchronise with the festival, so that she could join with her fellow-Bethlehemites in celebrating it.

**Ruth Is Guided To
The Field of Boaz
— Ruth 2**

“But how were Naomi and Ruth to live now that they had returned to Bethlehem? The Law of Moses provided the means. God decreed that when the farmers in Is-

rael harvested their crops, they were to leave any grain that the reapers had left for the poor people to freely collect for their own needs (Deuteronomy 24:19). They were to do this particularly for strangers (Leviticus 19:9-10), and as Ruth was both poor and a stranger she had a special claim on the gleaning. It was not a very pleasant way to live, yet Ruth did not murmur, but was thankful that God had made such provision for the feeding of the needy. But if it were humiliating for Ruth to have to rely upon this work of charity, how much more would it be for Naomi, who was not only aged, but once knew great prosperity in Bethlehem. However, Ruth asked permission of Naomi to do the gleaning for them both, and out she set for that purpose.

“Being a stranger, she knew nothing of the country, nor who owned the fields. But God guided her. She turned into a field where a number of workers were reaping the harvest, and she followed them, collecting the grain they left. Suddenly they all paused in their work. A powerfully-built man had entered the field, and all the workers looked up to greet him. He was the owner of the property, the wealthy Boaz, renowned alike for his piety towards God, as well as his prowess in war. He greeted his workmen: ‘*Yahweh immachem*’ — ‘Yahweh be with you’. The greeting signifies, ‘May Yahweh be with you to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work’. The men replied: *Barechecha Yahweh*’ — ‘Yahweh bless thee’. This greeting signifies, ‘May Yahweh bless thee with the increase of the field, and grace to use your bounty to the glory of the Giver’. Thus with a prayer on the lips of both Master and men, the work proceeded to the glory of God. The reapers went about their work, and the gleaners that followed stooped to pick up the grains that were left.

“As they did so, Boaz caught sight of Ruth for the first time.

“Who is this young lady? he asked his overseer.

“She is Ruth the Moabitess, was the reply. The overseer praised her for the long hours she had worked at her task in the field (v. 7). And Boaz, as he watched the beautiful Ruth, labori-

ously gleaning the few grains that remained, was drawn by kindness to her. He already knew of her loyal service to her mother-in-law, for he was related to Naomi. He desired to help them, but knew that they would not want what men call 'charity', but would be encouraged and pleased by his loving interest. He could have enriched them without effort on his part, but he knew that would not be the best thing for them. The best thing would be to allow Ruth to work profitably, by so arranging affairs that she would gain by her labours receive protection, and have her needs met.

"Ruth was overcome by his kindness to her, a stranger. By now she knew how Israelites viewed the people of Moab (see Deuteronomy 23:3; Ruth 2:10), and was deeply moved by the courtesy and consideration of Boaz. She bowed down before him, thanking him for his help. The kind words of Boaz comforted Ruth, and strengthened her faith in the God of Israel (see Prov. 15:23; 25:11).

"She continued to glean in the fields, and at mealtime was invited by Boaz to eat with the reapers. They sat down among the



Boaz invites Ruth to dine with him.

sheaves of grain and Boaz himself helped Ruth to the parched corn. This was a favorite dish. The ears were gathered when not quite ripe, and roasted on an iron plate. They have a milky, crusty flavour, pleasant to the taste. Boaz loaded Ruth with food so that she not only had enough to eat, but ample to take home to Naomi. After eating, Ruth went back to glean again, and Boaz told his men to let some handfuls fall to the ground on purpose. Thus, by evening, Ruth had gathered a goodly supply of barley heads, and when she had beaten out the grains with a stick (Isaiah 28:27), she had about a bushel, which she took home to her mother-in-law.

“When Naomi saw how much Ruth had brought home, she was glad and asked Yahweh to bless the man who had been so kind to her. When she learned who that man was, her wonderment grew even greater. She could see that God was working in their lives to fulfil a wonderful purpose. She thanked Him for His loving care, in that He had not left off his kindness to the living and the dead, and explained to Ruth what this meant. Boaz was a near kinsman, or relative. As such, under the Law of Moses, he had the right to buy back their land, and restore to them a measure of their original prosperity. She advised Ruth to keep close by the maidens of Boaz until the end of the barley and wheat harvests.

Ruth Appeals For Help — Ruth 3

“But Naomi realised that Ruth could not continue forever gathering grain in the fields. She decided that she must seek for her a husband who could provide for her.

‘My daughter’, she said to Ruth, ‘shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?’”

“That says nothing about a husband,” interrupted Graeham.

“The word in the Hebrew translated ‘Rest’ is *Menuchah*,” explained his father. “It means *a safe shelter*, and it was the word the Hebrews used to describe a husband’s home. Such a home was considered the bride’s *menuchah*. or *safe shelter*, where she received security and protection. Naomi had used this word when she had told Orpah and Ruth to return to the land of Moab. She had said: ‘Yahweh grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband . . .’ (Ch. 1:9). Now, in the land of Israel, she was determined to find such a safe shelter for the lovely and gentle Ruth.

“The Law of Moses provided the means by which this could be done. And I want you children to take particular notice of what I am about to say. It reveals part of the character of God showing Him to be loving and compassionate, a Father who is not

unmindful of our needs, and will provide a Friend who will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in Him. In His law He demanded that those who had the means must help those who are less fortunate. For example, if a Hebrew fell in debt, and had to borrow on the land that God had granted him, it was the duty of the nearest of kin to buy it back, and restore it to his poor relation (Leviticus 25:23-25). In doing so, the next of kin acted on behalf of Yahweh who decreed that in any case the land must be returned to the original owner every fifty years (Leviticus 25:10,23). Next — if a Hebrew was sold into slavery because he could not pay his debts, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem him from his state of servitude (Leviticus 25:47-55). Thirdly — if a person suffered violence at the hands of another, it was the duty of the next of kin to avenge him (Joshua 20:5-10). Finally, if a person died leaving no children, it was the duty of the next of kin to marry his widow, and raise up children for his dead relation, that his family name might be retained in Israel (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

“Therefore the Law of Moses taught men to be considerate of one another. The poor could always look to his redeemer, the next of kin for help; whilst the wealthy were commanded by law to look out for the needs of the poor among them. The followers of the Lord Jesus need no such law, for they should do this as a matter of course. The great example that they have in the Lord Jesus should teach them that.

“The Hebrews had a special name for the next of kin. They called him ‘the *Goel*’ and to the *Goel* all the distressed families of Israel had a right to look. In our Bible that word is translated *the Redeemer*. The next of kin, therefore, was the Redeemer, and the work of the Redeemer under such circumstances was to:

- (1) Restore to Hebrews their original inheritance.
- (2) Redeem his relations from slavery.
- (3) Avenge their brethren of their enemies.
- (4) Preserve the family by providing children.

“Is that why God is called the Redeemer of Israel?” asked Graeham with a note of interest in his voice.

“That is so,” answered his father. “On several occasions Yahweh is called the Redeemer of Israel (Isaiah 59:20; Psa. 19:14; 78:35, etc.), and the use of this title shows that He will Restore, Redeem, Avenge and Preserve His people.

“Just a moment,” interrupted Peter in an argumentative tone of voice. “I have a hard question to ask. Let us see if Dad can wriggle out of this one!”

“Well, what is it?” asked Ann sharply. “We want to finish the story of Ruth some time tonight!”

THREE BEAUTIFUL CHARACTERS IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

BOAZ (*The Strong One*) — was a farmer, a valiant man and wealthy, beloved of his servants. He was extremely prosperous, and yet not above helping the common labourers in the field. By the grace of Yahweh, he was permitted to type the future, becoming like the Lord Jesus, the *Goel*, or Redeemer of his family. He was kind, thoughtful and gracious, and, above all, earnest and sincere in his worship, which moulded the pattern of his life from day to day. His name (meaning *strength*) was in marked contrast to the meaning of Ruth's first husband — Mahlon (meaning *sickness*).

RUTH (*Lovely, or Tender*) — quietly and faithfully accepted the path of duty wherever it led. It brought her into poverty and difficulty, but through it all, Yahweh was with her, protecting and guiding her to the great joy that lay hidden in the future. She was modest, industrious, and doubtless beautiful. She had the qualities to attract Boaz and engage his affection, whilst her tender concern for Naomi, her cheerful shouldering of the cares of the household, her voluntary acceptance of poverty in order to help her mother-in-law, could not fail to arouse the esteem of Boaz. All these things worked together in the purpose of God to bring about a marriage from which ultimately came David, and from him the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of mankind.

NAOMI (*Favour or Pleasantness*) — the virtues of Ruth do not take away from the qualities of Naomi. She is revealed as an outstanding woman of faith, courage and kindness. She never lost the first quality even in her dire distress, but ever sought the way of truth and righteousness. Her care for her daughters-in-law, her trust in God when adversity came upon her, her reliance upon His Law to which she drew Ruth, were finally rewarded with a great joy in the birth of her grandson.

The record of Ruth must have been cheering for those who lived in those times, and who were oppressed with the evils of their day. As they pondered its meaning, they would be uplifted with the realisation that they were not without a Redeemer to help them, in spite of the spiritual famine, the violence and godlessness of the age (Job 19:14,25).

"It is a really good question, this!" said Peter slowly to the annoyance of his sisters. "Dad said that the word 'Redeemer' means 'next of kin' — that correct?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips.

"Next you said that God is our Redeemer — is that correct?"

"Certainly," replied his father.



Ruth
and
Boaz
in
the
field.

“Well, is God our next of kin?” asked Peter triumphantly.

“Hmm, that is true!” said Ann thoughtfully. “God is not our next of kin”.

“It is a good question,” commended Mr. Phillips as Peter, to the scorn of his sisters, patted himself on the back, and the answer is a most interesting and wonderful one. When Yahweh declared Himself as Redeemer of Israel, He was stating His intention of revealing Himself in one who would be allied to the human race, and who would thus be in a position to redeem mankind from the state into which it has fallen through sin. You know to whom I am referring, of course”.

“It is to Jesus Christ,” said Peter.

“Yes,” replied his father. “God revealed himself in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19), and in doing so became the Redeemer of mankind. See what the Lord himself declares in John 5:27: ‘The Father hath given him (the Lord Jesus) authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man’. As Son of man he is a near kinsman to the human race, and therefore in a position to redeem mankind”.

“This is very interesting, Daddy,” said Ann, “but it is taking us a long way from the Book of Ruth”.

“Not at all, my dear,” replied her father. “The book of Ruth teaches this wonderful lesson, and is really a type of the work of Yahweh in the Lord Jesus as we shall see. Naomi knew of this wonderful provision of the Law of Moses, and decided to avail herself of it for the benefit of the beautiful Ruth. Boaz was a near kinsman, and therefore in a position to help Ruth by marrying her, and buying back the property of her dead husband. A true redeemer must have the right, the power, and the will to redeem, and Naomi judged that Boaz had all these qualifications.

“She told Ruth to prepare herself, to watch carefully where Boaz slept each evening. Then, as he lay there, to gently lift up the blanket that covered his feet. This was a custom whereby wives of old showed their subjection to their husbands. The Law of the Redeemer, and the fact that Boaz was the near kinsman of her dead husband, now gave the lovely and gentle Ruth the right to do likewise.

“Ruth did as Naomi told her. That night she entered the sleeping room of Boaz, and lifting up the blanket that covered his feet, she lay there, awaiting the time he would awake. Her presence disturbed Boaz. He awoke with a start, and to his amazement, he saw that there was a woman in the room. ‘Who are you?’ he asked. ‘I am Ruth’ came the answer, ‘Spread thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art one that has right to redeem’ (Ch. 3:9 — marg.).

“Ruth, as a widow, thus appealed to Boaz for the protection that the Law of Moses provided. In asking Boaz to spread his skirt over her, she was making reference to the custom of the times. The casting of an outward garment over the bride’s head was part of the ceremony at old-time eastern marriages. It was a token given by the husband that he would protect his wife, for the word ‘skirt’ in the Hebrew is ‘wing’. Thus Ruth was appealing to Boaz for marriage and protection.

“Boaz was deeply touched by the action of Ruth. Though she was young and beautiful, and possibly could have obtained a husband from among the young men both rich and poor, she preferred to follow the Law of God, and build up the house of her dead husband in the way appointed (v. 10). And Boaz, who had learned to love and esteem the beautiful young Gentile maiden, was happy to take her as his bride. But there was a difficulty. There was a kinsman nearer than Boaz, whose duty it was first to act as redeemer. Boaz knew this, and it was possibly the reason why he had not offered to perform the part of the Redeemer, and restore Ruth to the position she should have held as the wife of Mahlon. But now that Ruth had appealed to him, he was determined to do something about it. ‘In the morning,’ he said, ‘I will see if your closer kinsman will perform his duty, and if not, I will act as your Redeemer’. When morning came he loaded her with a present, and sent her back to Naomi.

“Ruth told her mother-in-law all that had happened and they awaited developments that were not long in coming”.

Boaz
The Redeemer
— Ruth 3

“On the morrow,” continued Mr. Phillips, “Boaz went to the gate of the city. In those days, many of the cities were walled for fear of enemy attack, so that entrance into a city was very limited. The gate became the most prominent place, and all the notable men and judges met there to give their decisions on any problems in dispute that came before them (Deut. 16:18; Josh. 20:4).

“Not long after Boaz arrived, he saw the relative of Naomi also approaching. Calling ten principal men of the city to act as witnesses, he explained his intention to act as Redeemer if this other closer relation whose name is not disclosed, did not intend to do so. He declared that Naomi, in her poverty was about to sell a parcel of land that belonged to Elimelech, and it was the right of this near relative, or of Boaz, to purchase it, and so retain it in the family. Boaz told the near relative to act upon his right, or else he would do so.

"The relative agreed to buy the land. But when Boaz added that he must also accept the responsibility of Ruth the Moabitess, the man refused to do so. 'I cannot redeem it myself lest I mar mine own inheritance' he said, 'Redeem it yourself, for I cannot do so'.

"So saying, he took off his shoe and handed it to Boaz".

"Whatever did he do that for?" interrupted Joan.

"It was the custom of the day," replied her father. "When any land was bought or sold, the man who sold it took off his shoe and gave it to the man who bought it".

"But why did he do so?" asked Ann.

"It was just a custom, a ceremony," explained her father. "By it a man showed that he had given up his right to walk upon the land thus sold. The ten men, witnessing this, could testify that the near relative had given up his right to the land he could have redeemed".



Boaz purchases the inheritance of Naomi so that he may marry Ruth.

“What did the relative mean when he said that he would ‘mar’ his inheritance if he accepted Ruth?” asked Graeham (Ruth 4:6).

“The word means *ruin*,” explained his father. “I believe that it related to the proposed marriage with Ruth. She was a Moabitess, and to marry one of such a race was prohibited by the Law (Deut. 23:3-4). To do so would bring the condemnation of the Law upon him, and so ‘mar’ his inheritance”.

“Why, then, was Boaz prepared to marry her?” asked Peter. “Did he not know the Law?”

“Yes, but he also realised that Ruth, though a Moabitess by descent was a true Israelitess in heart, belief and character. He realised that ‘the flesh profits nothing’ (John 6:63), and that God would not refuse even a Moabite if he gave himself to doing His will. Therefore, Boaz realised that Yahweh and His grace were greater than the Law and its demands”.

“How does that fit in with Boaz representing Christ?” asked Graeham.

“In a very wonderful manner,” answered his father enthusiastically. “The Lord Jesus went beyond the restrictions of the Law in bringing people to God (Heb. 13:12). He provided a sacrifice that is able to remove every sin, and convert Gentiles into true Israelites (Ephesians 2:11-14). It is a sacrifice that is able to provide a covering for those who come unto him in truth blotting out those sins from which there was no forgiveness under the Law (Psa. 51:14-16). Now Paul taught that in order to do this, Jesus himself came under the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13), for he was crucified as a criminal. In any other man that would have ‘marred his inheritance’.”

“Does that mean God’s Law cursed him?” asked Graeham.

“The manner of Christ’s death brought him under the curse of the Law”, replied his father. “You see, the Law condemned all who were put to death by hanging upon a tree (Deut. 21:23), for only criminals were so treated”.

“But Jesus was not a criminal,” protested Peter.

“Of course, not!” exclaimed his father. “And the Law did not condemn him for his righteous character, for he manifested perfect obedience in all his ways. But his flesh was the same as that of all mankind; and the flesh is the seat of sin. Jesus himself taught: ‘From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thought, adulteries, fornications, murders’ and so forth (Mark 7:21-23). The ‘lusts of the flesh’ are evil (1 John 2:16) and must be suppressed if we would please God. No man has been able to completely conquer the flesh, except the Lord Jesus Christ; and he was only able to do it through the mental strength granted him by his heavenly Father (Psalm 80:17). To illustrate that it was not

the flesh that conquered, but rather 'God in Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:19), the Father permitted the Son to be crucified (Acts 2:23). His flesh (which is the fallen flesh of all mankind) came under the condemnation of the Law; but not his righteous character".

"How did God strengthen him to overcome?" asked Peter.

"In the mental ability that the Lord Jesus possessed, and which was greater than that of any other person," explained his Father. "It is in the mind that the battle of life is fought and won or lost. God gave him a mind with the ability to absorb Divine things greater than any man. He used that which God had given him, and so himself co-operated with his Father to defeat that which normally would have overwhelmed him — the desires of the flesh. In addition, God gave him the Spirit without measure, and in other ways helped the Son to conquer as he did. However, it was not all God, but Christ who co-operated with God".

"If God gave him greater means to overcome than anybody else has had, is not that unfair?" asked Peter.

"Of course not," replied his father. "No more than it is unfair to say that Boaz had greater means than Ruth. Jesus had a greater work to do than any other person for he had to open the way to salvation, and God granted him the means to accomplish it. He had greater potential to that end than any others. We all differ in characteristics and abilities, for we all have natural gifts that differ one from the other. Accordingly there are degrees of responsibility. Read the second half of Luke 12:48 for me".

Peter found the place and read:

"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more".

"Thank you," continued Mr. Phillips. "You see from that Scripture that when God grants privileges, He expects returns. Christ was given greater strength than any other person: a mind more conducive to receiving spiritual principles than that of any other man or woman. But perfect obedience was required of him. There was no sacrifice for him to secure the forgiveness of sins if he failed. And therefore a greater burden of responsibility rested upon him than upon any other person. Boaz, like Christ, was prepared to assume the responsibilities that rested upon him in accepting Ruth as His wife. His faith in God was such that he knew that he would not 'mar his inheritance' if he helped one such as her. That was not the case with the near relation. He was governed only by the Law, and did not realise that he continually broke the Law himself. He knew that Mahlon and Chilion had both died after marrying Moabitess women, and perhaps feared

that he might similarly suffer. He did not realise that Ruth had turned from her Moabitish ways, and accepted Yahweh in truth. Indeed, he had no thought for Ruth in her need, but only for his own selfish welfare. He therefore accepted the offer of Boaz, and was very much relieved when he took over the duties of redeemer.

“Boaz, on his part, recognising the qualities of Ruth, realising that her character was the result of her love of God, and therefore seeing in her the attributes that a true Israelite should display, had confidence in the grace of Yahweh to endure any condemnation of the Law upon the marriage. He realised that ‘by the works of the Law no flesh shall be saved’, and so was prepared to act the part of Redeemer. Thus this love story has a happy ending. The strong and kindly Boaz, the man of wealth, married the outcast Ruth. In due time, a little baby boy was born whose name they called ‘Obed,’ which means *Serving*. Naomi became very fond of this little boy, so much so that he became a ‘restorer of her life,’ and a ‘nourisher in her old age’. This boy became the grandfather of David, the great king who reigned in Jerusalem, and to whom God gave such a wonderful promise.

“Thus from a state of famine and death in the Land of sin, Naomi and Ruth were redeemed by Boaz, so that their names became great in Israel. And in this we have a parable”.

“What is a parable?” asked Joan.

“It is a story with a hidden meaning,” replied her father. “The Lord used parables often to explain his teaching to the people. He described the Kingdom of God as ‘lost treasure’, as a ‘marriage feast,’ and so forth; and he left it to his hearers to work out the meaning behind his words. In the book of Ruth we have both history and parable”.

“Will you explain the parable?” asked Ann.

The Parable

“The book commences with a time of famine (Ch. 1:1) during which Elimelech deserted Bethlehem for the land of Moab, taking with him his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. The Bible also speaks of a time of spiritual famine (Amos 8:7-14), when the nation of Israel would be driven from the land. All these names have special meanings. ‘Elimelech’ means *My God (El) is king*, and in the parable speaks of the nation of Israel as the Kingdom of God. His wife’s name (Naomi) means *favour*, and can speak of the favored position of the people of Israel. But Mahlon and Chilion mean *sickness* and *wasting*, and tell of the state into which the two nations of Israel fell through the spiritual famine they went through.

“Elimelech left Bethlehem-Judah which means *The House of Bread and Praise*, to sojourn in the land of Moab, which was the Land of Sin to the Jewish people (Deuteronomy 23:1-3). To Elimelech and his sons it was also the Land of Death. For Naomi it was the Land of Dispersion and Disgrace.

“We see this fulfilled in the state of Israel today. The nation has forsaken the *House of Bread*, and has gone to sojourn in the land of Moab. Meanwhile the Gospel has been proclaimed to Gentiles, and some among them have been attracted to the Hope of Israel. They are like Ruth, who cleaved to Yahweh and the hope of Israel. She turned her back upon the ways of the Gentiles, and identified herself with the lowly condition of her mother-in-law. In doing so she found herself in a state of poverty. So also do those who seek Christ. They must give up the world; they are described as ‘the poor of this world, rich in faith’ (James 1:10; 2:5). Like Ruth, they seek a Redeemer who can help them.

“Boaz means *Strength*, or *Strong One*. He was a type of Christ who will redeem both Jew and Gentile (Naomi and Ruth). He is the near kinsman of Israel, because he was born a Jew. But there was a nearer kinsman who had a right to redeem Israel, but found it is beyond his ability to do so. That nearer kinsman was the Law of Moses. It was unable to redeem Israel (Naomi), causing true Israelites to plead the help of the Lord Jesus (Galatians 3:13-14).

“Therefore, what a wonderful parable this is! It was designed to reveal to Israelites who thought upon it, that they should seek a Redeemer other than the Law: one in whom there would be found the grace to save. That Redeemer, of course, was the Seed of the Woman promised at the very beginning (Genesis 3:15), the promised Seed of Abraham who would be put to death as a sacrifice for sin, but raised again to lead his people victorious, as typed by Isaac when offered upon the Mount (Genesis 22). The parable also showed that the hope of Israel would be opened up to Gentiles, like Ruth, and that Israel, in its old age, like Naomi, would find comfort from those of other nations who would embrace the covenant of Abraham, and so enter into a precious relationship with God. The parable, therefore, sets out:

1. Naomi as a type of the Israel Ecclesia.
2. Ruth as a type of the Gentile Ecclesia.
3. Boaz as a type of the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer of both (Romans 15:8).
4. Obed, the son of Ruth and Boaz, the nourisher and restorer of life to Naomi in her old age, as a type of those who serve the Lord (Isaiah 49:20-21).

“This delightful book, with its lovely story of Ruth, shines like the pure bright light of the sun as it destroys the darkness of

night” continued Mr. Phillips, “for it provides a great contrast to the violence and evil recorded in *The Book of Judges*. It depicts the triumph of divine love: a love that is both boundless and self-sacrificing”. “Such love we see revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his all that we might be redeemed. And a measure of such love we must return to him, and to the Father in the heavens, if we would follow the example of Ruth. Paul speaks of that love in his beautiful chapter, the 1st Corinthians 13. Love suffers long, and is kind; it does not envy what others might have; it is not impatient or conceited; it thinks of others seeking their good; it never loses hope, never gives way under difficulties, always bears up under trouble. Such a love will develop in us characters which the Lord will approve, as Boaz approved that of Ruth.

“And one final thought,” concluded Mr. Phillips, “As Naomi and Ruth, in their poverty and distress, were taught by God’s word to look for a Redeemer, so each one of us needs to seek a Redeemer unto life eternal. As you children grow you will have to face increasing problems and trials. These can be most difficult and depressing, and at times it seems as though all are against you. Always try to remember, that the help of the *Goel*, the Redeemer, the Next of Kin; Jesus Christ is available. If you do so in faith, it will not be in vain. By baptism into Christ, Yahweh, through the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes our Redeemer; and He is always ready to help. Build up your knowledge of Him, for with that knowledge comes faith (Romans 10:17); and granted sufficient faith, the victory will be yours (1 John 5:4). That is the great lesson of the Book of Ruth: a story that has provided renewed hope for many weary pilgrims in life’s journey, stimulating them to continue their way towards the Kingdom in spite of the difficulties that seem to beset their paths”.





"Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah" (1 Sam. 8:4).



The First Book of Samuel tells how the anarchy of the times of the Judges was changed into the order of the monarchy. It outlines the work of Samuel the prophet, a man who towered above even many of the great men of the Bible, and whose influence for good was felt hundreds of years after his death (Jeremiah 15:1). Samuel was the last of the judges, but the first of the company or school of prophets of which we read from his day onwards (Acts 3:24). His work acted as a bridge, linking the time of the Judges with the Kingship that he helped to establish.

The first twenty-seven chapters of the first book that bears his name were probably written by a Samuel with Gad and Nathan adding the balance. This is based upon the statement recorded in (1 Chronicles 29:29).

In the original Hebrew Bible, the two books of Samuel (like those of Kings and Chronicles) appeared as one book. They were first divided and treated as two books when the Old Testament was translated into Greek about the third century before Christ. They were then called the First and Second Books of the Kingdoms. That is why, in our Bible, we read: "The first book of Samuel, otherwise called, The First Book of the Kings".

The great lesson of this book is expressed in the angry reproof of the Prophet to Saul the first King: "Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying His voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams ..." (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

The book can be divided into three parts:

1. SAMUEL: THE LAST OF THE JUDGES — CHAPTERS 1-7
 His birth and youth — Chapters 1 and 2
 His call and office — Chapter 3
 His times and acts — Chapters 4-7
 Summary — Chapter 7:15-17.
2. SAUL: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE — CHAPTERS 8-15
 His appointment as King — Chapters 8-10
 His promising beginning — Chapters 11-12
 His later folly and sin — Chapters 13-15
 Rejection — Chapter 15:23,28,35
3. DAVID: THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART
 — CHAPTERS 16-31
 Anointed by Samuel — Chapter 16:1-13
 Service before Saul — Chapter 16:14-Chapter 20
 A fugitive from Saul — Chapters 21-30
 Death of Saul — Chapter 21.

The 1st Samuel is not merely a new book; it introduces a new epoch. It is the first of three double books (Samuel, Kings and Chronicles) that record the rise and fall of the Israelitish monarchy.

Though it briefly touches upon the state of lawlessness and evil that existed in the times of the Judges, we learn how the firm, sure hands of Samuel brought a measure of order and stability to the affairs of the nation, leading to the setting up of the Kingdom in Israel.

Chapter One

THE BIRTH AND UPBRINGING OF SAMUEL

The Birth of Samuel — 1 Samuel 1

Our story takes us back to the times of Samson, who lived, it is thought, during the life-time of Eli the high priest. The Philistines oppressed Israel forty years (Judges 13:1), and Samson was sent to “begin to deliver Israel” (v. 5). This he did for twenty years (Judges 15:20), but at his death the work was not completed. It was left to another and greater man to do this, even Samuel the prophet (1 Samuel 7:13).

Meanwhile, Israel had fallen into a state of wickedness and anarchy. Eli was too old to cope with the ruthless evil of his sons, or to properly minister to the spiritual needs of the people. He left much of the work to his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. These two priests were extremely evil men. They cared nothing for the ways of Yahweh, and sought only to please themselves. Their wickedness became a scandal throughout Israel and brought the worship of Yahweh into disrepute. In consequence, people cared nothing for it. Idolatry increased, and the nation sank lower into wickedness than ever before.

It was in the midst of those unpromising conditions that one of the greatest Judges of all was born, to effect a wonderful deliverance of the nation, both spiritually and nationally. His birth was in answer to prayer, and his childhood was spent in the most unusual circumstances.

Hannah’s Prayer and Vow

There lived in the town of Ramah, in Benjamin, a Levite by the name of Elkanah. He had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. This caused Hannah great distress. Moreover, Peninnah added to her sorrow by mocking her. She probably did this out of jealousy of Hannah, who was greatly loved by her husband. “Am I not better to thee than ten sons?” he asked his wife. But nothing he said could comfort Hannah.

Elkanah was faithful to Yahweh, and brought his household up to reverence Him in worship. Each year the whole family made a pilgrimage to Shiloh, where the Tabernacle was set up, there to pray and offer sacrifices unto Yahweh. This should have

been a time of great rejoicing for all, but for Hannah it was a time of misery. For there was Peninnah, surrounded by her sons and daughters, using every opportunity to flaunt them before poor Hannah, mocking her because she was childless, and causing her to fret.



Peninnah surrounded by her children mocked Hannah and made her unhappy.

So instead of rejoicing at the festival, she wept and could not eat.

But Hannah was a woman of faith, and made her problem a matter of fervent prayer. She asked Yahweh to bless her with a son. She stood at the door of the Tabernacle where Eli the high priest sat in state upon a throne, and there she poured out her heart unto God. She vowed that if Yahweh would grant her request, she would give him unto Him "all the days of his life" (Ch. 1:11). Like Samson, he would be a Nazarite, a man separated unto God. As a token of that his hair would not be trimmed, but would be allowed to grow.

Hannah put all her heart into her prayer. She forgot she was in a public place; and that others could see her. Impervious to her surroundings with earnest desire she continued long in prayer, beseeching God to grant the request that she made (v. 12).

Eli, the high priest, watched her, and was disgusted with what he thought he saw. Hannah was praying quietly. Her lips moved, but she uttered no sound. Her petition was to God alone. Eli did not know that. He could see that the woman was deeply moved. He observed her distraught appearance. He noticed her lips moving. He thought she must be drunk; for so low had the worship of God fallen, that often worshippers appeared in that condition. He harshly rebuked her, commanding her to put away wine if she wanted to worship at the Tabernacle.

But Hannah meekly replied that he had made a mistake. She explained her desire, and the purpose of her prayer. Eli now saw that she was a most Godly woman, and added his prayer to her's



Hannah brings the young Samuel unto the High Priest, Eli at Shiloh.

“The God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him,” he said.

And God answered the prayer. In due time a little son was born to Hannah whom she named Samuel, which means *Name of God**. Elkanah realised that God was with the little baby, and that his household was involved in matters beyond his understanding. He agreed that Hannah should not go up to the yearly pilgrimage until the baby was weaned. As for Peninnah, her mocking of Hannah was silenced forever.

**Samuel is Taken
to the Tabernacle**

In those days, babies were not weaned until they were about three years of age (2 Macc. 7:27; 2 Chron. 31:16). When that time came Hannah made ready to part with the precious gift she had received. The little company left Ramah taking with them all that was necessary. This included a bullock of three years' old to provide a sacrifice for the consecration of Samuel†.

Once again Hannah appeared before Eli. But now he saw a happy, smiling woman, with the joy of her heart with her; a mother faithfully prepared to deliver up to Yahweh what He had granted unto her. Eagerly she explained her mission to the high priest. “Oh my lord,” she said, “I am the woman that stood here praying unto Yahweh. For this child I prayed; my request was granted, and I have returned him to Yahweh. As long as he lives he shall be given to Yahweh”.

It was a very joyful company that feasted before God on that occasion, watching the smoke of the sacrifice that consecrated Samuel, ascend into heaven. When the ceremony was over, the young child, dressed in a simple linen robe, was formally handed over to the care of Eli. Then, her heart filled with gratitude and love towards Almighty God, and with His spirit resting upon her, Hannah expressed her joy in a glorious prophetic hymn of praise, recorded in 1 Samuel 2. The words are similar to those uttered by

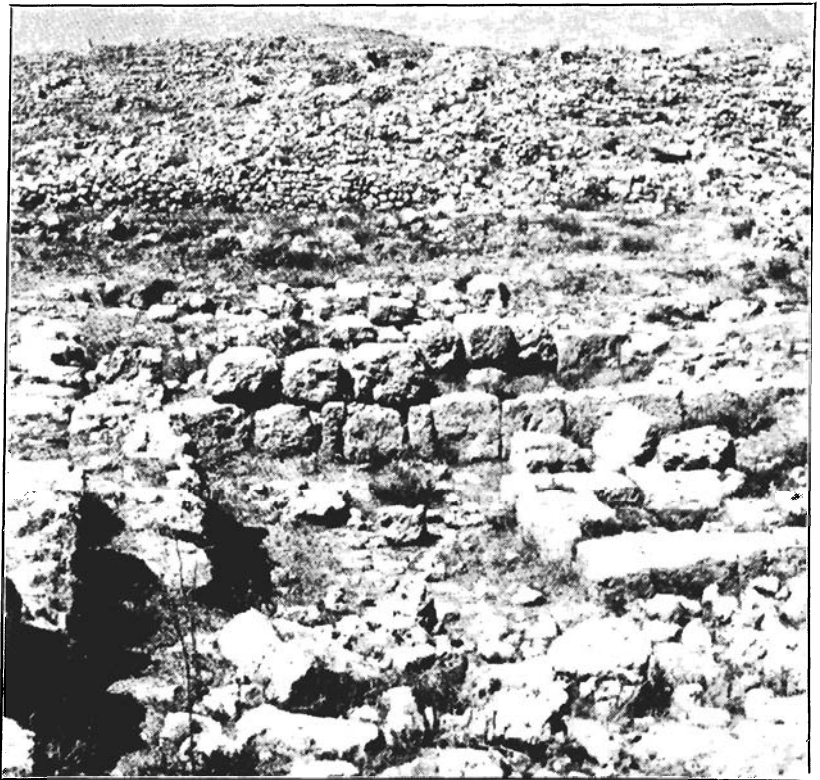
* The name Samuel is almost universally said to signify *Asked of God*. That is because of the words of 1 Samuel 1:20: “She bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have *asked him of Yahweh*”. But Samuel is a combination of *Shem* and *El*, and nowhere does *Shem* signify “asked”, but rather “name”. However by extension, the name *shem* can also signify *family*, for a person's name is carried on through his family. Hannah wanted a son so that the family name may be continued. Accordingly she called him, Samuel. Samuel signifies *Name* or *Family* of God (El). She prayed for a family; and when Yahweh granted her petition, she gave the family back to Him. Faithful women like Hannah who recognise that their children comprise “the heritage of Yahweh” will likewise recognise their responsibility to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and in that way, will give them back to God Who gave them (see Psalms 127:3; Ephesians 6:4).

† This is according to the *Septuagint* — rather than three bullocks according to the R.V.

Mary the mother of Jesus prior to his birth (Luke 1:46-55). For the first time in the Bible, the title of King-Messiah (*anointed*) is used in connection with the promised Saviour who would come (1 Samuel 2:10). Hannah's hymn of praise tells of the majesty of Yahweh, how He rebukes the proud but saves the meek, how He will elevate His saints, and humble the proud by national judgments; how He will ultimately bring about the setting up of His Kingdom on earth.

Having proclaimed the words of this glorious hymn, Hannah returned with Elkanah to their home in Ramah leaving the infant Samuel in the care of Eli.

Little did any of those concerned realise how greatly the little boy, who shortly afterwards commenced to perform small duties about the Tabernacle, was destined to affect the course of Israel's history.



Shiloh today — brought to this ruinous state by the wickedness of such as Hophni and Phineas. See Jeremiah 7:12.

THE SONGS OF HANNAH & MARY COMPARED

The expressions of Mary's song when she was told by Gabriel that she would bear a son who would be Saviour of mankind were drawn from those of Hannah at the birth of Samuel (cp. 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55).

Hannah's Song of Triumph Rejoicing in Yahweh's Salvation v. 1

My heart rejoices in Yahweh,
My strength is exalted in Yahweh,
My mouth is opened wide against
my enemies;
Because I rejoice in Thy Salvation

He Rebukes the Proud but Saves the Meek — Vv. 3-5

Talk no more so exceeding proudly,
Let not arrogance come out of your
mouth;

For Yahweh is a God (El) of
knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed,
The bows of the mighty are broken;
And the feeble gird on strength.
They that were full have hired out
themselves for bread,
But those who were hungry have
ceased to hunger;
So that the barren hath born seven,
And she that hath many children is
waxed feeble.

He will elevate His saints — vv. 6-8

Yahweh killeth, and maketh alive;
He bringeth down to the grave, and
bringeth up;
Yahweh maketh poor, & maketh rich;
He bringeth low, and lifteth up;
He raiseth up the oppressed out of
the dust;
And lifteth up the beggar from the
dunghill,
To set them among princes,
And to make them inherit the throne
of glory;
For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh's;
And He hath set the world upon them.

Coming National Judgments — vv. 9-10

He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be cut off in
darkness,
For by strength shall no man prevail;
The adversaries of Yahweh shall be
broken in pieces;
Out of heaven shall He thunder upon
them;
Yahweh shall judge the ends of the earth
And He shall give strength unto His king;
And exalt the horn of His Christ.

Mary's Song of Praise

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God
my Saviour;
For He hath regarded the low
estate of his handmaiden;
For, behold, from henceforth all
generations shall call me
blessed;
For He that is mighty hath done
to me great things;
And holy is His name.

And His mercy is on them that fear
Him;
From generation to generation.
He hath showed strength with His
arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts;
He hath put down the mighty from
their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with
good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty
away.
He hath holpen His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy;
As He spake to our fathers,
To Abraham, and to his seed for
ever.



In her song, Hannah reveals herself to be a prophetess indeed, seeing beyond the rivalry of her adversary, Peninah, and the work of her son, to a greater rivalry between the two women of the Apocalypse and the triumph of the King Messiah.

This is the first place in the Bible where the King Messiah is mentioned, indicating the clarity of Hannah's spiritual vision.

Chapter Two

SAMUEL'S UPBRINGING

Samuel's Early Training

"The story of Samuel, as a little boy, growing up in the precincts of the Tabernacle, is a great favourite with most people", remarked Mr. Phillips, after the family had read 1 Samuel 2. "Dressed in his linen robe (v. 18), he became the constant companion of Eli the High Priest, who taught him the things of God. Gradually a bond of deep love grew between the aged priest and the little child. Samuel needed some guidance and care, for the Tabernacle had become the centre of the crudest and most wicked acts committed by the vile sons of Eli. What went on there greatly contrasted with the Godly manner in which Samuel had been brought up. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, ministered in the worship of God, but their wickedness caused Israelites to despise the service of Yahweh".

"What did they do?" asked Ann.

"They not only acted in a shockingly immoral manner", replied her father "but they interfered also in the worship itself. Offerings brought to the Tabernacle were treated as the food of Yahweh (Leviticus 21:6,17; Numbers 28:2). They were placed upon the altar so treating it as His table (Malachi 1:7). Worship at the altar, therefore, symbolised a meal over which Yahweh presided. Some sacrifices, such as the Peace Offerings brought all parties together. Portion was consumed on the altar, portion was given to the priests (Lev. 7:30-32), and the rest was eaten by the offerer (Lev. 7:15). On such occasions Yahweh, the priests and the worshipper were united in fellowship through the communal festival. On such occasions, as is only right, God was served first, the people thus recognising that He must be first in all their considerations. But these two wicked priests, Hophni and Phineas, destroyed this beautiful symbolism. Instead of waiting for God to be served first, and accepting with humble thanksgiving the portion which the Law of Moses provided for them, they sent their servants to roughly demand the portion of meat they wanted, and as much as they desired. They did this 'before the fat was burnt upon the altar' (v. 15), that is, before Yahweh had been served His portion. This was a slight both to God and the worshippers; and, as a result, 'men abhorred the offering' (v. 17). Other wicked, and unspeakable things these

evil men did, so that the Tabernacle was not a very nice place in which to bring up a young boy like Samuel”.

“Did Eli know how his sons acted?” asked Joan.

“Yes,” replied her father. “He reproved them, but far too gently, and so they did not heed his rebukes. They had been spoiled by indulgence, and now were past correction. Instead of giving him pleasure they gave him pain (see Proverbs 29:17). Poor Eli doubtless thought that in being gentle with his children he was showing them affection but as the book of Proverbs teaches: ‘He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes’ (Proverbs 13:24).”

“Well Dad is certainly warm in his love towards us at times!” said Peter with a grin.

“Children are corrected for their own good”, answered his father. “Another Proverb says, ‘The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame’ (Proverbs 29:15)”.

“I am afraid you will wear yourself out before Peter learns much wisdom” said Ann, glad to get one back on her brother.

“People generally do not believe in these Bible methods today,” remarked Mr. Phillips, “But with all their modern methods, and theories of child-upbringing, the old-fashioned ways are best. It does not require that parents should be harsh and over-bearing, but they must be prepared, in love, to correct and restrain their children. If brought up kindly but firmly, there is little need for the rod to be constantly used”.

“These are excellent comments for the upbringing of girls” remarked Peter loftily, “but I am more interested in the upbringing of Samuel, and of his times”.

“Eli would have done his sons a service if instead of quietly reproving them, he had vigorously and openly rebuked them, commanding that they cease their wickedness immediately,” said Mr. Phillips. “That would have been a kindness. But Eli could not bear to offend them. And in treating them too gently he brought disaster upon his family, his sons, and the whole nation. Kindly actions and gentle words are of great benefit under proper conditions, but there comes a time when we must speak out and act in such a way as cannot be misunderstood”.

“It is a shocking thing that priests could have been so evil”, remarked Graeham.

“It is not hard to acknowledge the cause,” replied his father. “The sons of Eli had been brought up in an atmosphere of religious worship but had come to take it all for granted. Though priests, they were not touched by the true spirit of worship; it lacked meaning for them. Their office was holy, but their charac-

ters were corrupt. They took hold of sacred things with unworthy hands: occupying the highest positions of their day, bearing a holy name, engaging in sacred duties, proclaiming Godly words, wearing robes that symbolised purity and righteousness — yet using it all as a cover for frightful wickedness. No wonder God condemned them!”

“Verse 12 says that they ‘knew not Yahweh’,” said Ann. “Surely they must have known about Him!”

“The word really signifies to know intimately and personally, in such a way as to reflect His influence in life,” replied her father. “The verse you have quoted is an important one, illustrating the meaning of a most important statement made by the Lord Jesus. In a wonderful prayer that he uttered just before his death he declared: ‘This is life eternal to *know* Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). Many people believe that the Lord referred to mere academic ‘knowledge’ in this statement; but whilst a knowledge of God is necessary, He requires more than that. He wants that knowledge used by believers building into their characters the principles it teaches. The sons of Eli ‘knew not Yahweh’ in the sense that the knowledge of Divine things brought no change in them. To really know God and His son is to be so impressed with Divine teaching that it unites us closely to them, and changes our lives (see Jeremiah 22:16). But the sons of Eli were hardened in sin. Day after day they continued their evil practises with impunity and, as the book of Ecclesiastes says: ‘Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set inn them to do evil’ (Ecc. 8:11). That was the case with Hophni and Phineas”.

“That was a very bad example for Samuel,” said Graeham.

“A worse place than the Tabernacle, for the upbringing of Samuel could hardly have been found,” agreed his father. “And yet, in the midst of all that evil, the character of the pure, innocent child was untouched by it. Indeed, the wording of the chapter we have read reveals that”.

“In what way does it do that?” asked Peter.

“It does so by setting the evil example of the two priests side by side with the attitude of Samuel, showing that he was untouched by it” declared his father.

“I have not noticed that,” remarked Graeham.

“It is there for all to see and recognise”, replied his father. “See the contrast in vv. 11-12: ‘The child did minister before Yahweh’ but in the next verse, ‘the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not Yahweh’. Notice it again in vv. 17-18: ‘The sin of the young men was very great . . . But Samuel ministered girded with

a linen ephod'. Look also at vv. 25-26: 'They hearkened not unto the voice of their father . . . and the child Samuel grew on and was in favour . . .' Throughout this chapter the same contrast is shown. Hophni, Phineas and Samuel were all brought up in the same Tabernacle environment. But constant sin had hardened the hearts of the priests, who took the privileges of God as their right. On the other hand the young boy was elevated and purified by his constant study and worship of God. This conflict of attitudes brought tension to the household of Eli. Nevertheless this training in youth was profitable to Samuel. Yahweh ultimately elevated him to a status that few have equalled; whereas the sons of Eli suffered such a measure of disgrace and tragedy as few have suffered. Meanwhile, Samuel, like the Lord Jesus as a child 'grew in favour both with Yahweh and with men' (1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:52)".

**Eli Is Warned Of
Terrible Punishment
To Come**

"The time was rapidly approaching when the evil of Eli's house was to be severely punished," continued Mr. Phillips. "But first, the aged priest was visited by a 'man of God' (v. 27), a prophet of doom bearing a terrible message of retribution. He warned Eli that in failing to correct his sons, he had permitted the worship of God to fall into contempt, and therefore punishment would engulf his house. The land of Israel would be invaded by a powerful enemy (v. 32), Eli's two sons would be stricken down in the one day (v. 34), and the position of High-priest would be taken from his family (vv. 35-36)."

"When was the position of High-priest taken from Eli's family?" asked Graeham.

"Many years later, in the days of Solomon," answered his father. "The honour was taken from Abiathar, the last descendant of Eli to have it, and given to a faithful priest called Zadok (1 Kings 2:26-27)".

"What is meant by 'I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before Mine anointed for ever' (v. 35)?" asked Ann.

"That promise takes us right into the future when the Lord Jesus shall reign on earth," answered Mr. Phillips. "The Bible shows that at that time, those who have continued faithful will be given immortal life (Matthew 19:29), and positions of great authority in the earth (Revelation 2:26). They will be made 'kings and priests' with Christ (Revelation 5:9-10)".

"What has that got to do with Zadok?" asked Peter.

"The word Zadok means *Just One*," explained Mr. Phillips. "From Ezekiel 44:15, we learn that the immortal priests of the Age to Come are called 'sons of Zadok'. As Zadok ministered in

the Temple before Solomon, the King of Peace, so these priests of the future will be with the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, in the Temple that shall be set up at Jerusalem”.

“What is meant by ‘a sure house’?” asked Ann.

“It does not mean a building of brick like we live in”, answered her father. “A house can represent a family, and here a sure family is promised this faithful priest. That is why the immortal priests of the Age to come are called ‘*sons of Zadok*’. Notice that verse 35 says that he shall ‘walk before Mine anointed *for ever*’.

“I was wondering who that referred to!”

“The word ‘anointed’, in the Hebrew is Messiah, and in the Greek is Christ,” explained Mr. Phillips. “Here the word must refer to the Lord Jesus, for whilst there have been many men who have been anointed in the past, his anointing is ‘forever’.”

“Verse 36 is difficult,” said Peter. “It says that everyone left in Eli’s house shall come bending unto the house of the Anointed. What is meant by that?”

“The prophecies of the Bible show that in the Age to Come there will be two kinds of priests to look after the worship of Yahweh,” explained his father. “There will be the followers of the Lord Jesus who will be immortal, and there will be also mortal, Jewish priests to assist them as the Levites did the priests in the past. They too are referred to in Ezekiel 44:10-11, and this prophecy in Samuel shows that they will act as servants to the immortal priests. Ezekiel speaks of them as those Jewish priests ‘who went astray’ from the worship of God. Unfortunately, the Jewish people have done that. They remain ‘blind’ in their worship (Romans 11:25). Their state was represented by the house of Eli!”

“The verse says that they will ask ‘for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread,’” said Graeham. “Will they really ask for those things?”

“Not really,” replied his father. “‘A piece of silver,’ was the price of redemption under the Law of Moses (see Exodus 30:13; Lev. 5:15). It typified the work of a redemption in Christ (1 Peter 1:18). The way of redemption, in the age to come, will be through the immortal House of Zadok. ‘Bread’ is the staff of life, and here stands for the sustaining food of life. Christ described himself as ‘bread from heaven’ (John 6:32-35). Such bread will be made available to those who seek redemption in the age to come”.

“It is all very difficult,” said Ann with a sigh.

“The best thing for you to do,” replied her father with a smile, “is to read this very important chapter over again quietly, and think on what I have told you. If you still find it difficult, come to

me with your problem. Many of these matters will be unravelled as we continue with our story of the Bible”.

**Samuel Learns
That There Is A
Voice Greater
Than Eli's
—1 Samuel 3**

The child Samuel was growing up. School-
ed by Eli, he “ministered before Yahweh”
(1 Sam. 3:1), learning to do small tasks
such as opening doors for the priests
(v. 15). The eager, thoughtful boy had
come to love his aged tutor, but now the

time had come when he had to learn that there is a greater Voice
than that of the High-Priest.

At that time, there was no open vision in Israel (v. 1). God had
turned His face from His people because of their wickedness.
The Tabernacle was there in the city of Shiloh, and close to it the
priests had their homes, but the Voice of God was silent.

In one of those homes, Eli lived, and with him there dwelt his
young charge — Samuel. Unaffected by the dark and terrible
deeds that were daily committed about him, and the awful mes-
sage of doom that had been publicly uttered against the house of
Eli, the child was a great comfort to the old man, cheering him by
his guileless zeal, and his innocent purity which contrasted so
greatly with the violent wickedness of the times.

One night, as Samuel slept, he was roused by a Voice that call-
ed him by name. He thought it must have been Eli. He answered:
“Here I am!” But no one replied. Troubled by the silence, he ran
into the room where the High-priest slept, exclaiming: “Here am
I; for you called me!”

Eli thought the boy must have been dreaming. “I did not call
you,” he replied. “Go and lie down again”.

Samuel returned to his room, and again silence descended
upon the sleeping household. But to the boy Samuel, the silence
was again broken by a Voice. Again he leapt out of bed, and went
to Eli in answer to the summons. He knew of no other voice that
would call him. He had not at that time received any personal
revelation from God (v. 7). He was puzzled, therefore, when Eli
told him the second time that he had not called him.

Samuel again returned to his bed, and again the darkness of
the night closed in upon the sleeping household. Then once more
the Voice spake. Samuel could not understand why Eli should
thus call him and yet deny that he had done so. Perhaps it was
through old age. Again entering the priest's room, he declared:
“Here am I, “for you *did* call me!”

The aged priest now realised what had happened. Samuel had,
indeed, heard a Voice; but it was a greater Voice than that of the
priest. He told the boy to return to his room, and if the Voice



*"And Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth"
(1 Samuel 3:10)*

again was heard, to reply: "Speak, Yahweh; for thy servant heareth!"

The Voice spake again, and a sad message was given to Samuel, to pass on to the High priest. Eli's sons were condemned because of their vile ways, and Eli himself was condemned because "he restrained them not". The Voice, speaking to Samuel, showed that the house of Eli had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness. Previous messages of warning had been ignored, and now Yahweh was about to move against His rebellious priests.

What a message for the young boy to receive! He hated to reveal it to Eli for he loved the priest as a father. But Eli ordered Samuel to tell him all that the Voice had spoken. He recognised his own shortcomings, and those of his sons. He knew, that Yahweh was just and that they deserved the punishment that was threatened. But he rested on the mercy of God: "Let Him do what seemeth Him good", he said to Samuel.

The response: "*Speak, Yahweh; for Thy servant heareth!*" became the keynote of Samuel's life from thence onwards. To him the word of Yahweh was supreme, and obedience to it was his greatest concern. As he grew to manhood, the Voice continued to instruct him (v. 19). In turn he taught the people the word of Truth. He revealed to them the purpose of God. He made predictions that came to pass. The people of Israel recognised in him the sign of a true prophet (Deut. 18:22). From Shiloh, his headquarters, his word went out to all Israel.

The Tragedy of Ebenezer — 1 Samuel 4

The sin of Israel was now to reap its punishment and sorrow. From the south-west, the Philistines, a brutal and powerful race, massed their forces and prepared to invade the land. To defend themselves against the threatened attack, the Israelites also gathered an army, and set the warriors in battle array at a place later called Eben-ezer, or *Stone of Help* (Ch. 7:12). This was about 25 miles distant from Shiloh, the capital of Israel. This the people were anxious to defend. But in the battle Israel was defeated, and four thousand men lay dead. "Why has Yahweh permitted us to be so smitten?" asked the elders of Israel. They should have known the answer to this question, but they were blind to their own sins. Instead they decided to take the sacred Ark from out of the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle, and carry it into battle. They were sure that Yahweh would not allow it to be damaged, and therefore He would be forced to give them the victory.

This was their crowning act of wickedness, and it resulted in a

terrible national tragedy to Israel.

Meanwhile the sinful hands of Hophni and Phineas helped to carry the sacred Ark of the Covenant from its resting place into the camp of Israel. They should have realised that they had broken the Covenant, and the Ark would not help them. But both they and the people were spiritually blind. The soldiers saw the solemn procession of priests carrying the Ark into their midst, and immediately they took heart. A great shout of confidence rent the air, so loud that it was heard by the Philistines. A spy was sent to find out the cause, and when it was learned that the Ark of Yahweh was in the midst of Israel, the Philistines became fearful. They began to panic, and for the moment it seemed as though the plan of the Israelites might succeed. But the leaders of the Philistines rallied their soldiers calling upon them to take courage, and fight. Thus exhorted, their warriors prepared themselves for the conflict.

Again the two armies joined in battle. Confidently the Israelites threw themselves into the fray, but the Philistines also charged forwards with determination. They were a strong and ruthless people, and possessed some of the best weapons of the times. Fiercely they strove with the Hebrews until they won a great victory. No less than 30,000 Israelites lay dead, the Ark of God was captured, and the two priests Hophni and Phineas were slain.

There was rejoicing in the camp of the Philistines, but fear and dismay in that of the Israelites. In all the history of the nation, never had there been such a tragedy as that! To have 30,000 dead was bad enough, but to have lost the Ark of God as well, meant that they were without the symbol of God's presence in their midst, and therefore without adequate defence! against their enemies. A man of Benjamin, with his clothes rent to show that the innermost feelings of the people were open to all, and with earth on his head to indicate that the nation had been humbled to the dust, ran from the place of battle to Shiloh with the news. As the people saw his torn clothes, and grief-stricken appearance they anxiously gathered to hear what he had to say. A loud wail of grief arose when they heard the sad and terrible news. The noise was heard by Eli who, blind with age, was sitting in an open space not far from the Tabernacle, his heart trembling for the fate of the Ark. He heard the wail of the people and asked its cause. He was told that Israel had suffered defeat, that many of the people had been slain, that his two sons were dead, and the Ark of God was captured.

What a terrible blow for the old man! He could bear everything but the last. But when he heard that the Ark was taken by the

hated Philistines, that the presence of Yahweh was no longer with His people, it was too much. His heart failed him, and falling from his seat, his neck broke, and he died.

The whole of Israel was plunged into mourning. The terrible news overshadowed every other matter. The nation was not only leaderless, but without its most sacred object. Never before had Israel fallen to such a low state. The general feeling of the people was shown by the wife of Phineas. She heard of the death of her husband, she heard that the Ark of God was captured; and it was too much for her to bear. She had just given birth to a little boy, whom she called Ichabod which means *Where is the glory?* for,



Hearing that Hophni and Phinehas were slain, Eli fell from off his seat backwards and his neck brake and he died (1 Samuel 4:18).

she said, "The glory is departed from Israel". But her sorrow was such that even the presence of the little baby could not rally her; and she died.

At last that dark and terrible day of gloom and defeat for the people of God came to an end. Sin had indeed led the way to a sorrow that touched every heart in Israel.

**The Joy of Victory
Taken From
The Philistines
— 1 Samuel 6**

But if there was mourning and sorrow in Israel, there was joy and gladness in Philistia. The people remembered how Samson had afflicted them, and they rejoiced at the victory. Triumphantly the soldiers carried the Ark of God back into their country, mocking at Israel and its God. They were confident that their victory was due to their god Dagon, and they felt it only right that they should put the Ark of Yahweh beneath the image of Dagon their god in the great temple they had built at Ashdod, one of their main cities.

With great pomp and ceremony they did so. On the following morning, however, they found that Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark of Yahweh.

They could not understand this, but probably thought it was due to some accident. They therefore set up Dagon again, amazed and troubled at what had happened.

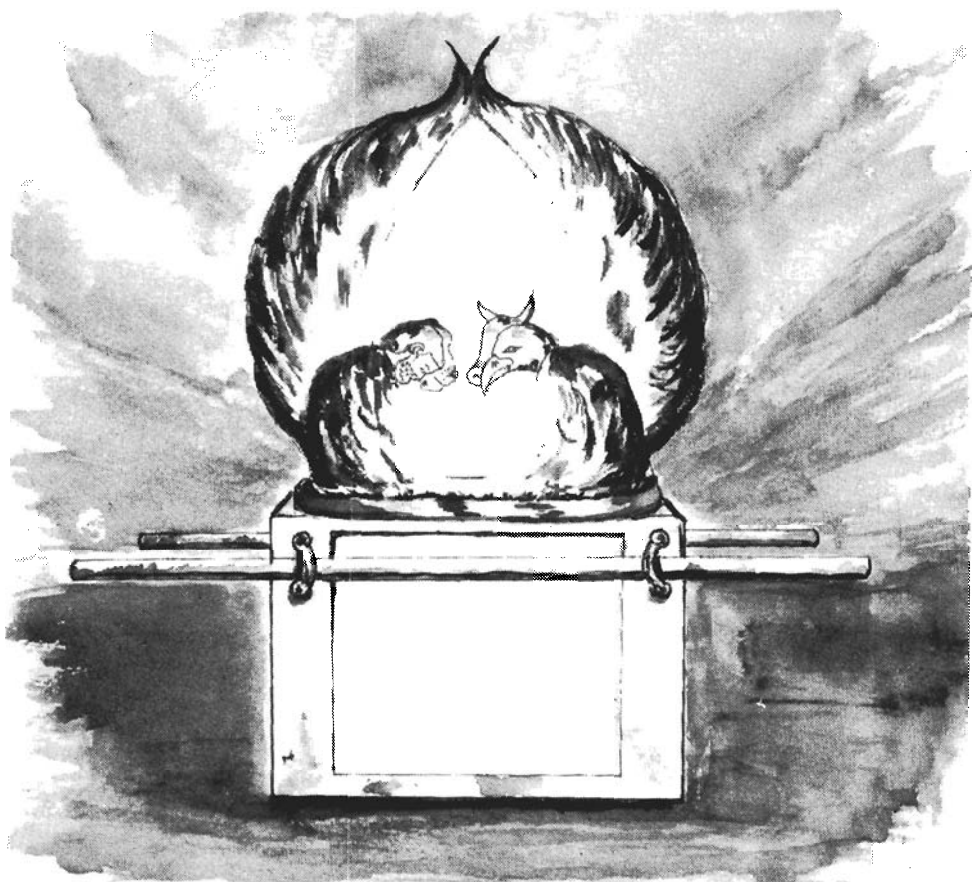
Next morning an even greater calamity had occurred, as far as they were concerned. Not only was the god Dagon prostrate on its face on the ground, but it was broken in pieces. The god had the head and shoulders of a man, but the body of a fish, and the Philistine priest found only the lower part remaining in the temple!

To make matters worse, all the people of Ashdod began to suffer from tumors or boils. News then came that a plague of mice* had broken out throughout the land. Finally other fatal sickness-

* The word emerods in 1 Samuel 5 and 6 represents two different words in the Hebrew. The first word is *'ophelim*, and signifies mounds, tumours or swellings, its basic significance being a hill (2 Chronicles 27:3). But it was never treated as such in the synagogue, the readers substituting the word *tehorim* or "burnings", this being the word used in Ch. 6:11,17, the vowel points of which were attached to the consonants of Ophalim in the Hebrew Bible. This was done because the word was not thought fit to be used in the public readings. (Emerods is Old English for haemorrhoids or piles). Some have identified the emerods or swellings with the bubonic plague which is characterised by swellings, particularly in the lymph glands of the groin and armpits, and because this plague is transmitted by rats or mice ("mice" is rendered as "rats" by the NIV — 1 Sam. 6:5), images of emerods and of mice or rats were sent back with the Ark, the Philistines recognising the relation of one to the other and acknowledging the punishment as coming from Yahweh. If this is correct, this would be the first time in history that the bubonic plague has been associated with rodents. See *Animals of Bible Lands*.

es afflicted the people until the whole country was in a state of fear and suffering.

The pagan priests could not understand the cause of this. They believed that the victory they had won was through the blessing of their god and they were puzzled as to why they now suffered such reverses. They did not know whether it was due to the presence of the Ark or not. They decided to try an experiment. They agreed to send the Ark to the powerful fortress city of Gath to see what happened. The men of Gath did not want the terrible Ark. They viewed its approach with fear, asking that it should not come into their city. But the men of Ashdod would not take it back, so into the city of Gath it was conveyed. Immediately the plague broke out in Gath, bringing suffering and death to many



The ark of God which caused the terrible plagues to come upon the godless Philistines.

of the people. Quickly the men of Gath arranged for it to be removed, and it was conveyed to Ekron. By now fear and panic were sweeping throughout the whole of Philistia. The Philistines could face Israel in battle but they feared the terrible Ark of God. Well they might! In Ekron a “deadly destruction” devastated the people. The plague had swept through their city and none were safe. How could they get rid of the terrible Ark?

The Ark

Is Returned

—1 Samuel 7

For seven months the Ark was in the land of the Philistines (v. 1), bringing pain and death to many of the people. Cures were tried to prevent the outbreak of the plague, but in vain. At last, the pagan priests and magicians suggested that the Ark be sent back to the Land of Israel, together with a trespass offering. “If this provides a cure”, they said, “It will show why everything else we have tried has been in vain” (v. 3).

They made images of five golden tumors and five golden mice (one for each of the five main cities of the Philistines), and placed them in a box. They then made a new cart, and took two cows which had never worn a yoke. The cows were tied to the cart, and their calves were left at home. The Ark was placed on the cart, and the jewels of gold were placed in the box at its side. Then the cows were let loose to see what direction they would take.

Normally cows will not leave their calves; but these two, doubtless driven by angels invisible to the Philistines, took the road to Beth-shemesh which was on the border of Israel, lowing as they went. This was undeniable proof that Yahweh, the God of Israel, had been responsible for punishing the Philistines.

In the valley-fields of Bethshemesh, men and women of Israel were reaping their wheat harvest. They saw in the distance a little procession coming towards their town. It was the cart with the Ark, and following behind it were the lords of the Philistines. The cows brought the cart into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood still beside a great stone. The people rejoiced to see the sacred Ark returned. They lifted up their voices in thanksgiving unto Yahweh for returning to His people.

Beth-shemesh was a prominent town standing on the main road that ran from the coastal plains of the Philistines to the city of Jerusalem. It was one of the towns that had been given to the priests, so it was inhabited by those who should have known what to do with the Ark when it returned (Joshua 21:13,16). Unfortunately, the people of Beth-shemesh did not treat it with the reverence that was its due. The Ark was the throne of Yahweh in Israel. Normally it was kept in the Most Holy in the Tabernacle where only the High Priest was permitted to enter. During the

wilderness wanderings, when it had to be conveyed from place to place, priests had to cover it before the Levites were permitted to carry it on the staves or poles provided. To gaze upon it without authority from God was punishable with death (Numbers 4:5,15,20). In the Most Holy, the glory of Yahweh shone forth from between the Cherubim that formed part of the Mercy Seat on the top of the Ark (Exod. 25:21-27). As a most sacred object it should have been treated with the greatest reverence. Therefore when the cows had taken it to the field of Joshua, and the priests had rejoiced to see it (1 Sam. 6:13-14), they, in humility and reverence, should have turned away their eyes, as men do when they pray. Instead, their curiosity got the better of them. Some of their number even lifted the Mercy Seat to gaze into the Ark itself (v. 19). They were instantly punished. The Spirit of Yahweh flashed forth, slaying those who had set such a bad example before the people†. The slaughter dismayed the people of Beth-shemesh. Like the Philistines they now wanted to get rid of the ark. They blamed the disaster on to God, instead of accepting that they themselves were responsible. They sent a message to the town of Kirjath-Jearim, about sixteen miles (26kms) distant, asking them to come and fetch the Ark from Beth-shemesh.

The men of Kirjath-Jearim did as they were asked. They probably took counsel from someone in authority, perhaps from Samuel, for when the Ark came into their town, they set aside Eleazar the son of Abinadab to care for it, and to prevent a repetition of what had happened in Beth-shemesh. There the Ark remained for many years, until the time of David (2 Sam. 6:3)‡.

† The Authorised Version states that Yahweh smote 50,070 people. This being out of all proportion to the size of Beth-shemesh has led to various readings. Some versions have five instead of fifty. According to *The Companion Bible* the Hebrew reads: "Seventy men, two fifties and one thousand", that is, 1,170. Josephus says: "Seventy men of the village of Beth-Shemesh, approaching the ark, which they were not worthy to touch (not being priests) were struck with lightning". He thus omits the 50,000. Others have suggested that the common reading is correct but that it lacks one letter in Hebrew the letter *ki* which is the article of comparison, and signifies *like, as or equal to*. This would change the reading to compare the seventy men as "equal to" fifty thousand. In other words, the fifty men were leaders, elders or governors of the people. On this reading, the number of the slain would be seventy prominent leaders of the people in Beth-Shemesh. Either this, or the suggestion of *The Companion Bible*, seems more in accordance with the facts, than does the reading of the A.V., which requires 50,070 slain in a small town!

‡ An important alteration should be noted in 1 Sam. 7:2. A full -stop should appear after "long", and a new sentence should commence with the words that follow. The Ark was in Kirjath-jearim much longer than twenty years. But twenty years after the defeat at the hands of the Philistines, the people began to lament because of the state of decline in Israel. The twenty years enabled Samuel to reach full maturity, and he now stood forth as an acknowledged leader (v. 3). The present punctuation can remain if it is acknowledged that the verse teaches (1) the Ark remained in Kirjath-jearim a long (undefined) time, (2) twenty years after it arrived there the events of this chapter took place.

**Samuel
the Prophet
— 1 Samuel 7**

Twenty years had passed by. For Samuel it had been twenty years of intense activity, during which time he travelled throughout the land, teaching the people the things of God, exhorting them to turn to Him again. Others like-minded, were attracted to his teaching and these he formed into groups known in the Bible as “the companies of prophets”. Over them he was chief, so that the New Testament refers to him as the first of the prophets (Acts 3:24). Though there were prophets before Samuel he founded the order. Before his time, such prophets acted independently as individuals but in his time he organised them into a “company,” with himself at their head (1 Sam. 19:20).

In doing so, he commenced a movement that continued throughout Biblical times. From the days of Samuel onwards, the Companies or Schools of the Prophets exercised considerable influence in Israel. Their duty was not limited to foretelling the future, but was more concerned with revealing the will of God in contrast to the people’s own ways and doings. They acted as spokesmen for God, proclaiming His requirements (1 Corinthians 14:3). They were Yahweh’s messengers (Haggai 1:13; Malachi 1:1), making known His will, warning of His judgments, rebuking the crimes of rulers and people, instructing men in doctrine, and proclaiming His future purpose. They organised forms of Divine worship to supplement the official requirements of Tabernacle, and later, Temple worship, and this included the singing of hymns to praise Yahweh, the education of people in His requirements, as well as the proclamation of His future purpose. It was whilst he was associated with Samuel in the School of the Prophets, that David was instructed as to how the Temple worship should be organised (see 1 Chronicles 9:22; 25:2-3).

These Companies of the Prophets acted as watchdogs in the nation. They opposed error; they demanded that profession be consistent with performance, they warned against allowing the worship of Yahweh to become a meaningless ritual (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-24 etc). They cared nothing for human praise or blame, nor were they swayed by fleshly opinion. They maintained an unswerving fidelity to the Voice of independence, duty and conscience. They comprised a voluntary and faithful minority in the midst of the nation, manifesting a stern, unyielding opposition towards apathy, anarchy and apostasy (see Ezekiel 2:6-7; 3:8-9).

Samuel was the first to organise such a company called also “sons of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:5; Amos 7:14) but he was followed by others such as Elijah, Elisha (see 2 Kings 2:5,9,15),

Isaiah, Jeremiah and so forth. They all had their associates who assisted them in the work before them. Christ, as the chief of the prophets, had his company, the Apostles; and Paul, likewise, as a “prophet” appointed of Christ, gathered around him his assistants. Those organised by Samuel became his helpers. With their assistance, after twenty years of work and preparation, he called for a gathering of all people for a national revival to seek Yahweh (1 Samuel 7:2).^{*} In addressing the great assembly Samuel displayed compelling characteristics of leadership. The people had come to know him for his stern, unyielding principles, and respected him for them. He was now a familiar figure among them in his long, austere mantle, and his flowing hair and beard, his tokens of a life-time Nazarite vow of complete dedication. He now publicly instructed them as to what was required. It was not sufficient that they regret past misdeeds, and express sorrow by word only; the people must give Yahweh their hearts; they must bear up before Him their past failures, and put away their evil practices. If they were ready to undertake to do that, he, Samuel would intervene on their behalf through prayer to Yahweh, beseeching Him to help them.

The people humbly submitted to this request, and Samuel ordered them to prepare to meet with God at a town called Mizpeh (or *Watchtower*). At the appointed time, representatives of all Israel were gathered together, and Samuel, as leader, presided over the assembly. In the sight of the people, he took water and poured it out upon the ground (v. 6). This symbolic action represented the tears of Israel, in sorrow for past misdeeds (see Psalm 22:14; Lamentations 2:19); he then called for a fast, that the people might feel the effects of their grief.

Finally, he assumed the position of Judge. He not only brought the people closer to God, but he reconciled them one to another, and in doing so laid the foundation for better government within the nation.

The people responded to his firm and wise leadership, and were heartened by the realisation that Yahweh would help them.

The Philistines Again Attack

This activity was not unnoticed by the Philistines. They had heard of Samuel and knew of the value of his work to Israel; and when the people gathered at Mizpeh they became concerned as to what might be the outcome of them so doing. Fearing the growing power of Israel, they prepared an army and invaded the land, setting up their camp at the very spot where, twenty years

^{*} The Hebrew word rendered “lament” (1 Sam. 7:2) signifies both to bewail, and also to assemble. The R.V. margin renders: “Were drawn together”.

earlier, Israel had been defeated, and the Ark had been captured. This hostile action filled the Israelites with fear. They pleaded with Samuel to seek the help of God. "Cease not to cry unto Yahweh for us," they urged.

Samuel did not fear the Philistines. He placed his confidence in God. He did not panic, even though he knew the Philistine army was on the march. Instead he sought the help of Yahweh. With quiet confidence he prepared a sacrifice, and seeking the help of God, he called the people together to worship.

But the people were afraid. They feared the strength of the Philistines, especially as they were largely without weapons. Under those circumstances, the appearance of the fearless and faithful old prophet, with flowing hair and beard and distinctive robe of office, quietly and faithfully presiding over the worship of Yahweh, steadied them. He exhorted them to place their faith in God.

His confidence in Yahweh was not in vain. His prayer for help was answered. As the Philistines were about to attack, a frightful storm broke. Fearful crashes of thunder shook the ground; bright spears of lightning flashed across the darkened sky, their forked fingers streaking down against the enemy, the earth shook and quaked. In the face of this unprecedented roar of artillery from heaven the Philistines turned and fled in fear. Their superior weapons were ineffectual. The Israelites attacked the fleeing enemy. They drove the Philistines before them, down the slopes of hills, and along the valleys, until they reached the very spot where they had been defeated twenty years earlier. Here they won a notable victory, avenging the defeat they had suffered then at the hands of the Philistines.

Despite his age, Samuel had moved with the attacking Israelites. Now in thankfulness to the God Who had won for them such a notable victory, he took a stone and placed it as a memorial, calling it Eben-ezer, or *The Stone of Help*. "Hitherto hath Yahweh helped us," he declared.

The victory was decisive. So much so, that the Philistines no longer invaded the land during the lifetime of Samuel (v. 13). Thus he completed the work commenced by Samson (Judges 13:5). Sin had brought Israel to the point when the nation was almost destroyed, and the glory had departed (1 Samuel 4:21). But faith had restored conviction and brought victory (Hebrews 11:1,32). The mediation of the prophet had united the people with Yahweh, Who had humbled their proud oppressors, and granted them the victory (1 John 5:4).

What a Stone of Help (*Ebenezer*) Yahweh had been to His people! And can He not be such to us? He will be if we follow the

example of such as Samuel. To bring this home to Israel, Samuel set up a Stone as a memorial and called it Eben-ezer, or *Stone of Help*. Today, such a Stone is found in the Lord Jesus Christ who is represented in Scripture as the Stone of Israel (Gen. 49:24). He is the Stone which will crush and destroy the enemies of God, but one upon which his followers can confidently lean for help and victory (Matt. 21:42-44). They need to view him as their Ebenezer, their *Stone of Help*, remembering that the God who delivered Israel out of the hands of the powerful Philistines has promised to supply “grace to help in time of need” to all who turn to Him for help (Hebrews 4:16). But to experience such help they must exhibit faith.

Samuel The Judge

The victory at Ebenezer finally established the leadership of Samuel. His authority was now accepted without question. He continued to judge the nation for the rest of his life (1 Samuel 7:15). Though living at the town of Ramah where his parents had lived before him, he travelled from year to year throughout Israel, staying in Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh. There the people gathered before him, to learn of the ways and will of Yahweh, and to receive any advice that may be given by him, or to accept any decisions he may impose. He brought order, stability and prosperity to the land. Never before had Israel experienced such a settled state as it did under this great leader.

The good that Samuel accomplished lasted for centuries after his death. He set in order the worship of the Tabernacle, upon which was later based the Temple worship (1 Chron. 9:22). He re-organised the celebration of the feasts commanded under the law (2 Chron. 35:18). He recorded a history of the times (1 Chron. 29:29). He established the companies of the prophets, so that throughout Israel there were those who could teach the people, and help them to better understand the will and purpose of God. The work he performed was so valuable and helpful to Israel, that centuries later he was compared with Moses because of what he had accomplished (Jer. 15:1). In the discharge of his public duties, Samuel is not charged with a single fault. He appears in the Bible as one of the most upright, conscientious and noble men with whom the nation was ever favoured.

Samuel came at a crucial moment for Israel. It was a time when it seemed that the nation must be crushed, when “the glory had departed”. He stopped the national decay, and built it into an orderly state. He undertook the task of giving Israel a spiritual and moral culture, as well as a stable government, setting it firmly on the path that led to the Kingdom of God under David.

He was intensely loyal — to Yahweh, the Nation, the High Priest and finally to the King. Service to God was his prime concern, and yet he hesitated to tell Eli the dread message he had received because he loved his aged teacher. Later he wept and prayed for Saul, pleading that Yahweh might forgive him. At the same time he was jealous of the honour of Yahweh's name, and harshly reproved the King before the people, ruthlessly slaying those whom God would have punished.

He came at the time when he was most needed. It was an epoch of perplexity and change. He ended the period of the Judges and commenced the time of the prophets, acting as a bridge along which Israel passed from anarchy to monarchy. Above all, he laid down principles of education for "all Israel", which played a most important part in many seeking God in truth.

We honour this great man, not merely by reading about him, but by following the example of faith that he set (Heb. 11:32).



Ramah, the home town of Samuel and his parents.



The great judge-prophet Samuel anoints the young Saul as Israel's first king.

Israel's First King

In the Law of Moses, the duties of the King of Israel had been clearly set down (Deut. 17:14-20). This showed that it was the purpose of Yahweh that His people one day should have a king to reign over them. But in the days of Samuel, the people became impatient, and demanded that their king should be immediately set over them. God granted them their request, and Saul was made a king. He was the people's choice, and was a great contrast to David, the second king, the "man after God's own heart".

There is an interesting parallel between Cain and Abel, and Saul and David, as we shall find as the histories of these two kings unfold. Cain was a tiller of the ground, and so also Saul (1 Sam. 11:5); Abel was a shepherd; and so also was David. Cain was jealous of Abel, and Saul was jealous of David. Cain sought to worship God according to his own ideas and not according to instructions; and Saul was guilty of the same mistake (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Cain killed Abel; and Saul sought to kill David. God provided another seed in place of Abel (Gen. 4:25); and He delivered David from the hand of Saul.

As Abel is clearly set forth in the Bible as a type of the Lord Jesus, so also is King David. The opposition of Saul to David foreshadowed the enmity that the Lord Jesus received from the rulers of Israel at his first advent. The historical incidents that marked the advancement of these men are therefore interesting both from their historical and their typical significance. Many wonderful lessons are found in the lives of both to help us in the way of life.

Meanwhile, we gather up the story at the time when the people of Israel had learned to appreciate the benefits of what Samuel had done for them in overcoming their enemies, and establishing a righteous government throughout the land.

Chapter One

ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

Israel Desires A King — 1 Samuel 8

Many years had gone by in peace and quietness. The people learned to appreciate the benefits of orderly government.

They rejoiced in the grand leader that Yahweh had given them in Samuel the prophet, and looked back over the evils of the past as a terrible dream.

But their leader was growing old. As age began to take its toll, he set up his two sons in Beer-sheba as judges. However, they did not walk in the ways of their father. They took bribes, and perverted judgment (v. 3).

The elders of Israel feared that if Samuel should die the nation would again fall on evil times.

In this they did not realise that it was not so much Samuel as Yahweh, who protected and guided the nation.

They came to Samuel with their request.

"You are old," they said to the prophet, "and your sons walk not in your ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations".

Samuel heard this request with a heavy heart. He felt that the people were rejecting him for all that he had done. Moreover, the request was sinful in that it showed complete lack of understanding of God's purpose. Yahweh had determined that when the time was ripe He would provide the people with a king (Genesis 35:11; 49:10; Numbers 24:17). His law had made provision for such an appointment (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), and Hannah in her prophetic song had made reference to it (1 Samuel 2:10). The people should have waited for Yahweh to provide them with a king in His own time; but, instead they now demanded that one should be appointed immediately.

With a heavy heart, Samuel turned to God in prayer, that he might learn the Divine will. In answer, the Voice came to him:

"Hearken unto the voice of the people, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. They have always revolted against Me, and so they do now. Nevertheless, obey their voice, but first shew them what the king will do whom they shall appoint to reign over themselves".

Accordingly, Samuel gathered the elders together before him. He told them that Yahweh would grant their request, but warned

them of the folly of it. He showed how the king would oppress them; how he would take their sons and daughters to be his servants, and demand that they pay him tribute.

The elders listened to Samuel, but his warning made no impression on them. They feared anarchy once Samuel died, and continued with their request.

Once again the Judge turned to prayer unto Yahweh, and again the Voice spake:

“Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king!”

With this answer, the prophet told the elders to return to their homes, and await the appointment of God.

**Saul Meets
Samuel
— 1 Samuel 9**

“A remarkable thing about this chapter,” commented Mr. Phillips, discussing the 1 Samuel 9, “is the way in which Yahweh used commonplace things to draw the future king and prophet together”.

“What do you mean by that?” asked Graeham.

“Well, consider the circumstances,” answered his father. “Here was a man in Benjamin called Kish who had lost his asses. He sent his son Saul, a handsome, powerfully built young man to seek for them. I suppose that both Kish and Saul complained bitterly at the loss. Yet behind this trivial affair, Yahweh was working to bring Saul to the kingdom”.

“Does God still act in that way today?” asked Ann.

“Certainly He does,” replied her father. “Of course the majority of incidents in life have no bearing upon God at all, but other ones have. The difficulty is that we do not always know when Yahweh is working in our lives, and when He is not”.

“That is rather awkward,” commented Peter.

“Well it means that in all our ways we must acknowledge Him, and act as though He were working in them. For you, Peter, that would mean a lot less complaining. When life is looked at in that light, we can see that evil circumstances give us an opportunity of showing God that we can bear up under difficulty, and have the faith to see beyond it”.

“That is a very good point”, said Graeham.

“It is illustrated in an incident that occurs later on in the story of the Bible,” continued Mr. Phillips. “In the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Israel was taken into captivity. Among those affected were many good people, such as Daniel the prophet (Daniel 1:3-6). Doubtless they were a little upset at losing all their possessions and their homes, but behind it was the hand of God, moving for ‘their good’, as Jeremiah the prophet was told (Jeremiah 24:5)”.

"I think we will have to restrict Dad in his comments", said Peter to the indignation of Ann. "We are reading about Saul, but in some way which I can't follow, we are hundreds of years further on, in point of time, to the days of Daniel!"

"Very well!" agreed Mr. Phillips. "What do you want to know about Saul, Peter?"

"What does his name mean?"

"His name means *Asked for* or *Appointed*. He was 'Asked for' by man.

"That is interesting", said Peter.

"Thank you, Peter!" replied his father gravely. "Let us now consider the journey he took. He left home with a servant, to find his father's asses, and searched through the hill country of Ephraim, and through the land of Benjamin, down into some wild, unoccupied territory known as the Land of Shalim, or *Foxes*; but they were not there. Saul and his servant were now south of Benjamin; several days had been occupied in searching, and he proposed to return home. However, as their travels had taken them close to the home town of Samuel, the servant suggested that before returning they might seek the advice of the prophet. But Saul protested that he had no present to give Samuel".

"Why would he need a present?" asked Joan.

"Merely as a token of respect," answered her father. "It was not the value of the present that counted. Thus the servant said that he had the 'fourth part of a shekel of silver' that they could use for that purpose. It was only worth a few pence, but it was all that was required".

"In verse 9 it says that the prophet was called a *seer*. What is meant by that?" asked Ann.

"It means that the prophet could '*see*' something more than other people," replied her father. "A man like Samuel could see into the future because he was always looking for the fulfilment of God's purpose. The prophets were men who lived in advance of their times. Thus we read of 'the vision of Isaiah', or of the other prophets (Isaiah 1:1)."

"Now, Dad! Back to Saul," warned Peter.

"Very well," replied his father. "We will return to Saul. He arrived at the city where Samuel dwelt, and there he met some young maidens going to draw water.

"Is the prophet here?" he asked them.

"He is," they replied. "'He arrived today because there is a great feast for the elders of the people. If you go straight into the city now you will be able to see him before he goes to the feast'

"Saul and his servant hastened into the city. There they saw an

old man, clad in a long mantle, with flowing hair and beard, awaiting them. Saul approached him and asked where he might see Samuel, not knowing that he was actually speaking to the prophet. But Samuel knew that this was the young man selected to rule the kingdom. To the great surprise of Saul, he was told by Samuel that there was a place reserved for him at the Feast.

“Set not your mind on the asses,” he told Saul, “for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? It is not on you, and on all your father’s house?”

“Saul was astounded to hear those words. He knew, of course, that all Israel desired a king, but it seemed remarkable that he of all men should be chosen. And yet, the fact that Samuel had revealed that he knew all about the asses showed the he was indeed the Seer, and that he spoke from some inner knowledge of men and matters. But that he, Saul, of Benjamin, should be chosen as ruler, seemed incredible to the modest young man.

“I am of Benjamin,” he told Samuel. “It is the smallest of the tribes, and my family is the least of all the families of Benjamin. Why should I be selected?”

“But Samuel waved his objection aside, and conducted Saul to the feast. He was given the most honoured position among the select guests assembled, about thirty persons. Saul was a shy farmer, unused to great honour. To be suddenly elevated to such a position as now was granted him increased his shyness. It left him confused with wonder.

“Meanwhile the feast proceeded. It was a sacrificial feast (v. 13,23). In certain offerings, the shoulder of the animal was given to the priests as their portion (Leviticus 7:32-33), but now it was put before Saul”.

“Why was it given to him?” asked Graeham, interrupting his father.

“It was usually given to the priests to symbolise that the people leaned upon them for help”, answered Mr. Phillips. “Samuel doubtless gave it to Saul for the same reason. The government was about to pass to him, and he would have to bear the weight of responsibility.. The people would seek him for guidance and judgment. Remember the words of Isaiah 9:6 (we won’t turn to it because Peter will only complain) — ‘The government shall be upon his shoulder’”.

“In the Bible, Samuel is represented as giving to Saul that which was left (v. 24),” remarked Ann. “That does not sound very complimentary” .

“The word really means that which is reserved,” answered her father.

“It is rendered that way in the margin,” said Graeham.

"This important portion of the sacrifice was reserved for Saul, as the kingship was also," explained her father. "Saul ate the sacrifice, thus showing he would accept the position.

"That night," continued Mr. Phillips, "Saul stayed at Samuel's home. They spent the night discussing the wonderful appointment, during which the Prophet doubtless advised the King of how he should conduct himself, and perform his duties".

**Saul Is
Officially Appointed
King
—1 Samuel 10**

"Next morning," continued Mr. Phillips. "Samuel took a bowl of oil and poured it upon the head of Saul, saying, 'This is because Yahweh hath anointed thee to be captain over His nation' (1 Sam. 10:1)".

"Whatever did he do that for?" asked Ann.

"It was the ancient and simple ceremony of appointing kings in Israel," explained her father. "They were not crowned as the kings of England are, but anointed with oil".

"But what was the purpose of it?" asked Ann, with a puzzled frown on her face.

"It was a special oil prepared as instructed by Moses," explained Mr. Phillips. "Exodus 30:22-25 records how it was to be made, and warned against any person making any oil like it, or any person being anointed with it except those Yahweh appointed. Any unauthorised use of it was to be punished with death (v. 33)".

"That still does not explain the purpose of anointing Saul," said Peter, in an argumentative tone of voice.

"The oil pointed forward to that with which the Lord Jesus was anointed, even the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 1:9)," explained his father. "When Samuel anointed Saul, it not only symbolised that his authority came from above, but also showed from whence Saul must derive his strength and wisdom to rule rightly, namely from Yahweh. Thus it was a symbolic act that showed to the people that there was a link between God and the king that did not exist between other people".

"Were only kings anointed?" asked little Joan.

"No," replied her father, "the priests and prophets of Israel were also anointed with the same oil. They were separated from the rest of the people because of their special relationship with God".

"Go on with the story Daddy," said Joan.

"It must have been a very puzzled and subdued young man that left Samuel to return to his father's house," continued Mr. Phil-

lips. "Could he be sure that what Samuel told him was true? Was he certain that some mistake had not been made? Samuel had given him three signs to show that what he had told Saul was by command of God, and he had not gone far when the first of these was fulfilled. He was met by one of his father's servants, who told him that the asses which had been lost were found, and that he should return home. This was the first sign Samuel had told him, and we can understand how Saul would be filled with wonderment when it was fulfilled."

"It seems a very unimportant detail to record," said Graeham.

"Not really," answered his father. "It was not merely a sign, but taught Saul something else. As king, he was about to assume great responsibilities. His minor cares were to be put aside, and he was to undertake greater duties. No longer were the lost asses of his earthly father to concern him, but the cares of God's people, whose Bible symbol is the ass, as we found on an earlier occasion. They were straying and needed somebody with authority to restore them to their proper place".

"What was the second sign?" asked Ann.

"Saul continued on his way, until he was met by three men going up to Bethel. They saluted him as Samuel had said they would, and provided him with food".

"What is the meaning of that sign?" asked Peter.

"The first sign had shown that he was to take on greater responsibilities, and now this sign showed that men would respect him, and help him," suggested his father. "His sustenance would come from the people, instead of his own efforts in farming".

"What was the third sign?"

"As Saul continued, he met a company of prophets coming down a hill. As they descended to the road along which Saul was trudging, they played instruments of music. Suddenly the spirit of God came on Saul, and he joined their company, singing praises unto Yahweh. This was the third sign Samuel had told him would happen, and it taught Saul that whilst his lower cares were about to cease, and men would minister unto him, he must also rely upon the power of God, without which he would prove a failure".

"Did Saul realise this?"

"We are not told how much Saul knew," answered Mr. Phillips. "There is a significant statement made in v. 11, however, which indicates something of the character of Saul. When people saw Saul among the prophets, singing praises to God, it struck those who knew him as a strange. They knew him only as a shy, powerful young man, not accustomed to being overmuch interested in the things of God. It startled them to see the change.

‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ they asked. They knew him as the son of Kish, a man of no particular importance in the land, and so they contemptuously asked: ‘Who is their father?’ that is, Who is in authority over the prophets? Many years later the Jews spake of Jesus in a similar way to decry his importance (Matt. 13:54-55).

“When Saul returned home,” continued Mr. Phillips, “he told his friends of his adventures, omitting the startling news that he was to be made king. They would not have believed him if he had told them this. So he settled down to his work on his father’s farm, awaiting the appointed day when his authority would be made known to all the nation.

“That day came. The people were called to Mizpeh. Once again in a public address Samuel warned them of the folly of their action in demanding a king before the time appointed by God. Again the people refused to hearken to his advice. He then separated the people who had gathered to him in their various tribes, to determine by lot from which tribe the king should be taken. What a hush must have fallen upon the congregation of Israel when the smallest tribe of Benjamin, the tribe that was almost wiped out of existence by the other tribes a few years’ earlier, was taken. The families of the tribe of Benjamin were then set in order before the prophet, and another surprise occurred, when the family of Matri (so little known in Israel that nothing further is recorded of it) was taken. But the astonishment did not cease there, for finally the shy, largely unknown son of the farmer Kish was taken, and it was announced that here was Israel’s king!

“But he could not be found. Knowing what would happen, he had hidden himself among the baggage of the people. God revealed the secret of his hiding place, and Saul was brought before the nation and proclaimed King before all the people. They saw a handsome powerful young man who stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people. As they saw his powerful appearance, they forgot his obscurity, they rejoiced in his manly bearing. Here was their king, and with a great shout they acknowledged him as such. Many hastened to pay their respects and to present gifts to him.

“But there were some who were dissatisfied. They were probably leaders of other tribes, more powerful than Benjamin, who thought they, themselves, should have been chosen as king. They were jealous of Saul the farmer boy, who stood shy and timid before the nation. They spake scornfully of him. ‘How shall this man save us?’ they asked. They gave him no presents, but Saul ignored their insult and the contempt they heaped on him.

“As for Samuel, he warned the people of what they once more

could expect from such a monarchy. He then wrote his words in a book that was preserved in the Tabernacle, and which, in future years, testified against the folly of the people”.

“There is a question I would like to ask,” interrupted Ann, as her father paused. “You describe Saul as ‘the people’s choice,’ but in v. 24 Samuel describes him as the one ‘whom Yahweh hath chosen’. He could not be both, could he?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Phillips. “Saul’s appointment, though by Divine decree, was nevertheless that of popular election. They could have refused him, but they did not. In fact, when they saw him, they shouted in their pleasure. They said ‘Let the king live’ (v. 24 — margin), that is, let him have everything that makes life really worth living, including the kingship. Their shout of delight was really the crowning insult towards Yahweh. To reject God, and then to appeal to Him to help the king in such a manner, showed that they did not understand the extent of their sin. They first tried to depose God from the Government, and then called upon Him to bless the one whom they desired in His stead. A more humble, quiet and subdued approach would have been more fitting. They could not have their King without God permitting it, therefore it had to be by His authority, but at the same time they should have recognised that their need of a king really revealed their own shortcomings. This they did not seem to understand, though Samuel tried to bring it home to them”.

Saul’s First Victory — 1 Samuel 11

Saul was untrained and uneducated in kingly duties, and once the excitement of his appointment was over, he returned to his farm at Gibeah (Ch. 11:5). This town later became known as “Gibeah of Saul” (v. 4), and became the capital of his kingdom (Ch. 15:34; 22:6; 23:19). It was not a place of happy memories, for it had earlier been the scene of one of the most abominable crimes and awful tragedies in Israel’s history (Judges 19). Saul’s reign was likewise to have many grim and tragic episodes.

Meanwhile the king resumed his occupation as farmer, and the people must have wondered as to what real value their king was to them. A crisis soon occurred that forced the shy, retiring Saul to leave his farm forever, and properly take up his kingly duties.

The Ammonites, under Nahash (whose name means *serpent*) invaded the land east of Jordan, and besieged the town of Jabesh-gilead. This town was situated in the highlands on the edge of the Jordan valley. Once it fell, the gateway would be open to the Ammonites to swarm over the Jordan, and attack the central tribes of Israel.

The men of Jabesh looked fearfully out from the walls of their

city at the confident army of Ammonites that encircled it. In vain they waited for relief from Israel. Their king was ploughing the fields, and seemed indifferent to the fate of the country. The criticism that some had levelled against Saul at his appointment (Ch. 10:27), and which now swept the country, weakening his influence seemed justified (Ch. 11:12). The men of Jabesh realised that they could not cope with the forces facing them, and as help from the rest of Israel was not forthcoming, they sought from Nahash terms of peace.

But when they heard what he required they were appalled. His terms of peace were that all the men of Jabesh submit to having their right eyes thrust out, as an insult to all Israel, showing that they had left their brethren to the fate of the enemy. The soldier using his shield with his left hand, hides his left eye, and requires his right eye for sight. Nahash's terms would have destroyed all the men of Jabesh as fighting units.

The men of Jabesh pleaded with Nahash to give them seven days' respite, in which to see if any would save them. If not, they would lay down their arms and submit to Nahash. Nahash agreed to this. He thought he would gain an easy victory, and that the rest of Israel would not risk a war merely to save Jabesh.

The messengers were sent forth, and in due time came to the town of Gibeah. When they told the people their tidings, they lifted up their voice in a loud wail of distress. It was heard by Saul, who, at that moment, was following his herd out of the field driving them home. When he heard the news, the spirit of God came upon him. He felt himself strongly excited to attempt the rescue of his brethren. He was consumed by a burning anger, and taking a yoke of oxen, he hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout the land of Israel, declaring that this would be the fate of any who refused to follow him in the defence of Jabesh.

This was a really kingly action. It roused the men of Israel as one man. A feeling of awe and fear came upon them as they inspected the gory parcels sent throughout the land, and heard the message of their king. A great company was assembled unto him, and a message was sent to Jabesh to tell the inhabitants that by the next day relief would arrive. By a forced march of 25 miles overnight, the united army of Israel moved forward to the help of their brethren.

Meanwhile, the men of Jabesh sent a message to Nahash. "Tomorrow," they said, "we will come out unto you, and you can do with us all that seems good unto you".

They fulfilled these words, but not in the manner Nahash imagined. Saul had arrived on the scene. His army surrounded

the Ammonites. At sunrise he attacked. The battle raged all the morning, but by midday, the Ammonites had been completely defeated. Their army was hopelessly scattered, and Saul was acclaimed as conqueror and hero.

What now of those who had previously criticised him! Their folly was now apparent. As the soldiers of Israel streamed back to their land, flushed with victory, hot from the war and the shedding of blood, applauding the leadership qualities of Saul, they were filled with indignation against his critics. They desired to shed more blood. "Bring here the men who say, Shall Saul reign over us, that we may put them to death!" they fiercely demanded. But Saul would not permit it. "Yahweh hath wrought salvation in Israel," he declared. In this he showed true kingly qualities.

The men of Jabesh never forgot the service he rendered them. There were already very strong ties between Jabesh and Saul's tribe, for the city had not joined in the general rising of the tribes against Benjamin and Gibeah, in the time of the Judges (Judges 21:8-15). And from now onwards Jabesh ever remained loyal to Saul. It was the men of Jabesh who later rescued the body of Saul from insult at Bethshan, and gave it burial with themselves (1 Samuel 31:11-13). Jabesh remained the last stronghold of Saul's power after the death of the king, and Abner felt that he might find sympathy there for the cause of Saul's dynasty, when the rest of the tribes were turning to David (2 Samuel 2).



Saul leading the battle against the Ammonites.

Chapter Two

SAMUEL RESIGNS HIS POSITION AS JUDGE — 1 SAMUEL 12

Saul's victory over Nahash showed that he had qualities of leadership to command the people. He stood forth in full power as king, and Samuel felt that the time had come for him to resign as Judge. The prophet called the people together once more to Gilgal, that they might confirm the kingdom, and that he might publicly hand over his duties to the king.

A great company of people assembled together to worship before Yahweh, to thank Him for the wonderful victory at Jabesh, and to rejoice together in the establishment of the kingdom. Many sacrifices were offered, and the people consumed together a feast of peace offerings before Yahweh (1 Samuel 11:15).

In the midst of all these celebrations, Samuel delivered his last public oration to the people. There is nothing weak or wanting in his speech, nothing to suggest the failing of his powers. He finished his course in full vigour of all his faculties. There is presented a grand picture of the aged, grey-haired Judge, publicly laying down his leadership, calling upon the people to testify to his personal integrity, challenging them to lay a charge against him if they were able.

But what of his sons? Had they not proved wicked and disobedient? They had; but Samuel had not repeated the folly of Eli. He could say to the people, "My sons are with you" (1 Sam. 12:2). He had deprived them of their public office, and had reduced them to the level of the common people. He called upon the people to judge if they were worthy of punishment, and to deal with them as they saw fit.

The people answered that Samuel had proved faithful in all that he had done; they had no cause of complaint against him.

Samuel again addressed the people. It was his last public speech before his retirement as Judge, and like Moses and Joshua he wanted to plainly advise the people how they should conduct themselves before God.

He briefly reviewed the history of Israel, showing how Yahweh had helped the nation, how He is ever ready to assist those who humbly and faithfully approach Him for aid. He also showed how that sin brought suffering to the people, so that true

happiness and peace comes only by following the way of Truth. As Samuel spoke of these things, he pleaded with the people to follow the way of wisdom. "Fear Yahweh," he told them. "Serve Him; obey His voice; rebel not against His commandment" (v. 14). "Turn not aside from Him," he said in another part of his address, "for Yahweh will not forsake His people" (see 1 Samuel 12:14,20-22,24).

He called upon Yahweh to give the people a sign, clearly showing that it was in His power to help or punish Israel, and to prove that he spoke truly in describing their action in asking for a king before the time was ripe, as wickedness. It was sometime in June or July when the people had been called together (v. 17). In the Land of Israel that is mid-summer, a time when it never rains. Day after day the sun shines down brightly out of a deep, blue sky. But on this day, following Samuel's prayer a change took place. He had prayed that Yahweh might send a storm of thunder and rain, as a sign to the people speaking of His power to control things beyond that which is natural to man. As he finished his petition, a heavy bank of clouds could be seen, driving towards the people, blotting out the blue Palestinian sky, darkening the bright, burning sun. As the people trembled at the unusual sight, the deep roar and crash of thunder made them even more afraid, and this was followed by a heavy downpour of rain. This dark, awful omen spoke of Yahweh's anger and fury. As He had blotting out the bright shining sun and the blue of heaven, so He could blot out their king and their kingdom if they did not prove obedient. As he had reversed the normal state of things as far as the weather was concerned, so He could turn back the fortunes of His people. As they pondered the power of their God they recognised their shortcomings and pleaded with Samuel to pray for them. The faithful old prophet did so, but he warned the people: "If you continue to do wickedly, you will be consumed, both you and your king" (v. 25).

**Saul's Impatience
Results In Failure
— 1 Samuel 13**

In the territory of Benjamin, there is a Pass called Michmash, which opens a way through the harsh, craggy hills in the land, to the lowlands and coastal plains in the west. This Pass is the key to the centre and southern portions of the land of Israel, and in the hands of an enemy meant that the people could be brought under threat. In the days of Saul, the Philistines had set up a garrison on one of the high hills in the territory of Benjamin, that commanded this pass. It was called Geba, and from it they were able to control the land round about.

Such a garrison, within the borders of his own tribe, was an

insult to the king. If Saul was to command respect, he must get rid of it. But how could he do so without the Philistines invading the land in force, and making things even worse!

Two years went by, and nothing was done. Then one day, at the head of an Israelitish army, Jonathan the son of Saul, attacked the garrison and overthrew it.

This was the signal for war, and it was necessary for the soldiers of Israel to first dedicate themselves unto Yahweh, that they might receive His help. Samuel had instructed Saul to gather the people together at Gilgal, and within seven days he would come and offer sacrifices on their behalf.

Gilgal is in the deep Jordan valley far below the Pass of Michmash. To withdraw his army to that point was to give an



The pass called Michmash, opening the way through harsh, craggy hills to the area of Benjamin.

advantage to the enemy if it occupied the Pass. Saul no doubt hoped that news of the overthrow of the garrison at Geba would not be received by the Philistines until Samuel had come, and his army was able to again ascend to the heights above. But in this he was disappointed. The Philistines heard of Jonathan's action and sent a huge force of infantry, cavalry and chariots to punish the Israelites. They appeared on the heights of Michmash as Saul was in the valley below waiting for Samuel. Saul realised he was in an awkward position. To attack the Philistines, he would have to advance up the steep rise that leads from Gilgal to Michmash, and this seemed an impossible task against the tremendous forces of chariots and cavalry commanded by the Philistines.

God was testing Saul, and he failed through lack of faith.

A large army of Israelites had gathered around him, but when they saw how greatly the odds were against them, they were filled with fear, and began to desert. Meanwhile the Philistines began to oppress all around them, so that the people of Israel were much distressed. Their cities gave them no protection, they were not safe in their homes. The Philistines swaggered through the streets of their towns, roughly entering their houses, and ill-treated the people. Many Israelites left the cities and sought hiding places in the caves, forests and hills.

Saul began to panic. He had not the faith or patience to "stand and await the salvation of Yahweh". Samuel had told him that he would come within seven days, and then all would be well. But it did not look well to Saul as he viewed his dwindling forces, and the vast, confident army poised above, ready to swoop down upon him and destroy him. Impatiently he waited for Samuel. Day after day went by, and fewer and fewer were the men that stayed with him. At last the seventh day came. But with it not Samuel. Saul thought he would never come, that he was deserted by even the prophet. There remained but one thing to do. Saul impatiently decided to offer the sacrifice himself. He knew that he should not do so, but his patience had run out. By now, only 600 men remained with him. If he did not do something quickly, he would lose the kingdom. In desperation, he ordered the sacrifices to be brought to him, and against the command of Samuel, he offered them upon the altar.

But the seventh day had not quite finished, and even as Saul had completed his unlawful offering, he saw Samuel approaching. He went out to meet him, but there was no smile of greeting on the prophet's face. Only stern anger. "What have you done?" he harshly demanded of the king. Saul explained: "The people were scattering from me; I thought you were not going to come; the Philistines are massing their forces at Michmash; if I wait here

much longer, they will come down upon us and destroy us. I therefore forced myself to offer the sacrifice”.

Saul's answer showed that he lacked sufficient faith and patience to act as Yahweh's king in Israel. To exercise authority in God's Kingdom, the king must set an example of strict, unswerving obedience. Instead; he had disobeyed the voice of the prophet in the sight of all Israel.

“You have done foolishly,” Samuel told the king. “If you had obeyed the command of Yahweh, then He would have established your kingdom over Israel for ever. But now your kingdom shall not stand. Yahweh has discovered a man after His own heart, and has appointed him to be captain over His people, because you have not kept His commandment”.

So saying, Samuel abruptly turned from Saul. He left the king a disappointed man. Only 600 men of his army remained with him, and in face of the tremendous odds that the Philistines had brought against him, there was but one thing to do: go in hiding from the enemy that now fully occupied the territory of Benjamin.

This left the Philistines to do as they pleased. They ravaged the countryside, giving themselves over to pillage and destruction, causing fear and distress throughout the area. They flaunted their power before the Israelites, and gloried in their great iron chariots and weapons of war. They, alone, knew how to make iron weapons, and they carefully guarded the secret of doing so, for fear that the Israelites might learn the art and so manufacture their own weapons. Thus there was no smith in Israel, and the people had to go down to the Philistines to have their tools sharpened, though they were permitted to have a file, or grindstone, to restore the blunted edges of their tools. Among the Israelitish army, however, there were no iron weapons, no swords or spears, except in the hands of Saul and Jonathan. The weapons the Israelites used were mainly bow and arrows or slings for throwing stones.

Israel was at a serious disadvantage under their king as they had been during the periods before the Judges. The lordly Philistines forced their will on the conquered people who lived in daily fear and dread. With the Israelitish army scattered, many of the people had been forced into slavery under the Philistines, and many others had fled the cities to find refuge in the hills (Ch. 14:11). Only a handful of men remained with Saul.

Once again, the people learned the lesson of how sin brings suffering. The distress had come upon the people because of lack of faith; because the commands of God had been ignored; because the king lacked the patience to wait for God. Deliver-

ance was near, however. From this state of abject humiliation and depression, Israel was soon to be cheered by a resounding victory.

Jonathan's Faith Jonathan the eldest son of Saul, was a man of great faith and courage. He hated to think that the people of God were subject to the heathen. He realised the cause of it, and decided he would try and correct it.

First, the Philistines must be defeated in their garrison at Michmash. This was no easy task. The garrison was on the top of a steep cliff overlooking a harsh, rocky valley below. In this valley were two steep, jagged crags, called Bozez and Seneh, like two ugly fangs, projecting from the open jaws of the ravine. They looked rough and evil, but as Jonathan spied out the land, he could see that he could use them as a cover by which he might climb up the face of the cliff to the garrison above.

Jonathan was a skilful warrior. In addition, he had faith. He knew that if God were with him he could overthrow the Philistines. He sincerely believed the words of Moses, that, given faith, "one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (Deuteronomy 32:30; 1 Sam. 14:6). He knew, also, that it needed some courageous act of faith if Israel were to overcome its difficulties.

He explained his plans to his armour bearer, who, faithful like his master, agreed to help. He then asked of God a sign. He suggested that he reveal himself unto the Philistines, and if they invited him to come up to them, he would accept it as an omen that Yahweh would deliver them into his hand.

Accordingly Jonathan stood openly in the pass below, so that the Philistines above could see him. They commenced to ridicule him: "Behold, the Hebrews have come out of the holes in which they hide themselves", they mocked. And then they added, "Why don't you come up and visit us!"

They did not mean this, of course: they were only mocking the two lonely Israelitish soldiers. Little did they realise the consequence of their words.

Jonathan accepted these words as a sign he had asked of God. "Follow me," he said to his armour-bearer, "for Yahweh hath delivered them into the hand of Israel".

Using the two crags as cover on hands and feet, they climbed up the steep cliff that rose directly above the valley, and entered the Philistine garrison where few were on the watch. Fiercely Jonathan attacked them, and they, taken off their guard, fell before the resolute Israelite and his armour-bearer. There is a flat piece of ground on the top of Michmash, about half an acre

in extent, and the Philistines, hearing the commotion caused by Jonathan attacking their guards, went to their assistance. But Jonathan and his young assistant, nothing daunted by the fact that they were only two against a garrison, attacked with such goodwill, that soon this flat piece of ground was littered with dead Philistines. The rest of the garrison, not realising that the Israelites only numbered two, and believing that it represented a full-scale attack, began to retreat. Their fear turned to panic when Yahweh sent a great earthquake. A sense of impending disaster gripped many of them. They turned to flee. Others tried to stop them. Soon Philistines were fighting Philistines, and in the mutual slaughter, Jonathan wrought a great victory.

Saul's Rash Wilfulness

Meanwhile, Saul's attention was drawn to the strange happenings taking place in the garrison of the Philistines. What was the meaning of it? He could see the enemy dispersing in all directions, but did not understand the cause. He numbered his few remaining soldiers, and found that Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing. He next called for the priest to find the cause of this, and to seek instructions from God. But his rash wilfulness again got the better of him. He could see the enemy retreating, he could hear the noise of battle and he could not wait to ask counsel of Yahweh. Brushing aside the restraining hand of the priest he impetuously went to war (v. 19).

Saul's army only numbered 600 men, but as news of the defeat of the Philistines was noised around, many of those who had hidden rose up from their places to help; others whom the Philistines had made slaves (v. 21) rose in mutiny against their oppressors; so that the Philistines, now almost frantic with panic, found enemies rising on all sides. They fled down the steep, rocky pass of Beth-horon, with the men of Israel in hot pursuit. They were anxious to exact revenge upon the hated Philistines.

Saul quickly seized the opportunity afforded him through the courageous and faithful action of his son. He set his rapidly increasing army in battle array, and gave the order to advance against the enemy. Ultimately, he also foolishly ordered that no warrior was to taste any food until victory was complete. "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged of mine enemies", he proclaimed.

His main concern was for his personal triumph; and he set out to obtain this even at the expense of the needs of the people.

All day long the people chased the fleeing Philistines, until they were worn out with tiredness and lack of food. Jonathan, alone, had satisfied his hunger. He had not been present when his

father had foolishly commanded the people, and knew not the curse that had been placed on any who ate before the evening. He had partaken of some honeycomb he had found in the forest. In consequence, he was strengthened for the battle, and was able to more effectively pursue the enemy. The rest of the army, however, tired through their exertions, and famished through lack of food, allowed many of the enemy to escape (v. 30).

At last evening came. The period that Saul had commanded they should go without food was now at an end. Famished with hunger, the army flew upon the spoil they had taken, and commenced killing and eating the animals without waiting to arrange for this to be done properly, according to the law of Moses (v. 32; Lev. 3:17).

Saul's rash wilfulness, and hasty unnecessary vow, had caused the people to sin.

He tried to correct the action of the people. He commanded that a large stone be placed before him, that any animals required for food, should be killed in accordance with the law of God. He then built an altar to the Lord that upon it there might be offered the portion due to Him.

This done, Saul made ready to complete the victory. He decided to make a night attack on the Philistines, that their power might be completely destroyed. But the priest, recognising that a greater Power than Saul's was responsible for victory, now demanded that the counsel of God should be sought. This the king had wilfully and impatiently ignored earlier in the day.

However, Yahweh did not answer the priest. Something was wrong. Someone had sinned. The mind of Saul went immediately to the vow he had made. Somebody must have broken it. Saul decided that whoever it was should be put to death. Placing the people on one side, and Jonathan and himself on the other, the priest called upon Yahweh to reveal the guilty party. And Jonathan was taken.

He told his father what he had done. He had taken some honey, not knowing that in doing so he had broken the king's command, and now he must die! However, the people would not agree to this. Jonathan's faith and courage had saved Israel that day; he had wrought a great victory. Surely Yahweh would not desire his death. The people appealed to Yahweh, and redeemed Jonathan, possibly by offering up a sacrifice in his stead (v. 45).

Once again, Saul's folly had caused trouble in Israel. His vow was unwise, rash and thoughtless his actions were those of a man who did not fully understand the will of God.

Meanwhile, with the defeat of the Philistines, Saul was able to establish his power and extend his borders. He continued to

strengthen himself in the kingdom (v. 47). He won many victories, and received the plaudits of the people. He established his power by means of the sword, and not by faith. He no longer remained a farmer, but assumed full kingly power and dignity. He set up a personal bodyguard (1 Samuel 16:15,17), the members of which were mainly selected from his own tribe (ch. 22:7). They were noted for their warlike prowess, their stature and manly appearance (1 Samuel 14:52). Gradually the solemn words of Samuel, by which he had warned Saul that the kingdom would be taken from him, and given to one after Yahweh's own heart, faded from his mind. His success, and the glory with which he surrounded himself, seemed to refute to Samuel's warning. Surely it was impossible that one so elevated as he, so powerful, so successful, should be deposed! However, at the very height of his glory, an incident occurred that revealed that God really meant what He proclaimed. It was the crowning act of Saul's folly. It showed that fleshly might alone is not sufficient if one would effectively rule in the Kingdom of God.



Saul's victory against the Philistines.

Chapter Three

SAUL'S FINAL ACT OF FOLLY 1 SAMUEL 15

Saul's Disobedience And Deceit

"The chapter we have read this evening records the final act of disobedience on the part of Saul," remarked Mr. Phillips to his family. "By his action, he showed how unfitted he was to rule on behalf of God. He had been given great opportunities, but did not make the most of them. How true are his words, spoken of himself on the eve of his death: 'I have played the fool!' (1 Samuel 26:21).

The family had read 1 Samuel 15, with great interest following the adventures of Saul and Samuel. They learned how the prophet had approached the king with a command from Yahweh to go and fight Amalek. Four hundred years earlier, the Amalekites had cruelly and cowardly attacked the Israelites as they struggled down the wilderness and up the Valley of Rephidim to Sinai, cutting off those who straggled behind (Exodus 17:8; Deuteronomy 25:17-18). Joshua had led the army of Israel against the Amalekites, and with God's aid had won a great victory. But a temporary victory was not enough. God had decreed that the Amalekites must be completely destroyed (Exod. 17:14). Now the time had come to put that into effect. Saul was told to go forth and attack the Amalekites in their city (probably Kadesh), and destroy them completely, both man and beast.

As Ann Phillips read this portion of the chapter, a little frown came on her forehead.

"That seems a very cruel thing to have to do!" she remarked to her father.

"It depends upon the way you look at it," replied her father. "Amalek and Israel represented two opposing systems between which there could be no agreement. They stood for two different ways of thought and life, and the existence of each was a threat to the other. The Amalekites were wicked people opposed to the ways of Yahweh and bitterly hostile to Israel. So long as they remained, Israel could be challenged spiritually and nationally. Thus the command of Yahweh, though it seems cruel to us, was really an act of mercy. He was thinking of His people, as a father would his children, and removing from their path a dangerous stumbling block. In like manner, He commands us to destroy

those sins and separate from influences that would lead away from Him. In doing so, we sometimes have to be cruel to be kind”.

“But Saul was commanded to slay even the infants”, protested Peter. “Was there any need for that?”

“There was when you consider the full circumstances,” answered his father. “Amalek represented the serpent power of sin, and God knew that even the infants were a danger to Israel in the long run. If we come upon a nest of snakes, we do not hesitate to destroy them all, even the little ones, because we know that they will grow up to be a danger, with fangs full of poison. Yahweh knew that to be the case with Amalek, and therefore issued the command He did. It seems cruel to us, because we lack His wisdom, and we cannot foresee the future as He can. But actually He was protecting His own people; He had their good always in view. Yahweh is far wiser than flesh, and therefore we must not question many things that happen, and which we find hard to explain. Very often, evil happenings have turned out finally to the benefit of those who have experienced them. In this case, Samuel was sent to Saul with the command of Yahweh: ‘Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass’ (1 Sam. 15:3).

“Saul acted immediately,” continued Mr. Phillips. “He gathered together a large army, and marching deep in the south of the Land, attacked the Amalekites in the city of Kadesh (cp. v. 5 with Num. 13:29; 14:25). The attack was successful. The Amalekites were defeated, and their city overthrown. But when it came to putting into effect all of Yahweh’s instructions, Saul hesitated. It seemed such a pity to destroy all of the beautiful cattle and sheep that had fattened on the ample feed found in the valley of Kadesh! Why not take the best of them to display to the people of Israel, and to offer as a sacrifice to celebrate victory.

“And there was another matter that caused Saul to hesitate to put into effect the command of Yahweh. Agag, the king of the Amalekites, was a mighty man of war, whose commanding appearance would look well in the victory celebrations he had in mind. Would it matter if he were spared for that purpose? Would it not be honouring to Yahweh if they took the best of the animals, and Agag the king, to show the rest of Israel how great was the victory?

“Saul decided to do this, and so returned without fully completing the instructions of God.

“Proudly he led the victorious army of Israel back home, riding

at its head in a chariot of state*. He came to a place called Carmel,† and there, in celebration of his victory, and as an emblem of his power, he set up a monument in the shape of a hand‡. Afterwards, feeling very proud of his victory he continued to Gilgal, where the thanksgiving celebrations were to be held.

“But in the meantime, Samuel the prophet had received a message from Yahweh. He declared: ‘It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments’.

“This message grieved Samuel. He realised that it meant the end of Saul as king. Loyally he pleaded that Yahweh might overlook the king’s offence. But Saul had gone too far; and Samuel was sent on a mission to reveal this to him.

“With a heavy heart, the prophet set out for Gilgal to meet Saul. He found the place, a centre of happy activity. The Israelites were busily engaged in making ready for a national celebration of thanksgiving and victory. Samuel could hear the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle that Saul had saved, and could see Agag the king, looking on at the scene, wondering at his fate.

“Samuel viewed this busy activity with disapproval. The senseless bleating of the sheep, the haughty appearance of king Agag, filled him with anger. They were tokens of Saul’s disobedience. The old prophet, with flowing hair and beard, and long mantle, turned a stern face to Saul as the king approached him full of confidence.

“‘Blessed be thou of Yahweh!’ was the king’s greeting to the prophet. ‘I have performed the commandment’.

“‘If that be so,’ replied the prophet sternly, ‘what is the meaning of the bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?’

“Saul could see that the prophet was angry. He tried to excuse himself by blaming the people:

‘The people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice unto Yahweh; and the rest we destroyed,’ he told Samuel.

“But Samuel rejected such excuses. He rebuked Saul for his conceit, and for his failure to strictly carry out the commands of God.

“‘You were humble when you were elevated to rule,’ he sternly rebuked the king. ‘But now that you are king, and have been sent to perform God’s commands, and destroy the Amalekites, you refuse to do so’.

* According to the Septuagint version.

† This was not Mt. Carmel, but a village about 10 miles east of Hebron, the residence of Nabal — see 1 Sam. 25:2.

‡ See 1 Sam. 15:12 in Septuagint. The Hebrew for “place” is *yad* which signifies *hand*.

“Again Saul tried to justify himself.

“‘I have obeyed Yahweh,’ he told the prophet. ‘It is the people who took of the spoil, and they did so only to sacrifice unto Yahweh in Gilgal.’

“Saul imagined that in reserving the animals for sacrifice justified his action in keeping them alive. Like Cain, he was religious, but did not see the need to strictly carry out to the letter God’s instruction. He thought the end justified the means, and the fact that he intended to offer the animals in sacrifice was sufficient excuse for keeping them alive.

“This is a mistake that many religious people make,” continued Mr. Phillips as he outlined the chapter to the family. “They imagine that if they make great sacrifices of time or money for the things of God it will excuse them for failing to do what He requires. But it is wrong even to think that. Yahweh desires the worship of His creatures, but they must worship Him in the way He has set down in His book, the Bible. Nothing justifies us departing from that. To do so is to sin, no matter what our motives might be. And this lesson was impressed upon unhappy king Saul. Samuel declared unto him:

“‘Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying His voice? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the Word of Yahweh, He hath also rejected thee from being king’ (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

“These are most important words,” said Mr. Phillips. “So much so that I suggest that you each underline these two verses in your Bibles. The lesson they teach is just as important today as it was in the days of Saul. They certainly upset Saul. He declared (v. 24): ‘I have sinned . . . because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice’. Yahweh commanded one thing, but the people wanted another; and because Saul loved the praise of men, he did their bidding. How true this is of human nature! How often do great men ‘fear the people’, and hesitate to support that which they know is right. The lesson of this chapter needs to be heeded by us all.

“Saul confessed his sin, and asked for forgiveness. He pleaded with Saul to again turn with him. But he had gone too far. Samuel realised that Saul had not the spiritual qualities to rule. Angrily he turned to leave. As he did so, Saul caught hold of his long, flowing cloak, to compel him to stay; but instead, the coat tore in his hand.

“‘As you have torn my mantle, so Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you and given it unto a neighbour of yours,

who is better than you!’ declared the prophet.

“Saul continued to plead with Samuel: ‘Honour me now before the people, and turn with me that I may worship Yahweh,’ he cried.

“But the only way that can be done acceptably is by obedience to God’s requirements. Samuel decided to teach that lesson to Saul and to Israel. Turning back with the king, he commanded that Agag be brought before him.

“The King of the Amalekites was brought before the stern-faced, resolute prophet. Bound in fetters, he approached with tottering steps‡. In the unsmiling face of the prophet he read his death sentence. He pleaded for his life: ‘Death is bitter,’ he lamented to the prophet. But Samuel replied:

“‘As your sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women!’§



*The
prophet
Samuel
“hewed
Agag
in pieces
before
the Lord”.*

‡ The original suggests this. The *Septuagint* renders the words as “trembling”. Moffatt “with tottering steps,” Companion Bible, “in fetters”.

§ Agag’s words in the Hebrew is as Mr. Phillips gives it in his outline of the chapter. See Moffatt’s translation.

“With the people looking on, the aged prophet took a sword, and ruthlessly executed the doomed king. He then abruptly turned and left the gathering. No more did he come to visit Saul. By his folly, the king had lost the one friend who could have helped him. As for the victory celebrations, they were completely spoiled. Sadly the people dispersed. Saul returned to his capital at Gibeah, and Samuel went to his home-town of Ramah. The prophet sorrowed over Saul. He had come to like the handsome king, and was saddened by his failure,” concluded Mr. Phillips.

“Now are there any questions you would like to ask on the chapter?” he asked as he finished outlining the chapter.

“Yes”, said Graeham. “In verse 29, Yahweh is described as the ‘Strength of Israel’. Is there any particular significance about the title?”

“I believe so,” answered Mr. Phillips. “The Hebrew word translated ‘Strength’ has various meanings. It can signify *Splendour*, *Eternity*, *Strength*, or *Victory*. Some translations have rendered the word as *Triumph*. In this place, *Victory* seems more appropriate than ‘Strength’. Saul with his monument of Victory in Carmel (v. 12), and having preserved the best of the animals and Agag the king to grace his victory celebrations in Gilgal, had overlooked from whence victory had come to Israel. Samuel thus reminds him that victory is of Yahweh, and is conditional upon strictly obeying His commands. We must learn the same lesson in the battle of life. We will never win the victory over self unless we seek the aid of God, and follow His ways. David had some wonderful words to say on that theme. He declared: ‘Thine, O Yahweh, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom and Thou art exalted as head above all’ (1 Chron. 29:11). That is a truth that Saul failed to grasp.”

“I also have a question,” said Peter. “There seems to be a contradiction in the chapter. In v. 29 Samuel declares that God will not repent, but in v. 35 it says He did repent. In what way did God repent?”

“The word ‘repent’ is used in the Bible in a different way to that by which it is usually used among men,” explained Mr. Phillips. “We ‘repent’ when we are sorry for anything we have done; but in the Bible the word really means ‘to change’. In v. 29, Samuel declared that Yahweh would replace Saul with another king, and that He would not change in His intention to do so, whilst v. 35 states that Yahweh changed towards Saul and rejected him as king”.

“What does it mean in v. 29 where it says that ‘He is not a man

that He should repent"? asked Peter again.

"Samuel meant that when Yahweh determines upon a certain course of action, He has the power to put it into effect. A man might decide to do something, but whether he is able to accomplish it is open to question. It is not so with God Who is able to do all He proposes".

"That is true," agreed Peter, "but you do not see my point. Verse 29 says that 'He is not a man that He should repent,' but v. 35 shows that He did repent!"

"I see what you mean," said Mr. Phillips. "Verse 29 means that He is not like a man who can be forced to change his purpose. When Yahweh 'repents' or makes a change in plans, He does so to accomplish His purpose; but with man it is otherwise. Saul could have fought against man with some prospect of success, but it was hopeless for him to attempt to fight against God".



Samuel Reproves the Disobedient King.

***David Is
Introduced
To The Nation***

THE SHEPHERD BOY WHO BECAME KING

The story of the Bible has introduced us to many men and women of faith, whose lives are patterns, or examples, which we can follow with profit. Though oft-times faced with trials and difficulties, they rose above them because of their trust in God, and their determination not to yield to temptation or suffering. And the wonderful feature about the records of their lives is that they are not yet ended; those men and women, heroes and heroines of God's way, are yet to stand upon the earth and made gloriously immortal by a resurrection from the dead (Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Then the true value of their lives of sacrifice and service will be seen and respected by all.

Outstanding among those worthies of the past was Moses, concerning whom it is written: "there arose not a prophet in Israel like unto him" (Deut. 34:10). By his great work of deliverance, as well as the Law that he set before the people, he towers high above many other notable examples of faith, so that his name occurs no less than 750 times in the Old Testament.

And now, in the course of time, and the Divine purpose, we are introduced to another outstanding man of faith; one whose name occurs in the Bible 200 times more frequently than that of Moses! David, the shepherd boy of Bethlehem, who is described as "the man after God's own heart", was taken from the humble occupation of caring for sheep in the open field, to be king in Israel. He became Yahweh's choice of king, instead of Saul, who represented the people's choice. Saul had followed the way of the flesh; he sought to please the people. David, on the other hand, though he failed from time to time, sought to follow the ways of Yahweh. Saul, like Cain, was religious, but did not see the need to strictly follow God's way in his worship — but David ever sought the true way.

David's history is particularly important because of the wonderful covenant of promise that Yahweh made with him. It is the third of the three great covenants of promise upon which the whole Bible is based. These covenants relate to:

- (1) The promise in Eden;*
- (2) The promise to Abraham;*
- (3) The promise to David.*

Combined, these covenants of promise comprise a key that will unlock the true significance of any portion of the Bible.

In addition, David's history is important because it so clearly typifies the life of the Lord Jesus. From a humble beginning, he rose to be the highest in the land, foreshadowing the past life and future glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. David's life reveals the following developments:

- 1. As rejected by Saul and the nation.*
- 2. As gathering around him his associates who later helped him to rule.*
- 3. As King in Israel.*
- 4. As victor over the surrounding nations.*

The second half of 1 Samuel tells of his adventures as he wandered

a fugitive from the wrath of Saul. The 2 Samuel describes his glorious reign, but is divided into two parts, the second of which records his personal failures. For even this great man, as Moses before him, is humbled by the realisation of his personal weakness.

Before his death, David prepared everything for the full glory of the Kingdom, as manifested in the reign of his son Solomon. David received the plans for the coming Temple from God; he laid up riches to beautify it; he arranged for the way in which the services were to be conducted; he set to music many of the hymns that were subsequently used; and which we know as the Psalms of David.

He did everything that the Law required of him as King. For, long before there were kings in Israel, Moses had set down their first duty. They were called upon to write for themselves a copy of the Law of God in a book, and to read therefrom every day. The purpose of this was:

- (1) That they may learn to fear Yahweh;
- (2) That they may obey His laws;
- (3) That they may not become conceited above their brethren;
- (4) That they may reign long and prosperously upon the throne in Israel (see Deut. 17:18-20).

David did all this. "His delight was in the law of Yahweh; and in His law he meditated day and night" (Psa. 1:2). His prayer to God was: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law" (Psa. 119:18). This was the secret of his greatness, and the reason why he was able to surmount the terrible trials he was called upon to endure. The story of his life is an inspiration to all — both young and old.



Chapter One

DAVID IS ANOINTED KING

David Is Selected

The day came when the Voice of Yahweh was again heard by Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing that I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go, and I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided Me a king from among his sons".

Jesse was the grandson of Ruth the Moabitess. He was a sheep-farmer on the very land which had once belonged to Boaz. He had eight sons, and the youngest was named David (Ruth 4:21-22).

Samuel made ready, and on the appointed day, the elders of Bethlehem were startled to see him at their city. They wondered the cause of his mission.

"Have you come peaceable?" they asked him anxiously.

"Peaceably," he replied. "I am come to sacrifice unto Yahweh".

The elders of the city knew that this meant a feast, so they made ready. Among those who attended was Jesse and his family. Samuel separated the family of Jesse from the rest of the Bethlehemites,* and arranged for his sons to appear before him one by one.

The eldest of Jesse's sons was Eliab, a tall, well-built, handsome Israelite. "Surely this is to be Yahweh's anointed," thought Samuel.

But he was told: "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him. For Yahweh seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart".

One by one the sons of Jesse passed before the prophet, but none of them was chosen.

Samuel was puzzled. Apparently all the sons of Jesse had passed before him, but none had been selected.

"Are all your sons here?" he asked Jesse.

"There remains but the youngest, and behold he cares for the sheep," replied Jesse.

"Go and fetch him," ordered Samuel, "for we will not eat until he be come hither".

* The word "sanctified" (1 Sam. 16:5) means "to set apart" or separate.

Jesse sent for David, and presented him to the prophet.

Samuel saw before him a young, golden-haired, bright eyed boy of graceful appearance, dressed in a shepherd's clothes, and with staff in hand.

"Arise, anoint him," said the Voice to Samuel, "for this is he".

Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren. Immediately the spirit of Yahweh came upon David.

All those present realised that David had been selected for some great work in the purpose of Yahweh, but just what it comprised was not then revealed. Only Samuel knew that he was selected to be King in Israel. Perhaps Samuel whispered the momentous news in the ear of David as he anointed him, telling him that he had been selected to become Yahweh's king. Certainly David knew of his destiny. For a while, after his anointing by Samuel, it seems that he left tending the sheep, and joined the company of prophets that was with Samuel at Ramah.

There he was instructed in the duties he was one day to take up (1 Chron. 9:22).

Saul and David Meet

After Saul had heard the bitter news that he had been set aside as king, he became depressed and suspicious of all those about him. Moody fits of jealousy took possession of him, plunging him into conditions of murderous insanity.

His condition worried his servants: "Behold, an evil spirit from God troubles you," they declared (1 Samuel 16:14-15).

This was true, but not in the way most people imagine. God did not make Saul moody and insane by pouring an evil spirit into him. All He did was to control the circumstances of Saul's life. It was He who commanded Samuel to reprove the King; it was He who rejected Saul and said He would select somebody else to replace him. These circumstances influenced Saul, and because God was the Author of them, the Bible says that "an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled Saul".

In like manner, the Bible says that God "hardened Pharaoh's heart" in the days of Moses. He did this by removing the plagues, for, we read, "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants" (Exodus 9:34).

The only way Saul could be cured was to turn to God with all his heart; and God, Who is ever merciful, would have helped him.

But Saul did not do this, and his servants did not advise him to do so. Instead, they suggested that the king might seek out some-

body who was extremely clever in playing the harp, and who might therefore be able to soothe Saul's feelings when he was upset.

When the king decided to follow this advice, one of his servants declared: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse that is clever in playing. Moreover, he is courageous in action, manly in bearing, discreet in speech, pleasant in appearance, and Yahweh is with him" (1 Samuel 16:18).

From this it appears that David must have associated with the company of the prophets, for they used music to teach as well as the spoken word (1 Chronicles 25:3). And the fact that he is said to have the "Spirit of Yahweh" suggested that he found place among that company.

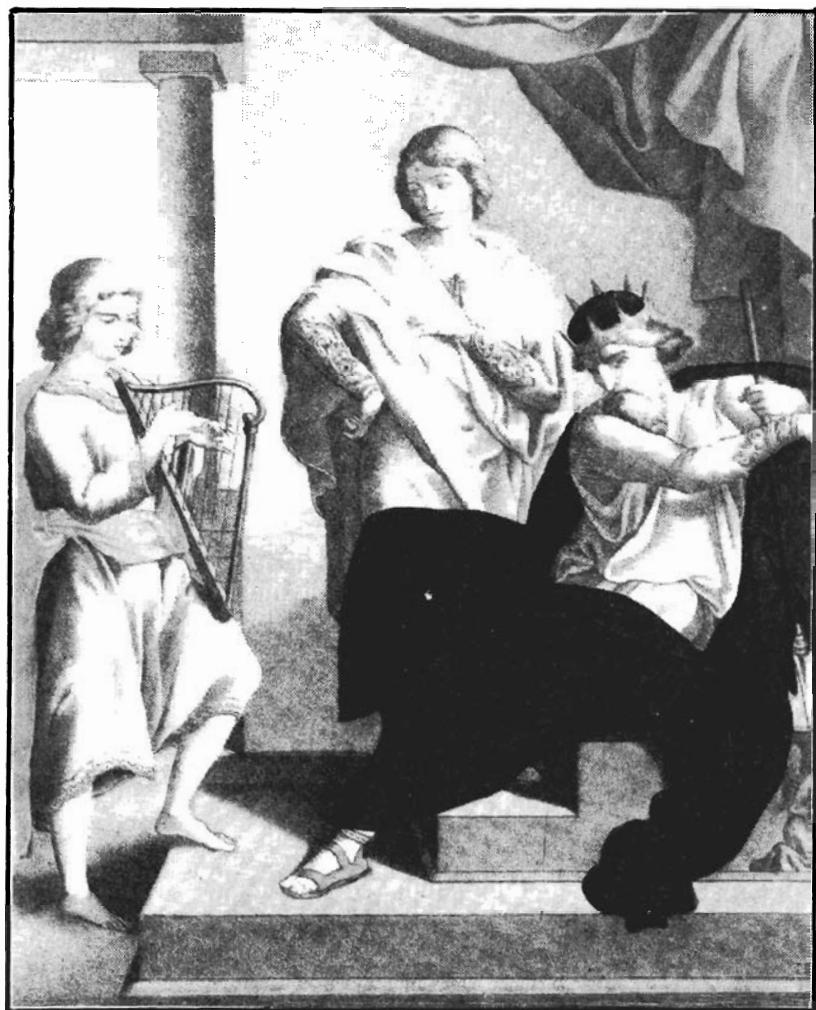
Saul appointed David court musician. He immediately won the heart of the king. He proved to be bright and pleasant company. The soothing strains of the music which he played so skillfully helped to quieten the savage, restless spirit of the king. Saul felt very much better for the presence of the boy from Bethlehem, and gradually a spirit of affection grew between them. Ultimately, but much later,[†] he made David his armour-bearer, and kept him permanently at court.

Meanwhile, war broke out between the Philistines and Israel. In the general activity of getting ready to defend the country, Saul had little time for music. He forgot his fears and feelings, and gave his attention to preparing the army for war. David was sent back to Jesse, to feed the sheep once more in the open fields of Bethlehem (1 Sam. 17:15).

The Shepherd Boy's Great Courage

On the hillsides of Bethlehem, David tended the sheep. He meditated long and deeply upon the wonderful events of his life, and particularly of what he had learned from Samuel. About him he saw evidences of Yahweh's mighty power, particularly in the beauty of nature, and the glory of the heavens above. As he searched the pages of the Bible, which he made his daily delight (Psa. 1:2), he prayed unto God that He might reveal unto him "wondrous things out of His law" (Psa. 119:18). He saw in the covenants of promise, and the remarkable history of Israel, evidence of Yahweh's care of His

[†] The record in 1 Samuel 16:14-23 temporarily ignores chronological order to consider the effect made upon Saul when he was deposed in favour of the then unknown future king. These verses present a general overall account of what occurred, and show how David was introduced to Saul, who little suspected then that he was destined to replace him. The chronological order recommences with chapter 17. David, having been for a short time with Saul returned home. The king temporarily forgot him in the excitement and preparations of the impending war as Israel made ready to meet the Philistine attack.



With the news of Saul being set aside as king, He becomes suspicious of everyone around him. David is then appointed as chief musician in the court of Saul. He skilfully played his harp in the presence of Saul which he had learnt while watching the sheep. His harp playing helped to soothe the king's heart and wielded between the two men a spirit of affection.

people, and the great purpose that He has for all mankind (Num. 14:21).

He also had revealed to him a practical example of the strength and care that Yahweh can give to those who trust in Him.

The sheep over which he ruled was attacked by wild beasts. A bear and a lion stalked the flock, and the lion seized a lamb and carried it away. Part of a shepherd's duty was to care for the animals of his flock even at risk, of his own life. Therefore, full of faith and courage, David pursued after the lion and, attacking it, took the lamb out of its mouth. The wild beast turned and savagely leaped at him, but David caught it by its beard and flinging it to the ground, killed it. On another occasion, in similar manner, he also slew a bear (1 Samuel 17:34-36). He realised, however, that his success was not due to his own strength. Yahweh had been with him to help him, and to deliver him out of the paws of the lion and of the bear.

David recognised that though he were a shepherd, there is a greater Shepherd than he (Psa. 80:1).

In tending the sheep he learned many lessons of faith and courage, of leadership and care for others, of dependence on God and personal endurance. Above all, he learned to patiently wait upon God. He never projected himself forward, nor failed in loyalty to Saul. Indeed, he grew to love and sympathise with that unfortunate king.

The Shepherd Boy Becomes A National Hero

The Valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17:2) is a long, winding valley, that leads in from the coastal plains of the Philistines, to the very heart of Israel, and of Judah. By the town of Shochoh, southwest of Bethlehem, it is met by two other valleys, and the junction forms an open broad plain, divided by a deep ditch which, in winter time, becomes a roaring torrent.

For some time, the Philistines had been preparing to invade Israel, and now the information was received by Saul that they were advancing up this long, winding valley into the heart of the country. Saul wasted no time. His army was ready and with many victories on record, he confidently descended from the hill country to meet the Philistines at Shochoh. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and the Israelites on a mountain between Shochoh and the fortress of Azekah on the other side. Between them lay the valley, with the deep brook in the centre. Both armies were in strong positions. Stationed on opposing mountains, they could clearly see each other.

The Philistines guarded the Pass that led to the heart of their territory, and the Israelites that which held the Key to the main

centre of Israel. Both sides were in strong defensive positions. They hesitated to attack for if either did so and lost, the way was opened for a decisive attack by the enemy.

Thus a stale-mate took place in the war.

There came out of the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath. He was a huge man, some 9ft. 9in. in height, heavily encased in armour. He had an helmet of brass, a coat of mail, greaves (leg pieces), of brass upon his legs, a target (R.V., a javelin) of brass between his shoulders, a sword in one hand, and a huge spear like a weaver's beam in the other. This left him no means of bearing a shield, so he employed another Philistine to act as shield-bearer. This soldier carried a huge shield, which he rested on the ground, behind which both the shield-bearer and Goliath sheltered. Day after day the champion stood out upon the flat ground between the two armies, challenging Israel to send a warrior to do battle with him.

"Why are you come out to set your battle in array?" he shouted, "Am not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall you be our servants and serve us. I defy the armies of Israel this day! Give me a man, that we may fight together!"

The Israelites were dismayed at the challenge, but no man dared to accept it. Not even Saul, who stood head and shoulders over many of the others (1 Sam. 10:23). The two armies thus remained gazing at each other, as, day after day, Goliath shouted his challenge and boast.

Forty days went by with the armies remaining inactive.

The unexpected length of the war was causing concern to many Israelites.

Meanwhile, the aged Jesse decided to send David to see how his brethren fared in the army. Too young to participate, David had remained at home to care for the sheep whilst his brothers entered service under Saul. Jesse decided to send them some provisions, and instructed his young son to bring back a pledge, some token of their welfare (1 Sam. 17:18).

Like Joseph, David went to see how his brothers fared (Gen. 37:13-14), and like Joseph, he found that his brothers were displeased at his coming. Eliab, Jesse's firstborn, the man whose appearance impressed Samuel, spake roughly to him, and showed that he rather despised his young brother, the shepherd boy. The treatment David received foreshadowed that received by the Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type, for of Jesus we also read that "neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:5).

David arrived at the encampment just as the army took up its position for the day, and shouted defiance at the enemy on the opposite hill (1 Sam. 17:20). Leaving the parcels he had brought in the care of an officer, he mingled with the Israelitish soldiers seeking his brethren, to pass on to them greetings from their father.

As he did so, he saw Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, come forth on the flat piece of ground before the two armies, and heard him shout his challenge to the Israelites.

About him, Israelites were discussing the reward that Saul had promised to give the man who would successfully meet the challenge of Goliath, but there was nobody prepared to do so.*

David was amazed that in all Israel there was not a man prepared to do battle with the Philistine. He remembered how God had helped him against the lion and the bear. If Yahweh granted him victory over those wild beasts, would He not also assist a man of faith against the Philistine below, who was trying to rob the flock of God? Why should such a man as that, outside the covenant and therefore fitted for death (cp. v. 26 with Gen. 17:14), be allowed to blasphemously defy the army of God? If there was no one in Israel with the faith and courage to meet the challenge, David determined to do so himself.

“What shall be done to the man that kills this Philistine and removes the reproach from Israel?” he asked those about him.

“The king will enrich him, will give him his daughter to wife, and grant his father’s house exemption from bondage or taxation in Israel,” was the reply.

Eliab, heard the words of David, and turned on his younger brother in anger. Perhaps he was jealous of the honour paid him by Samuel who had overlooked him though he was the firstborn.

“Why have you come down here?” he asked David, angrily. “With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride, and your wilful heart; you are wasting your time here merely to see the battle”.

But David continued to make his enquiries, until his words were told to Saul. And Saul, in turn, called for David to come before him.

How disappointed Saul was when he saw that David was but a youth, a stripling! How could this comparative babe help against the mighty Goliath!

But David said: “Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your

* 1 Sam. 17:24 reads that all Israel “fled” from Goliath. But why should they do so, seeing that he was not attacking them? The same Hebrew word is translated “hide” in Jud. 6:11 (see margin). The Israelites hid their faces from Goliath by refusing to take up his challenge.



Israel was badly outnumbered and facing the Philistines across the valley of Elah. Goliath, whose height was six cubits and a span stood roaring his challenge to the Hebrews. David putting his faith in God took his staff and sling in his hand faced the giant.

servant will go and fight with this Philistine”.

He told Saul how Yahweh had helped him when the lion and bear attacked the flock, and confidently declared: “Yahweh Who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine”.

Saul was impressed with these words. Moreover his position was desperate. His army could not remain bottled up as it was. And there was something compelling in the bright-eyed, golden-haired boy before him.

“Go,” he said to David, “and Yahweh be with you”.

He clothed David with armour: a helmet of brass upon his head; a coat of mail for his body; a sword upon his side. But David found that these hampered his movements. He was not used to them. His confidence was in Yahweh, and not in the armour. If Yahweh did not give him the victory the armour would not save him from the fury of the Philistine giant.

Nevertheless although David’s confidence was in Yahweh, he did not neglect to seek the best means of succeeding in his venture. He armed himself with his shepherd club by which he was used to protect the sheep, and carefully selected five smooth stones to aim surely and swiftly at the giant. He did not act foolishly or carelessly. He knew that God expected him to play his part. Putting the stones in his shepherd’s bag, he fearlessly went out on the flat plain to meet the enemy.

David Becomes A National Hero

It was a most dramatic moment. In the arena the huge Philistine with his heavy coat of mail, his mighty sword, fearsome javelin and sharp spear, and sheltering behind the huge shield which, standing on the ground, protected almost all his body stood glaring at the Israelites. The two armies, clothing the opposite hills, looked down upon the two duellists below. They saw a slightly built shepherd boy, unarmed except for his normal shepherd’s instruments, step out to meet the heavily armed giant. A hush of awe spread over the scene. It did not seem possible that David could come out of the encounter alive. And then the silence was broken by the hoarse, indignant shout of the Philistine:

“Am I a dog, that you come to me with staves?”

He cursed David by his gods, and declared: “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field”.

In cursing David by his gods, Goliath brought the contest into a new field of enquiry. It was not now a matter of man against man, but, rather, of Dagon, the god of the Philistines, challenging Yahweh, the God of Israel.

For David fought in the strength and Name of Yahweh.

According to *The Septuagint* version of the Bible, Psalm 144 is dedicated to the death of Goliath. It could well represent the prayer of David as he walked out on the plain to do battle with the man whom all Israel feared. The shepherd boy had rejected Saul's armour, knowing that in Yahweh He had a greater Protection. The boasts of Goliath, did not deter him, for his confidence was in Yahweh. He sought His help through the prayer recorded in Psalm 144:

1. His confidence in Yahweh

Blessed be Yahweh my Rock,

Who trains my hands for war, and my fingers to fight:

My Goodness and my Fortress;

My High Tower, and my Deliverer;

My Shield, and He in whom I trust:

Who subdueth my people under me.

Yahweh, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!

Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him!

Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

2. His Plea for Help

Bow Thy heavens, O Yahweh, and come down!

Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

Cast forth lightning, and scatter them (i.e. the Philistines);

Shoot out Thine arrows, and destroy them.

*Send Thine hand from above; rescue me, and deliver me out of
great waters,*

From the hand of aliens.

Whose mouth speaketh vanity (Goliath's boasts),

And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

3. His Promise to give Yahweh the Glory

I will sing a new song unto Thee, O God:

Upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

It is He Who giveth victory unto kings (Saul and David):

*Who delivereth David His servant from the hurtful sword (of
Goliath).*

Rescue me from the cruel sword,

Deliver me from the hands of aliens,

Whose mouth speaketh lies.

Whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

4. The Benefits of Victory to Israel

That our sons may be as plants,

Grown up in their youth;

That our daughters may be as cornerstones,

Polished after the similitude of a palace;

That our garners may be full,

Affording all manner of store;

*That our sheep may bring forth
 Thousands and ten thousands in our fields.
 That our oxen may be strong to labour,
 Suffering no evil or failure in bearing:
 That there be no complaining in our streets!
 Happy the people who is in such a case;
 Yea, happy the people, whose God is Yahweh.*
 (Psa. 144, A.V. & R.V.).

David uttered this prayer as he went out to meet Goliath. The watching troops had heard the boast of Goliath, and now they heard the clear confident voice of David in reply:

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield; but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of Armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will Yahweh deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the army of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth; *that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and all this ecclesia* shall know that Yahweh saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is Yahweh's, and He will give you into our hands*" (1 Sam. 17:46).

How the hearts of many in Israel must have been touched as they heard those words of faith echo through the valley. With concern the soldiers watched, the mighty Goliath lumber across to meet David whilst the slightly built, lightly clad shepherd boy, ran quickly to meet the giant. Placing one of the smooth stones he had selected, in his sling, he directed it towards the Philistine of Gath. With terrific speed it sped towards the giant, crushing his forehead, penetrating his brain, bringing to an end the blasphemous boasts of the heathen.

The hostile armies observed the outcome of the contest with amazement. For the Israelites it meant victory; for the Philistines defeat. They saw David run to the recumbent body of the Philistine, and drawing his sword from its sheath, cut off the head of the giant, holding it aloft for all to see.

The death of the Philistine champion stimulated both the faith and the courage of the Israelites whilst it disheartened the enemy. With a great victorious shout the former charged the latter who fled in fear. The Israelites rushed down the hill, crossed the brook that divided the plain, and chased the Philistines along the winding valley of Elah that stretched to the west, reaching the town of Gath.

Meanwhile, Saul had called for Abner, the captain of his army,

* The Hebrew word *qahal* is the equivalent of the Greek Ecclesia, and in the Septuagint version "Ecclesia" is here used.

who was also his uncle. Saul doubtless recognised the young man as the musician who used to play for him, but had quite forgotten his family relationships. This had now become a matter of some importance, for to the victor had been promised the hand of Saul's daughter, as well as great riches.

"Whose son is this youth, this stripling?" Saul asked Abner.

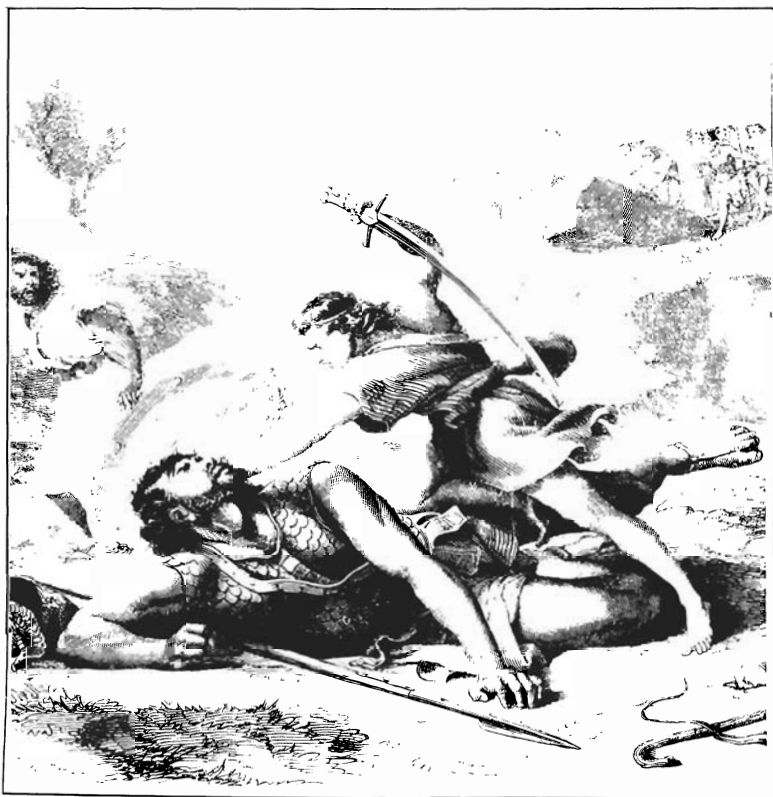
"O king, I cannot tell," was the reply.

When David returned to the camp, bearing with him the head of the fallen Philistine, he was brought before Saul.

"Whose son are you, young man?" asked the king.

"I am the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite," David replied.

How Saul came to hate that name in the days that followed!



The defeat of the Philistine Goliath at the hands of David, whose trust was in God.

A Greater Triumph Yet To Come

In what we have suggested as the prayer of David, recorded in Psalm 144, he promised that if victory be granted him, he would “sing a new song unto Yahweh”.

That song could well be the 8th Psalm.

The Psalm is dedicated to *muth-labben* — two Hebrew words that signify “the death of the champion”. The Psalm speaks of how the name of Yahweh is held in great esteem in all the earth (cp. with 1 Sam. 17:46), how that “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings” (the stripling David) Yahweh has revealed strength “because of His enemies”, that He might “still the enemy (Goliath) and the avenger”. The Psalm praises Yahweh for stooping to consider mere man, and promising to crown him with glory and honour.

This Psalm is based upon the death of Goliath which, as David declared, showed to “all the earth that there is a God in Israel,” and revealed to “the Ecclesia,” that He saveth not with sword or spear.

But though based upon the historic victory of faith, the Psalm is prophetic of Christ, and is quoted in the New Testament accordingly (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:6-8). It predicts the time when the glory of Yahweh will be manifested in the Governments of the nations, figuratively the political heavens; when those who have humbled themselves to perform His will will be elevated as a royal priesthood ruling with the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem over the whole earth (Rev. 5:9-10; Isa. 2:2-4), and when all mankind will be subject to the Kingdom of God.

This state of things will be brought about through the “death of the champion”, or the conquest of sin. Christ’s victory over sin and death (Hebrew 2:14), was an important development in this. It will be followed by the victory over Gog at the Lord’s coming. The Russian Gog (Ezek. 38:1) will unite all nations (except Israel and her supporters) under one head, and will invade the land of Israel at the time of the end (Ezekiel 38:16). He will champion the cause of Gentilism, and will induce fear in the hearts of all mortals who oppose him. His power is symbolised in the prophecy of Daniel by a great metallic warrior, whose appearance was terrible to those who saw it (Daniel 2:31). But this great image was smitten by a stone which grew into a mountain completely destroying the image, and filling the earth (vv. 34-35).

Explaining the prophecy, Daniel declared: “The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: the kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these (other) kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

To overthrow the enemies of God, and establish His power in

the earth, Jesus Christ must return from heaven (Acts 1:11; 3:19-20). In company with his resurrected and immortalised followers, he will intervene in the affairs of the nations, destroying the great military power which will meanwhile invade the land of Israel. By this means mankind will be set free to worship God through that one who today is "despised among men," so that "all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel". Then will the prediction of Psalm 8 be fulfilled in the conditions that shall exist on earth. To that end Christ, the good Shepherd, will direct his army, as David did the smooth stone he selected from the brook.

In addition to the typical significance of David's encounter with Goliath, it also provides an example of faith and courage (Psa. 31:24; 37:5). God worked with David, because he was ready and willing to work with God. We must do likewise. It is said, with truth, that "God helps those who help themselves". We must not expect God to do everything for us, but rather learn to use the means that He makes available to us. God has His own way in which to bring to pass His purpose (Eph. 1:11), and it is for us to discover that way and to submit to His requirements. God desires the wholehearted enthusiasm of His people in the accomplishment of His will in things both big and small (Ecc. 9:10). Yahweh has promised that He will "draw nigh to those who draw nigh to Him" (Psa. 34:18; 145:18; Isa. 55:6; James 4:8). The story of David and Goliath shows that He is true to His promise.

**David Makes
Friends and
Enemies**

"There are important lessons to be learned in that chapter!" remarked Mr. Phillips, enthusiastically after the family had read 1 Samuel 18.

"I liked the chapter we read last night much better," said Joan.

"The story of David and Goliath, which we read last night, is more dramatic, I certainly agree," said Mr. Phillips. "It must have been a wonderful moment when David returned after destroying his mighty opponent. Previously despised by his brothers, scorned by the Philistines, and perhaps pitied by all Israel as they watched him go forth to the unequal contest, David was now praised in such a way as to arouse the fierce jealousy of Saul, and thus bring him into danger".

"Why did Yahweh permit that?" asked Graeham.

"It was part of the training that David had to undergo to become the greatest king ever to sit on a throne", replied his father. "To that end, having revealed to him the great Power he was able to call upon in need, and having granted him a triumph

greater than any man in Israel, Yahweh now brought him into trouble, that he might learn not to trust in himself, but in God”.

“That is a good point,” said Peter.

“Yes,” replied his father. “Constant success is not good for us. It can lift us up in pride, and cause us to think of ourselves above what we really are. On the other hand, trouble empties us of pride; it makes us kinder towards those who suffer: it teaches us to lean on God Who can help us; it humbles us causing us to plead His help, and assists in creating a state of mind that will enable Him to make use of us. The priests of Israel were chosen by God that they might show kindness to the ignorant and erring, realising that they themselves were prone to failure (Hebrews 5:2). We are called to be a royal priesthood in the Age. Trouble and suffering can humble us in a similar way — though young people find it hard to understand this, because their lives are so free from these things”.

“David received help from Jonathan, which must have encouraged him,” remarked Graeham.

“True,” agreed his father. “And what a help a friend can be to one in trouble! We shall read how that Saul became bitterly jealous of David; how he drove him from home and family and brought him into daily peril of his life. In all this however David was encouraged by Jonathan to follow a course of faith and courage that finally brought him to the throne. David’s life began in obscurity — as a humble shepherd caring for a few sheep on a hillside, and overlooked even by his own family — but it ended in a blaze of glory, with himself crowned as king, and surrounding nations submissive to his rule. His life introduces many characters to us, but none is greater, nor more appealing than that of Jonathon.

“Jonathan already had proved himself a faithful warrior also,” said Graeham (see 1 Samuel 14).

“That is true,” replied his father. “Jonathan was set to be the future king of Israel, and had proved himself both courageous and faithful, but the house of Saul had shown itself unsuited for Yahweh’s purpose, and so another king had been anointed in David. Those circumstances reveal the outstanding character manifested by Jonathan. He was not jealous of David’s selection. His love for Yahweh and for his young friend was so strong that he willingly stood aside from his office, and assisted David in preference to himself. He extended to David a selfless affection that gave without demanding anything in return. He cared for David as a father would a son, even at the expense of his own interests. The love that each showed for the other reveals one of the greatest friendships of history. These two great, faithful,

courageous characters were attracted to each other, both seeking the other's good. This friendship is all the more remarkable, when the great difference in the ages of the two men are brought into consideration. Jonathan would have been about 40 years of age at this time, whilst David, the stripling, was perhaps about 17. But Jonathan admired the courageous faith and modest attitude of the bright-eyed shepherd boy, as, unafraid, he stepped forth to meet Goliath. And David, who had seen Jonathan in the court of Saul when he played as a musician, had learned to love the strong, gentle and faithful prince. So mutual affection grew between the middle-aged man and the young boy. They met and talked of their plans for the future. David told Jonathan of the visit of Samuel to his father's house, and how he had been anointed as future king, and they made a covenant to help each other. Jonathan took off his royal robe and weapons which constituted his badge of office, and gave them to David (v. 4), thus showing to the young boy that he gave up his position as heir-apparent in favour of his friend whom God had appointed".

"What did Saul think of that?" asked Ann.

"Saul knew nothing about it," answered her father, "and David and Jonathan kept it to themselves. Meanwhile, David was taken by Saul to his court, and no longer allowed to return home (v. 2). He became part of Saul's household, and continued to help the king in his moments of madness by soothing him with the sweet music he played so well.

"But now there occurred an incident that caused Saul to hate David and try to murder him. The Israelitish army returned to the capital of Gibeah, pleased with the Israelitish victory over the Philistines. They entered the city amid the cheers of the people, with Saul and David at the head of the procession. At this time Saul was very generous to the young victor of Goliath. He observed that everything David did, he did well (v. 5), and so he promoted him to honour. He first made him his armour-bearer, later promoted him to captain over a thousand men (v. 13), and finally appointed him general of the army. At that time only Saul, Jonathan and Abner were superior to him (Ch. 20:25; 22:14)".

"Well Saul was very good to him," remarked Ann.

"That was at first," answered her father, "but soon he began to change. He noticed that David was becoming more and more popular. The people of Gibeah saw him at the head of the army as it returned from its victories. Stories of David's skill, courage and valour became common (cp. 1 Samuel 18:5 with 22:14). As he grew in age and stature, the bright-eyed, fair haired, graceful young man became a popular hero with the people, well-known throughout the length and breadth of the land. His victories were

celebrated in song and dance. 'Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands,' the young women sang as they celebrated with joy and dancing the home-coming of the army of Israel.

"But this applause angered Saul. His jealous nature hated the thought that another should be held in higher esteem than he. 'They praise David more than me,' he muttered angrily to himself, 'what can he have more but the kingdom?' It was not only Saul that thought this way, for even the enemies of Israel, seeing and hearing of the praise that was being lavished upon the young captain, saw in David the future ruler of Israel (1 Samuel 21:11). They feared him greatly.

"As Saul grew suspicious of David, and watched his every movement (v. 9), conditions in the palace in Gibeah became tense. The king suffered more and more from moody fits of jealousy brought about by the sight of the wiry, keen-faced bright-eyed David. He could not bear to see him about the place. He grew to hate him, and his hatred gradually turned him to thoughts of murder".

"Before you go on," said Graeham, interrupting his father, "I would like to ask a question. Verse 18 says that 'the evil spirit' which troubled Saul came from God. What does that mean?"

"God was the author of it," replied Mr. Phillips, "but not in the way you think. God did not pour an evil spirit into Saul and induce in him thoughts of murder. But God did control the circumstances surrounding Saul's life and these aroused his jealousy. For example, God helped David, and it was this that influenced Saul. Therefore it is recorded that the 'evil spirit came from God'. The reproof of Samuel had brought to Saul the realisation of failure, and he could not bear the sight of a rival capturing the plaudits of the people.

"Saul carefully selected the time to murder David," continued Mr. Phillips. "We read in verse 10 that he 'prophesied in the midst of the house'. To 'prophesy,' does not necessarily mean to foretell the future, but 'to speak profitably' for the benefit of others (1 Cor. 14:3). Students of Hebrew say that the word is here used in such a way as to indicate that Saul did it in pretence. He was pretending to conduct family worship in his house, and had called for David to play music, possibly to accompany the singing of hymns. Everybody became intent upon the service, which was what Saul wanted. Suddenly, seizing the spear that stood by his side, he plunged the murderous weapon at David. But the vigilant David was too quick for Saul, and dodged out of the way. Mad with rage, and throwing off all pretence, Saul again thrust at him with the spear, but again David was able to avoid

the blow. He fled from the presence of the King and kept out of his way until his fit of madness left him”.

“I suppose after that experience, David would be on his guard against Saul,” said Ann.

“Yes,” replied her father. “Nevertheless, Saul was now determined to destroy David. He realised David would be on his guard, and therefore decided to try a different way of killing him. He promoted David, and made him captain. He knew that David was inexperienced, and perhaps thought he might be induced by pride, or ignorance, to commit some sin worthy of punishment, or bring down on him the contempt and anger of the people. In addition to this, there was always the chance that David might be slain in battle. So Saul put him at the head of a thousand soldiers. But David conducted himself so wisely and modestly before Yahweh and the people, that he was viewed with even greater favour. Like the Lord Jesus, whom he typed, he ‘increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man’ (Luke 2:52). We read that ‘all the people loved David because he went out and came in before them’ (v. 16). He acted as a true shepherd to the people under him.



The Valley of Elah where David slew Goliath

DAVID'S CONTEST WITH GOLIATH

In its typical significance, the account of David's contest with Goliath is perhaps the most important, and dramatic historical incident recorded in the Old Testament.

Moreover, it is obvious from David's expressions in Psalms 8 and 144, and his remarkable action in taking the severed head of Goliath for burial in a place adjacent to Jerusalem, that he fully comprehended the typical significance of the encounter.

It forms a bridge between the purpose of Yahweh with mankind as expressed at the epoch of creation, and the victory won by Christ over sin and death.

The account of Creation reveals that on the sixth day, man and woman were formed, and a marriage took place. This also is the purpose of Yahweh with His Son and the Lord's Bride at the conclusion of the Sixth Millennium to be followed by the rest of the Seventh.

The declaration was made on the Sixth Day: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing, that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

But God's purpose in that regard was delayed by the incidence of sin and the necessity of imposing death.

The victory over sin and death had to be won before the Divine purpose could be initiated.

That victory was foreshadowed by the conquest of Goliath by David.

Following the defeat of the Giant, his head was severed and taken by David to a site adjacent to Jerusalem and there buried (1 Samuel 17:54). Why should he do that? Jerusalem was not then of particular prominence! Gibeah of Saul was the capital; and David was a native of Bethlehem.

David could clearly see the purpose of God to provide victory over sin and death, by bruising in the head the seed of the serpent. He saw Goliath as representing the great enemy of mankind. Consequent upon him taking the head of the Giant to Jerusalem, the place of burial became known as Golgotha, or *The Place of a Skull*.

It typically showed that at Jerusalem the conquest would be won against the Seed of the Serpent. The drama of Christ's death and resurrection accomplished that. It will be followed by his defeat of Gog at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2), and ultimately by the final destruction of sin and death at the same place (Rev. 20:8-13).

That David recognised this is clear from the expressions that he used in Psalm 8 in celebrating the victory. He saw it as foreshadowing the time when Yahweh's name will "be excellent in all the earth" — fulfilling the purpose of creation; and when the "Son of Man" as multitudinously manifested will "have dominion over the works of God's hands . . . all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field" (Psa. 8:5-7). In Hebrews 2:6-11 Paul applies these words to Christ both individual and multitudinous, and shows how this will be brought about: by the conquest of sin and death (v. 14).

It was because David saw the typical significance of this contest with Goliath so clearly that he was able to proclaim confidently that Yahweh would give him the victory. He declared that the result would be that "all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel; and all this Ecclesia (Heb.) shall know that Yahweh saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Yahweh's, and He will give you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:46-47).

This typical foreshadowing of God's purpose through Christ, as dramatised on the plain of Elah provides a foundation for the whole of the New Testament.

This is illustrated by the following key texts proclaiming the "dominion" to be exercised by the Son of Man both personal and multitudinous:

John 17:2: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh . . ." — So Dominion promised.

1 Cor. 15:27: "He hath put all things under his feet". A citation of Psalm 8:6, showing that even death is to be subdued. Contrast this with Goliath's challenge of servitude and death (1 Sam. 17:9).

Ephesians 1:22: "Hath put all things under his feet". The basic theme of this epistle is the conquest of the Gentile heavenlies by the Christ-heavens (see Eph. 1:3,20; 2:6; 6:12).

Philippians 3:21: "Subdue all things unto himself". Paul's use of the type in this Epistle reveals that the source of power to conquer is from Yahweh. Bodies of humiliation were inherited through sin, but the possession of glorious bodies of immortality will be granted those gaining the victory (Phil. 3:21).

Colossians 1:15-23: This Epistle reveals the means of victory: by the provision of a firstborn to replace the original Adam, and who shall "subdue all unto himself", and so was "preached to every creature". Paul's words are based on Psalm 8.

1 Peter 3:22: "Authorities and powers being made subject unto him". The full extent of Christ's dominion is stated by Peter who quotes the Psalm as illustrative of Matt. 28:18.

Revelation 5:12: "We shall reign on the earth" "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power . . ." All ascribe "honour and glory" unto the Son, as Israel did David following his victory, so illustrating Psalm 8:1-5.

The references cited above are all related to Psalm 8 and therefore to David's conquest of Goliath. In order they reveal: The Promise — John 17; the Challenge — Ephesians; the Victory — Philippians; The Elevation — Colossians; The Power — Peter; The Glory — Revelation.

Other applications of the incident and the Psalm doubtless can be found in the New Testament. They sum up and provide the significance and meaning of the statement: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory" (Luke 24:26).

David's conquest was followed by victory and honour.

David, as a prophet, had a clear understanding of the purpose of Yahweh through him (see Acts 2:29-36). This is shown by the Psalms he composed relating to his contest and victory with the giant.

**David Wins
the Hand of
Saul's Daughter**

"Saul had promised that he would give his eldest daughter in marriage to the hero who gained the victory over Goliath," continued Mr. Phillips. "That reward should now be given David. But to be married to the daughter of the king would have given David a greater claim on the throne, and that is what Saul feared most of all. He saw that David's conduct was making him more popular with the people, whilst, on the other hand, the people were turning from him. There were those in his court who flattered him with their lips (Psalm 12:2), and sensing the hatred of Saul for David, fed that hatred with lies and evil suggestions (Psalm 11:2). David's confidence was in God (Psalm 11:4-5; 12:5), whereas the moody, jealous king sought means of killing him. Personal attack had failed. What else could he do? Perhaps if David were sent out to fight the Philistines he might be killed! Saul decided to put this plan into operation. Calling David before him, he declared: 'I will give you my elder daughter, Merab, to wife, if you prove brave and courageous in fighting Yahweh's battles' (1 Samuel 18:17).

"But Saul's plan miscarried. Instead of David being slain, he won further notable victories against Israel's enemies until his name resounded throughout the land. However, Saul did not keep his word. Instead, he gave his eldest daughter to another man. It was a foolish thing to do, for to break one's word never brings peace or happiness; and in this case, the marriage ended in dire tragedy (2 Samuel 21:8).

"Saul had a younger daughter named Michal. She was attracted to the young warrior. His graceful appearance, bright countenance, soothing music and military prowess enlivened the otherwise gloomy household of Saul. It was not long before Michal fell deeply in love with David.

"This pleased Saul. He saw in it means of trapping his enemy. Knowing that David was poor, and could not afford a dowry worthy of the king's daughter, he set him an almost impossible task as an alternative. 'If you can kill one hundred Philistines, I will give you Michal in marriage,' Saul told David.

"David did better than Saul required," said Mr. Phillips, continuing his story. "He slew two hundred of the enemies of Israel, so that Saul was forced to give him his daughter in marriage. As son-in-law of the king, David was brought a step nearer to the throne, and Saul's hatred against him increased accordingly.

**David Flees
to Samuel**

"Shortly after this, war broke out between the Philistines and Israel. It was probably brought on by the slaughter of those whom David had killed at the request of Saul. In this battle,



David before Saul. Having promised his daughter in marriage, Saul seeks information regarding David's family.

David excelled all the other servants of Saul in skill and bravery, so that his reputation as a warrior increased greatly (v. 30).

“Saul could not bear this. He determined that David must die. He instructed his servants, and his son Jonathan, that they must seek a way to slay David (Ch. 19:1). Such a suggestion horrified Jonathan. Saul did not realise the extent of love that existed between his son and his servant; he thought that Jonathan would have hated his rival to the throne as much as he did. He knew nothing of the covenant between the two friends. Jonathan determined to help David. He warned him of his danger, and then pleaded with his father to stop his persecution of David. He reminded him of how, in times past, Saul had found pleasure in the young shepherd. As Saul listened to the pleading voice of his son, he recalled the past, and remembered the happier days when he was at peace with David. His heart was touched, and he swore that he would not harm him. And, for a while, all was well; there was peace between Saul and David.

“But war again broke out. Once again David marched at the head of the army of Israel, and won a notable victory. Again Saul heard his praises sung by the people. Again he was consumed by bitter jealousy. His madness got the better of him, and he swore that he would kill David. One day, therefore, as David was playing before Saul, the king suddenly grasped a spear and aimed it at him. But David escaped. Rushing from Saul’s palace, he sought refuge in his own home.

“Saul still was determined to kill him. He sent spies to watch David’s house, and to slay him in the morning (1 Samuel 19:11). They surrounded the place like a pack of dogs howling for his blood (Psalm 59:6), boasting of what they would do when they caught him (v. 7). Their loud voices, the threats of violence they uttered and which were heard by those in the home, alarmed Michal. ‘If you do not save your life tonight,’ she warned David, ‘you will be dead in the morning’.

“She let him down through a window and so he escaped those sent by Saul to capture him. Then, taking an image, she laid it in the bed, covering it with blankets and a network of goat’s hair such as was used as a mosquito net (v. 13). When Saul’s spies hammered on the door, insisting upon seeing David, she told them that he was sick and in bed. When they entered she showed the bulky appearance of the bed and warned he must not be disturbed.

“Saul’s spies returned to Saul and told him that David was sick and in bed. ‘Bring me him here, bed and all!’ was the harsh commandment of the king. But when the messengers returned they found **David had escaped**; they had been deceived by Michal.

““Why did you do this to me?” angrily demanded the king of his daughter.

Michal pretended that David had threatened to kill her if she did not help him escape.

“Meanwhile, David fled to the hometown of Samuel, seeking refuge with the prophet. But the king, maddened with jealousy, sent messengers to take him even there. When they arrived they saw Samuel at the head of the company of the prophets, speaking to them of the glory of God. As they heard this they were moved by the enthusiasm that was manifested by the company of the prophets. Forgetting their mission, they joined them in worship.

“Other messengers were sent to take David, but they acted in similar manner.

“The mad, and jealous king was furious. He decided to go himself and take David. Consumed with rage he hastened to Ramah, and storming into the city, forced himself into the presence of Samuel who was presiding over the company of prophets. But when the angry king listened to the service of Samuel, he was affected in similar manner as his messengers had been. Throwing off his royal robe, and humbling himself before the prophet, he bowed down in worship also. Those present were amazed at the change in the king. ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’ they asked in wonderment.

David Seeks Jonathan’s Aid 1 Samuel 20

However David realised that there was no real safety with the aging Samuel. It was only a matter of time when his influence over Saul would be at an end, and the king would destroy him. Whilst he realised that God was with him, and had promised him the throne, he knew that he must not presume on this, but use whatever right means were available for his own safety.

There was one friend upon whom he could rely, and who would help him — Jonathan the son of Saul. David fled from Ramah back to Gibeah, and appealed to Jonathan for assistance.

“What have I done that your father is so angry with me?” he asked Jonathan. “Behold, he seeks my life”.

Jonathan promised that he would help him. “My father will not do anything without first telling me,” he assured David.

But David knew that there were men at court who would be pleased at his death; and he believed that Saul would work through them to bring this about. He reminded Jonathan of this, and between them they worked out a plan to discover Saul’s intentions.

The new moon was at hand. It symbolised the beginning of a



The sweet Psalmist of Israel. Though experiencing many troubles David sought comfort and harmony in sacred music and in God.

new epoch in the year when the light of the moon would gradually increase until it shone forth from the sky with its greatest brilliance. In Israel this was celebrated with a sacrifice and a feast. It was the custom of the Israelitish households to gather together on such occasions, for such a purpose. David as son-in-law of the king, and closely connected with him in his duties, was expected to celebrate it at the palace. But was it safe for him to do so? David did not think it was. He feared that his presence at this feast might be used by Saul as occasion to do him harm. He therefore arranged with Jonathan to explain that there was a yearly sacrifice among his family at Bethlehem at this time, and that he had granted David leave to attend it. Instead of returning to court when the feast was over, he would hide in the fields surrounding Gibeah, close by a great stone called *Ezel*, which means *Division*, or *Pointing the Way*, and Jonathan promised that he would come out to this place and reveal to David whether his life was in danger or not. He said that he would take with him a young boy and his bow and arrows. If, after shooting the arrows, he said to the boy, "Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, take them"! David would know that he was not in any danger. But if he said to the boy, "Behold, the arrows are beyond you!" David would know that he was in danger and there was need to flee away.

The time of the feast came, and the household of Saul sat down to celebrate it. The heart of the king was still disturbed by jealousy and rage against David, and his gloomy mind was set on murdering him. He decided to kill him in the palace. He saw that David's place was empty, but said nothing on the first day of the feast, thinking that something prevented him being present. On the second day however, when he saw that David's place was still empty, he asked Jonathan why David was not present.

Jonathan explained that the family of David had a special feast that month which he desired to attend, and that he had given him leave to do so.

Saul was filled with rage against Jonathan. His carefully laid plans had come to nothing. His hated enemy had escaped him once again. He was angry, not only with David but also with Jonathan, his son. He knew of the friendship that existed between them, and realised that Jonathan was trying to shelter David. Full of fury, he angrily turned on his son, accusing him of rebelling against his authority. "So long as the son of Jesse lives," he stormed, "you will not receive the kingdom. Go and fetch him straight away, that he may die!"

"Why should he be slain?" asked Jonathan. "What evil has he done?"

This was too much for the mad king. In a fury, he picked up the spear that was ever at his side; this time to aim at his son! As Jonathan saw the intention of his father. He started up from the table to get out of the way of the angry king, whose face was distorted with murderous rage. He now realised that there was no hope of peace between his father and his friend and his failure to arrange reconciliation between them angered him. He fiercely turned from the table, and refused to eat the feast with his father.



Next morning he sorrowfully went out to the field to meet David. He did not know whether he was being spied on or not, and so took with him the young boy as arranged. He fired the arrows into the distance and then told the boy to go and gather them. As the lad ran to do his bidding, Jonathan loudly cried out: "Is not the arrow beyond you? Make speed, haste, stay not!" The boy imagined that Jonathan was calling to him. He ran quickly, gathered up the arrows and returned them to Jonathan who, giving him his bow, told him to return to the city.

But David in hiding knew the meaning of the message. He saw that he had a faithful friend in Jonathan. He could see also, that they were not being spied upon, and therefore he came out of his place of hiding, to bid farewell to his friend. It was a very sorrowful moment. Each knew that this was the end; they must depart the one from the other for good. David bowed down before Jonathan thanking him for his help. They kissed one another and wept, but the bitterness of David was greater than that of Jonathan. He was about to lose everything, for a time at least. He had been driven from his home, his wife, his family, his friend. He knew of nobody upon whom he could rely. He was to be a fugitive from Saul, knowing full well that from now on his life was in constant danger, and he must be always on guard against enemies who might pretend to be friends, but who would desire his destruction.

Jonathan tried to comfort him: "Go in peace," he told David. "We have sworn both of us in the name of Yahweh, saying 'Yahweh be between me and you, and between my seed and your seed for ever'".

This was the last time the two friends met each other, except for a brief encounter when later Saul pursued David, and Jonathan secretly visited his friend to strengthen him in the Lord.

**David at the
City of Gath
1 Samuel 21;
Psalms 34,56**

Departing from Jonathan, David was at a loss what next to do. He had a few companions with him, but they were of little help against those whom Saul could muster. He knew the bitter rage of his enemy, and realised that his life was in imminent danger. He was without food or weapons, and knew not where to turn. As he wandered south of Gibeah, he came to the town of Nob, close to Mount Scopus and Jerusalem, where many of the priests dwelt. The Tabernacle was set up there, though the ark of the covenant still remained in the field of Abinadab (1 Samuel 7:1). He decided to appeal to Ahimelech the priest for help. This priest was a descendant of Eli, against whom Samuel had prophesied disaster (1 Samuel 2:33), and David little knew the terrible tragedy that was to follow his visit to Nob.

Leaving his few followers outside the town, David entered the court of the Tabernacle that was pitched closed by (Mark 2:26). Ahimelech, the high priest, saw him and came out to meet him. He wondered why David should be on his own, and asked the cause of it. What could David say? If he told him the real reason, the priest might send to Saul, and bring about the death of David! If he knew that David was fleeing from the king, he would refuse to help him! And David badly needed help just then. So he did what many others have done under similar circumstances, but which never really helps. He took refuge in a lie. He said to the priest: "The king has commanded me to do a secret mission, and has told me that I must not let anybody know about the matter. I have with me servants. I dare not go to anybody for food lest they learn of my secret mission. Can you help me? Give me some of the bread that you have!"

David's lie was to have terrible consequences.

The only bread Ahimelech had was the sacred shewbread that was placed fresh each Sabbath day upon the Table in the Holy Place, and which was eaten the following Sabbath by the priests (Leviticus 24:8). Believing that David was acting on behalf of the King, and that the matter was urgent, the priest permitted him to take some of these loaves for himself and his attendants who were waiting for David outside.

David had hoped that his visit to Nob would have gone unnoticed, but to his dismay he saw there a man named Doeg, an Edomite, who was a servant of Saul. He was in the city of Nob on some business attached to the Tabernacle, and he took note of all that was taking place.

Having received the bread from the priest, David next asked for some weapon to protect himself. "I had to leave in such a

hurry," he claimed, "that I brought neither sword or spear with me".

The priest replied: "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth, behind the ephod! If you care to take that for yourself, take it; there is no other here".

"There is none like it," replied David, "give it to me".

Where was David now to flee? Where would he be safe from the wrath of Saul? Doeg had seen him, and David knew that he would soon tell the King where his enemy was. He thought of the land of the Philistines. He would be safe there, for Saul would not dare enter into the territory of such bitter enemies of Israel — nor would he imagine that David would seek refuge there.

David hurried down to the city of Gath, hoping to pass unnoticed among the Philistines. But they recognised him as the hero of Israel, and the one most likely to succeed Saul as king. "Is not this David the king of the land?" they said. "Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"



David feigns madness before King Achish of Gath.

These words caused David anxiety. The servants of Achish the king of Gath took him captive (cp. 1 Samuel 21:14; Psalm 34), and brought him before their king. David found himself in even greater trouble. He was among the bitter enemies of his people, and the hometown of the great champion he had slain in battle. He feared that he might be given over to death. In his trouble, he prayed unto Yahweh (Psalm 34:4-8), beseeching that He might help him in his distress. Then in front of the Philistines, he pretended to be mad. He beat on the doors of the gate of the city with his hands, and frothed at the mouth, acting as though insane. When the Philistines brought him before the king, Achish looked with disgust upon his antics. He did not want an idiot in his court. He commanded that David should be thrust out of his presence.

David recognised in his narrow escape an evidence of the arm of Yahweh extended to help him in his need. In the beautiful Psalm which he composed to commemorate this occasion, he gives testimony to the wonderful assistance of God, and calls upon men to "taste and see that Yahweh is good", telling them that "the angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:8).

**David Gathers
Support
1 Samuel 22**

David's experience in Gath showed that he had a work to do in Israel, even though he was despised and rejected by the nation. In fact, his life now begins to foreshadow that of his greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1). As David was rejected by the leaders of the nation, so also was the Lord Jesus; as he became a fugitive, seeking shelter wherever he could, so also we read of the Lord that "he had nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20); and as David, in his distress, gathered about him a group of people who later assisted him to rule, so Christ is today gathering out of the nations those who will one day rule with him, clothed with glory and honour (Revelation 5:9-10).

In the experiences of David, which led him from obscurity to glory, we have foreshadowed the greater King, who will restore the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16), and reign thereon over the tribes of Jacob (Luke 1:32-33). It is quite important therefore, to follow the life of David, through this time of peril, when he was hunted by Saul as if he were an animal.

Humbled, dispirited, and troubled, David fled from Gath back to his own tribe of Judah. He felt that all were against him, that he was opposed by forces so powerful that he must surely be destroyed. Man could not help him in his distress but Yahweh could; and to Him he turned and found Help (see Psalm 142). He

found temporary refuge in a huge cave called Adullam, or *Enclosure*, close by the town of Sochoh, about two miles from where he had defeated Goliath. In the arched chambers of this underground palace, the distressed and lonely David who had been anointed King, set up his court.

First he sent and told his family of his condition. They were in dire danger from Saul, and he invited them to join him in the cave. His aged father and mother, together with his brethren and their families, joined him seeking refuge from Saul. David could see, however, that the hard life he was called upon to endure, would be too much for his father and mother. His father was a descendant of Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:21-22), and David now requested the king of Moab to allow his parents to dwell with him until his danger passed. They remained in Moab for some time.

Meanwhile, many men began to associate with David. The afflicted, the oppressed or those disturbed with conditions under Saul sought out David, for they recognised that he would ultimately reign and establish better conditions in the Kingdom*. How like the work of the Lord! Those who are afflicted and oppressed, or who are disturbed by the conditions of today, can seek refuge with him, knowing that when he comes to reign, they will experience relief.

Soon a company of some 400 men were gathered to David, and the number gradually increased (cp. 1 Samuel 22:2 with 23:13). He did not allow these to become a disorganised rabble, but subjected them to firm discipline, appointing himself as captain over them, and insisting that they follow his commands.

Among those who associated with David at this time was the prophet Gad (1 Samuel 22:5). It marked the beginning of a friendship of service over many years. Gad proved to be of great assistance to David, particularly when he became king (2 Chronicles 29:25). He was also of great help on this occasion for Saul had heard of the hiding place of David and had gathered a force to capture him. God revealed this to Gad, who advised David to seek a new hiding place. David therefore departed from the cave of Adullam and going deeper into the territory of Judah, found a hiding place in the Forest of Hareth, about 6 miles south of the cave. There he set up his camp and hid from Saul. Meanwhile Saul found that his enemy had fled. He was filled with bitter disappointment, and in his anger he committed a frightful crime that must have filled the whole of Israel with horror, and caused many

* The word "discontented" (1 Samuel 22:2) is given in the margin as "bitter of soul" and relates to those who were troubled by the evil conditions of the kingdom brought about by the maladministration of Saul.

to look to the time when his rule would cease, to be replaced by that of David. For all Israel now knew that David must one day be king.

**The Terrible
Tragedy at Nob
(1 Samuel 22:6-23)**

Once again David had escaped Saul. The king now knew that David was the man whom Samuel had anointed to take his place (v. 8). His determination to slay him increased. With spear in hand, and his followers gathered around him (v. 6), he remained in constant readiness to take up the chase as soon as he heard news of where David might be hiding. His gloomy jealousy filled his mind with evil suspicions against his closest supporters. He knew that Jonathan had helped David, and felt he could not trust any of his servants. He was angry with them all. Turning on them, the mad King exclaimed in a bitter voice: "Listen, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give you possessions, or make you captains and commanders of his army, that you have all conspired against me? No one cares enough for me to tell me that my son has stirred up my servant to be my enemy, as he is this day!"

This was not true, but Saul no longer cared about truth and nobody dared contradict him.

There was one among Saul's followers, however, who was anxious to become his favourite. It was Doeg the Edomite. This man had been elevated already by Saul over many of his own tribe. He had been present at the time that David had fled to the town of Nob, and had seen the priest give him the sword of Goliath. Doeg saw that as an opportunity to further his schemes.

"I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, who consulted Yahweh for him, and gave him provisions, and the sword of Goliath," Doeg told Saul.

This information made Saul furious. It confirmed his suspicions that all were conspiring against him. He determined to make an example of Ahimelech before all the people. Calling him before him, he accused him of sedition.

"Why have you conspired against me?" the king asked the priest. "You gave the son of Jesse bread and a sword, you consulted God for him, that he might rise against me as an enemy, which he does this day".

But Ahimelech denied the charge.

"I knew David only as your trusted officer, your son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and a man honoured in your household," he answered. "What I did I did for you, not for him".

This did not satisfy Saul. "You will surely die, Ahimelech. You and all your house," he grimly replied.

This terrible threat to the High Priest of Yahweh, horrified Saul's followers. He commanded his guard to slay the priests, but the men refused to do so. Such a crime did not horrify Doeg, however. He was an Edomite, and though he had embraced the worship of Yahweh, he was more concerned in looking after his own interests than in serving God. Saul knew that he could trust him to do anything he asked. Angrily turning from his guard, he commanded Doeg, "Strike these priests down!"

And Doeg did as he was bid. With sword in hand, he slaughtered eighty-five priests without mercy. Then entering the town of Nob, he put to death all he met, giving no quarter to any.

It was a terrible crime, and showed how unfit Saul was to reign.

One priest escaped. It was Abiathar, who now became High Priest. He fled to David with the sacred robes, so that David now had with him both Priest and Prophet. On the other hand, Saul had nobody to whom he could turn to receive counsel from God. He was to rue this as his tragic life came to an end.

David was deeply moved when he heard of the tragedy. He blamed himself for having gone to the city, and requested help of Ahimelech. He developed a bitter hatred of the brutal Doeg, and saw in him a type of all those evil men who have persecuted and destroyed the righteous throughout the ages. But he also knew that, as Yahweh was a God of justice, Doeg would be punished. He would have liked to have rendered vengeance himself, but it was not then within his power. He could only plead that Yahweh would avenge the death of the priests, and he composed a Psalm (Psalm 52), in which he reminded Israel that "the goodness of God endures continually," in spite of such terrible tragedies as



Nob, the town which David had been given the sword of Goliath.

had just occurred. He showed that though evil, violent men like Doeg might rise up loving wickedness more than righteousness, to prosper for a time, yet they would be destroyed forever. Then will the righteous rejoice and flourish, and realise the folly of those “who make not God their strength,” but trust in their own power and wickedness.

There have been many tragedies like that at Nob since the days of Saul and David. In past ages, many who have remained faithful to Christ have been cruelly tortured and murdered, but the same confidence of the ultimate triumph of righteousness sustained them as it did David. In this is seen “the patience and faith of the saints” (Revelation 13:10).

David’s Psalm represents Doeg as foreshadowing anti-Christ throughout the ages.

David The True Patriot

It was a dark and evil time for David: a time of anxious care and weariness. Saul was determined to kill him. He was surrounded by spies who were ever ready to betray him. Even his own followers did not understand him, and were constantly advising him to do things contrary to the will of God (e.g. 1 Samuel 26:8). His circumstances were somewhat similar to those of the Lord Jesus when the leaders of the nation sought to find something against Him. No wonder that many of the Psalms composed by David at this time are prophetic of Christ’s experiences (cp. Psalm 11; 34; 55; 142 etc.). The lives of these two great heroes, as type and antitype, have much in common.

David had shifted his place of hiding from the cave of Adullam to the Forest of Hareth, deep in the south of Judah. There, among the trees of the wood, he was able to remain hidden from Saul. But one day a messenger arrived to tell him that the Philistines had attacked the fortified city of Keilah (meaning *Citadel*) and were robbing the people of the fruits of their labour, bringing upon them great distress and misery.

What should David do under such circumstances?

He had an army of 600 men with him with which he could go to the help of Keilah. But why should he do so? Did not the people support Saul? Would it not be to his advantage if the country suffered from the Philistines, so that the people might tire of Saul’s reign and turn to him?

A lesser man than David might think so, but not this hero of faith. He was a “man after God’s own heart”. He always sought to serve Yahweh and not flesh. He tried to do what was pleasing in the sight of God, even though it was not what he might like to do.

He turned to God in prayer: "Shall I go and smite these Philistines?" he asked.

The answer came: "Go and smite the Philistines and save Keilah".

He called his captains before him, and told them that he was going to march to the relief of Keilah.

But his men thought he was mad.

"We are hiding here in fear," they reminded him, "If we openly march against Keilah, we shall be attacked by both Saul and the Philistines".

So fiercely did they oppose him that he again turned to God for instructions. Again he was told to save Keilah. He no longer hesitated. At the head of his men, he suddenly appeared outside the city, and the Philistines again learned to fear the sword of David. The attack was successful; the enemy was driven off; Keilah was saved.

The news flew north to Saul. Here was the opportunity he sought. David was caught in a city. All he need to do was march swiftly south and he would have his enemy caught as in a trap. Quickly he prepared, and rapidly he descended against the town of Keilah. Fortunately, David heard of these preparations. He was also warned by God that the men of Keilah had no true sense of gratitude or loyalty to David for what he had done, but would (like the people in the days of the Lord Jesus) betray him to Saul. He therefore fled the city and passing through the territory of Judah, again escaped the clutches of Saul.

True Friendship
(1 Samuel 23;
Proverbs 18:24)

Days of weariness and watching passed for David. Saul was hot on his tracks, and he had to seek refuge in the caves that

abound in the hill country of Judah (1 Samuel 23:14). Like the Son of Man he had "nowhere to lay his head".

Day followed day with news that told of Saul's continued pursuit of him. David was like a hunted animal, always in need of being on guard. He felt the strain of being constantly despised, defamed and persecuted. His faith alone sustained him. His confidence was in Yahweh, and in the assurance that all things would finally work out to his good. Some of his most beautiful Psalms were written at this time (e.g. Psalm 31).

The darkness of this gloomy time, however, was relieved by an unselfish act of loving friendship. Though Saul pursued David with implacable hatred, Jonathan had not forgotten his agreement with him, nor his love for him. At great risk of his own life, he made his way down to where David was hiding, and unexpect-

tedly visited him at his camp. What a surprise this was for David, and what comfort and joy it afforded him. The communion of his beloved friend at this moment, encouraged him, Jonathan “strengthened his hand in God”. He encouraged David by reminding him that Yahweh’s will must prevail, and that in spite of all difficulties and troubles, he would ultimately be king (1 Samuel 23:16-18).

How wonderful is true friendship! The book of Proverbs says that there is “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”. Jonathan was such a friend. A true friend will sacrifice his own interests for the one whom he loves — and Jonathan did that. He risked the violent anger of Saul in doing so. Jonathan’s love for God and for David was all-absorbing. It helped David over the difficulties that then faced him. When such acts of friendship are received they should be appreciated and the relationship treasured. Moreover, they should be repaid by similar loving, self-sacrificing actions. The Bible declares: “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly . . .”

A Near Escape

Whilst David was entertaining his friend Jonathan in a cave in the well-wooded hill of Hachilah, south in the territory of Judah (1 Samuel 23:19), a deputation of citizens was being received by Saul at his capital of Gibeah. They were from the land of Ziph, where David was hiding, and were basely preparing to betray him to his enemy.

“David hides among us at Hachilah,” they told Saul. “Come quickly, and we will play our part and deliver him into your hands”.

Saul was delighted at the news. He thanked them for their kindness to him, and told them to return home, and find out all places where David might hide.

Saul’s army was soon ready, and he marched south determined to capture his rival. Arriving at Ziph, the king learned that David had left for a place further south called Maon, about eight miles south of Hebron. It is in an area of hills and valleys, providing refuge to hide from an enemy. One traveller has described it as follows:

“Among those tossed and broken hills, where the valleys are all alike, large bodies of men may camp near each other without knowing it. Ambushes are everywhere possible, and alarms pass rapidly across the bare and silent hills. You may travel for hours and feel as solitary as at sea without a sail in sight; but if you are in search of any one, your guide’s signals can make men leap from slopes that did not seem to shelter a rabbit, and if you are

suspected, your passage may be stopped by a dozen men, as if they had sprung from the earth”.

Saul pursued David, and David fled before him as an animal will flee from before the hunter. The greatest care had to be exercised by David, lest Saul catch him in ambush.

One day that nearly happened.

David and his men were sheltering on the side of a mountain when they heard the noise of Saul’s men close to them in a nearby valley hidden by a hill.

It gave David’s men a shock. Was this the end? They were worn out by days and nights of anxiety, fleeing from the face of a bitter enemy. They knew they could expect no mercy from Saul, who so brutally butchered the priests of Nob.

Now they could hear the noise of Saul’s men, and realised that they had to remove from that spot as quickly and quietly as possible. In trying to do so, they saw to their horror that the army of Saul had completely surrounded them though, as yet, they were unseen by his men (1 Samuel 23:26). There seemed no way of escape. The only thing possible was to remain where they were, as quietly as they could, and hope for a miracle.

We may be sure that at this moment of crisis David sought consolation in prayer and sought Yahweh’s help. Nor did not he ask in vain. Before Saul had discovered the presence of David and his men, a messenger burst into his camp with an urgent appeal. “Hurry back,” he urged the king, “for the Philistines have invaded the land!”

The matter was urgent, and Saul was compelled to turn back from pursuing David to meet the attack of the Philistines. Little did the Philistines know, when they prepared to invade Israel, that their attack would save the future king of Israel, a monarch who would destroy their power. The hand of God was working in this, using natural means to protect the one whom He had chosen to be King. This incident illustrates the ways of Providence. It is often difficult to determine what is an act of God, and what is not; but it is always wise to commit our ways unto Him that He might direct our paths.

Saul having withdrawn David was saved once more. The place was called Sela-hammahlekoth, which means *The Rock of Divisions*.

A Near Escape for Saul (1 Samuel 24)

Once again David changed his hiding place. Now he selected some vast caves at a place called Engedi, or *The Well of the Wild Goats*. Engedi is about 15 miles due east of Ziph, close to the Dead Sea. It is separated from Ziph by a harsh, barren, waterless wilderness, which suddenly terminates

in a steep precipice. Below, about four hundred feet (122 metres) deep, there is a glorious well-watered valley of verdure, shrubs and freet trees. Plants of all kinds grow in profusion from the foot of the precipice to the beach of gleaming blue waters in front. The valley stretches for about a mile in length and then widens into a plain. Its steep, rocky sides are noted for huge caverns capable of holding hundreds of men or animals.

This provided David with an excellent hiding place. The caverns gave shelter to men and animals whilst the streams of water, and ample growth of grass and trees, provided them with the necessary food and drink.

It was a place frequented by shepherds, and they used the many caves for the purpose of caring for the sheep, often building a sheepcote made up by building up stones to form a circular wall in front of the cave.

Across the waterless wilderness to the oasis at Engedi moved David and his men. But he was not left in peace. Saul's spies



The Stronghold of Engedi — where David found refuge in one of its massive caves, and saved the life of Saul from the vengeful hands of his associates.

reported David's movements, and soon he set off in pursuit. With an army he, too, crossed the waterless desert, and was soon among the gardens of Engedi. His coming was seen by David. With his men, he retired into the innermost recesses of one of the largest caverns, a huge place, capable of holding some thousands of men. There, in the darkness, they quietly waited, hoping that Saul would soon leave the place.

But as they hid in the dark shadows of the cave, they saw a man enter.

It was their deadly enemy, Saul!

He had come to rest for a while.

Coming out of the light of the sun, he was blinded by the darkness of the cave, and did not notice that his movements were watched by hundreds of men at the back of the deep cavern.

It was the opportunity for which the men of David sought. One blow of a sword, and their deadly enemy was removed from their midst. They were keen to do it. They whispered to the leader asking permission to slay Saul, and so end the terrible tension and anxiety they were experiencing.

But David would not permit it.

"Yahweh forbid that I should do this unto my lord, to Yahweh's anointed!" he whispered to his men.

David knew that it was wrong to harm those whom Yahweh had anointed (see Psalm 105:5). No matter what Saul had done, he was still the anointed of Yahweh, and, as far as David was concerned, any punishment must come from Yahweh Himself.

But what a temptation to David! In fact, it was similar to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness. As Scripture was then used to try and induce the Lord to sin (see Matthew 4:6), so now the men of David said: "This is the day of which Yahweh spoke when He said unto you, Behold I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it shall seem good unto you".

The men of David saw the circumstances as a God-given opportunity that he should use. Otherwise, they reasoned, he would be fighting against God.

How easily it would have been for David to yield.

But he knew better than to do so.

Quietly creeping down to the unsuspecting Saul, he cut off a piece of the skirt of his robe and then crept back to his waiting and wondering followers.

Soon Saul rose up out of the cave and went his way, and David followed him.

"My lord the king!" he cried.

Saul turned in amazement. There, bowing before him, was his

hated enemy, David. His astonishment increased as he listened to the words David now spoke.

“Why do you listen to men who tell you that David means to injure you?” asked David. “You can see for yourself today that they are wrong. Yahweh put you into my power inside the cave, but I refused to kill you. I had mercy on you. I said that I will not lift my hand against my lord, for he is Yahweh’s anointed. Yes, my father, look here, look at the piece of skirt of your robe in my hand! I cut it off instead of killing you, that you may know that I have no wickedness in my heart against you. I have not sinned against you, though you are scheming to take my life. Let Yahweh judge between me and you! Let Him avenge me upon you! But my hand shall never strike you! Let Yahweh be Judge, and judge between me and you, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of your hand!”

Saul was deeply touched by the action and words of David. He knew that he spoke the truth. He suddenly felt a better man. The voice and harp of David had once soothed him, and now it was the righteousness of David’s action.

“You are more righteous than I,” he humbly replied, “for you have rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded you evil”.

Saul could not understand David’s motives (see v. 19). He knew what he would have done under similar circumstances. He also knew that Yahweh was with David, and he must surely come to the kingdom. He made David promise that when this happened he would not blot out his name in Israel; and to this David readily agreed.

Therefore, for a time peace reigned between Saul and David. Saul returned home to Gibeah, and David and his men remained in Engedi.

This outstanding act of kindness towards an enemy showed how Godly was the character of David. He had faith in Yahweh, and because of that was able to be generous to his foes. He manifested those qualities in which God takes pleasure. God gives good things to “just and unjust” alike (Matthew 5:45), and delights in His servants doing likewise. Thus he calls upon us them to “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). By such actions we might win people for Christ and for God. David won Saul by such means, and, for a time, brought peace into the lives of them both.

This does not mean that we can permit God’s truth, and His way, to be blasphemed without protest. “Our enemies” are not necessarily “God’s enemies”. There was a time when David used the sword against the enemies of Yahweh, and did it vigorously

because he was fighting His battles, but Saul as the anointed King had a special standing before God, and because of that David refused to avenge himself, leaving it to God to do so. Frequently we find ourselves in the same position; then we are wise to follow the example of David. We will be richly rewarded by so doing.

**The Wise Man
and The Fool
(1 Samuel 25)**

“Why should the life of David be given in such detail in the Bible?” asked Ann Phillips, one evening, as the family were discussing the reading for the day.

“For a very important reason,” answered her father. “David was the real founder of the monarchy, the most glorious king of the Kingdom of God on the throne of which, the Lord Jesus Christ is yet to set as king (Luke 1:32-33). As king it was David’s responsibility to set an example of faith and courage, calculated to inspire Israel to faithful deeds of valour. He was a lawgiver and poet; he re-organised the nation’s religious worship; because of his faith and obedience, the recipient of the third great covenant of promise recorded in the Bible. It is therefore important that we should know something of this great man”.

“What do you mean by the ‘third great covenant of promise’?” asked Joan.

“There are three covenants of promise upon which the whole of the Bible rests,” answered Mr. Phillips. “The first is that given in Eden to Eve and which we have already considered. The second comprised the promises made to Abraham which constitute the Gospel message (Galatians 3:8). And the third was given to David as we will find when we come to consider 2 Samuel 7”.

“Do you think it is important to study all these details in David’s life?” asked Peter.

“Certainly,” replied his father. “There are important lessons in them all, lessons we can apply to ourselves, and also incidents in the life of David, that foreshadowed the Lord Jesus, and help us to understand him better”.

“What lessons are found in the reading tonight (1 Samuel 25)?” asked Peter.

“It is really a very dramatic chapter when you study it properly,” said Mr. Phillips. “It speaks of the death of two men: Samuel and Nabal. They were both great in their way. The greatness of Samuel we all know, and Nabal was esteemed great because he had such wealth. One man was wise, the other was a fool”.

“You better take some notes on this chapter then Ann,” muttered Peter. “You will find them a help”.

“Samuel was the wise man,” continued Mr. Phillips, who, in his enthusiasm had not noticed the interruption. “His death was

a great blow to Israel and to David. He was a man noted for his zeal, his courage, and his honesty. He had not hesitated to reprove both king and people with a boldness which only the knowledge that Yahweh was with him could inspire. And yet, with all his firmness, he had a kindness which he showed in the interest he felt for the welfare of those about him. He wept when he heard the sad news that Yahweh had rejected Saul; he was ready to shelter David when as a boy, he fled from the anger of the king. Thus he tempered his zeal with love and kindness. Above all, he was honest. He was honest to Yahweh and to man. He never accepted a bribe, nor enriched any of his relations from the public money of the State. The people knew he could be trusted. According, so long as he lived, there was some steadying influence felt even in the court of Saul. But now he was dead, and all Israel gathered together to lament him, and to lay him to rest at Ramah".

"It was a sad time for Israel and for David," remarked Graeham, "for in Samuel, David had a wonderful friend".

"Yes," agreed his father. "Death is always a sad time. But in the case of Samuel, he died in hope of a resurrection to life eternal. The friends of Samuel could look forward to the time when Christ shall reign as king in Zion, when all the world will be subject to him, and Samuel will be raised from the dead to become one of the many king-priests who shall surround the throne in that day of glory (Revelation 5:9-10). In fact, one of the Psalms speaks of this time. I think it is Psalm 99".

"Yes, that is right," said Ann, who had quickly turned up the place. "The Psalm speaks of Yahweh established as great in Zion, and high above all the people. It speaks of the king's strength in judgment, and also says: 'Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name' (v. 6)."

"That will be a time of great rejoicing and triumph for all the worthies throughout all ages," said Mr. Phillips. "Then these men who have laboured long, and through difficulties, like Samuel, will receive their reward".

"From 1 Samuel 25:1 it seems as though David left Engedi on the death of Samuel," said Graeham. "Why would he do that?"

"He probably thought that Samuel exercised a restraining influence on Saul," replied his father, "and that with his death, Saul might make a further attempt on his life".

"Did he?" asked Joan.

"Yes," replied her father, "but before considering that, let us consider the death of this other 'great' man, Nabal".

"Take note, Ann," whispered Peter, with a grin, to the great

indignation of his sister.

“Nabal was a very wealthy sheep-farmer in Carmel, a fruitful stretch of country, close to the territory of Maon in Judah, said Mr. Phillips, as he commenced the story. “This Carmel is not to be confused with Carmel in the north, which is quite a different place. The time of shearing had come, and as was usual, it was celebrated with great joy and feasting. Nabal enjoyed this show, and in view of his great possessions, and his love of good food, he conducted it ‘like the feast of a king’ (v. 36).

“But in the midst of his rejoicing, he was visited by some tough-looking young men who brought a message from David. The message reminded Nabal that the men of David had protected his shepherds and sheep from danger, and now, as Nabal rejoiced in his prosperity, they expected some slight token of thanks.

“But Nabal was not prepared to do this. He looked upon himself as king in his house. He wanted to impress his servants with his power. He therefore answered David’s messengers roughly. ‘Who is David?’ he asked insultingly. ‘There are many servants that run away from their masters, and I am not going to give my food and drink to these runaway slaves!’

“It sounded very well in the large hall where Nabal was feasting in company with his men. But some of his shepherds, remembering the kind of men with David, began to be afraid. Their master was a fool, they said among themselves. His name is Nabal (which means *Fool*) and he has been properly named. They knew only too well what would happen when David’s hot-tempered young followers returned full of anger at having been publicly insulted. They knew that they would swoop down upon Carmel, and attack Nabal and his men!

“One of the men left the feast and went in search of Nabal’s wife. Her name was Abigail, which means *A father’s joy*. She was a lovely and intelligent woman, and as soon as she heard how Nabal had answered the men of David who had been so good to his shepherds, she decided to act without informing her husband.

“Hastily she prepared a gift of two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. It was not much to share among the men of David, but it was enough for her purpose. She put all these on asses, and taking with her some of the servants, she set out to meet David.

“Meanwhile David’s young men had returned to him full of indignation at the way they had been treated. When David heard how Nabal had answered them, his temper also flared up, and he determined to teach him a lesson. ‘We were foolish to look after



*Abigail: She matched beauty of countenance with
beauty of character.*

the property of such a fellow,' he said. 'Gird on your swords, and we will destroy him and his house'.

"Soon all preparations were made, and the followers of David, stirred to anger against Nabal and all his house, were riding to exact a terrible vengeance. In the fierce anger that seized David, he had lost all sense of proportion. He did not consider what Yahweh would have him to do. He was consumed with a desire to punish, and punish without mercy.

"But as they rode with this revengeful intention in mind, they saw coming towards them another little cavalcade. It was the beautiful and intelligent Abigail with her servants and gifts. As she saw David rapidly approaching, she got off her ass, and bowed down before him. David stopped in amazement. He imagined that all the house of Nabal joined with their master in his churlish attitude, and he was taken aback at this graceful and lovely woman, Nabal's wife, humbly bowing before him. 'Let the guilt of this action fall on me!' she said to David. 'Take no notice of Nabal. If I had seen your young men when they came, I would have attended to them. As for Nabal, as his name is, so is he. His name is Nabal (which means *Fool*) and folly is with him. Yahweh has used me to prevent you being guilty of shedding blood. Let your enemies, and those who seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And this present which I have brought, let it be given to the young men that follow my lord. Forgive my trespass, and as surely as Yahweh will make you a sure house because you fight His battles, do not commit the evil you now contemplate, for you are yet to be king in Israel. In that day you will not want to remember that you shed innocent blood in the heat of your anger'.

"Thus Abigail spake, and as David looked at the beautiful woman before him, and considered her wise and spiritual advice, he found his anger leaving him. How thankful he was that he had been prevented from indulging in such vengeance. He felt very grateful to Yahweh and to Abigail. 'Blessed be Yahweh God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me; and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from shedding blood and avenging myself with my own hand'.

"David realised that Nabal was not worth a moment's consideration. He turned and returned to his camp. Abigail returned to her home. There she found her foolish husband completely drunk. He had given himself up to feasting and merriment, little realising how close he was to tragedy and death. She said nothing to him that night, because she realised he was beyond understanding. Next morning, however, when he was sober and able to comprehend his danger better, she told him all that had come to

pass. Nabal was terribly concerned. He felt that his life was endangered. He was both a fool and a coward, and the worry of these things brought on a stroke that paralysed him (v. 37). For ten days he lingered in this condition, and then he died.

“Now David recognised the wisdom of Abigail’s advice. He had been prevented from a hasty and foolish action, a sin he would have regretted all his life, and now God had avenged him. Abigail, with her beauty and her spiritual wisdom had made such an impression on him that on the death of Nabal, he sent for her seeking marriage. In due time she became his wife.

“Therefore in this chapter,” concluded Mr. Phillips, “we have the contrast of the two men brought to our notice — the death of the wise man Samuel, contrasted with that of the fool, Nabal. All lamented the death of Samuel, but the death of Nabal was a cause of rejoicing. Yet both men had the same opportunity to learn of Yahweh and follow His ways”.



Over-indulgence in wine so drugged the foolish Nabal as to cause him to defy David, and so hasten his death. His fate illustrated the truth of Solomon’s wisdom: “Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine” — Proverbs 23:29-30.

“Do you think that is the main lesson of the chapter?” asked Graeham.

“No”, replied his father, “there is an even more important one — the one expressed in Proverbs 15:1: ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath’. Abigail’s attitude in that regard benefited herself, her house, and its adversary, David”.

“That is a good lesson for Peter to learn,” suggested Ann.

“It is a good lesson for us all to learn,” answered her father, “for we all make mistakes. To do things in a fit of temper seldom brings good results. We usually live to regret them. The Bible says ‘he that is hasty in spirit exalteth folly’ (Proverbs 14:29). When we are angry we must exercise care lest we sin”.

“Is it wrong to be angry?” asked Joan.

“Not always”, answered her father. “Jesus was angry (Mark 3:5) with the wickedness of people about him, but he controlled

his anger, and that is what we must learn to do. We cannot always look upon life with indifference, but we must learn always to be careful. Paul wrote some excellent words of advice in Ephesians 4:26. You can read them for me, please Joan”.

Joan read: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath”.

“That is excellent advice,” remarked Mr. Phillips. “If anything makes us angry, let us take care, and be certain that the anger does not lead us to sin. It is always good, before going to sleep of a night, to let the mind go over the events of that day, and drive away any wrath that you might have against any — particularly between brothers and sisters, or husbands and wives. A sulky person does not help anybody”.

“Before we close this discussion,” said Graeham, “Could you tell me what Abigail meant when she said to David, ‘they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal’? At that time Nabal was wealthy and happy, feasting with his servants”.

“What Abigail meant was for David to leave it with Yahweh to avenge his quarrel, and so well would it be done that she could only wish such vengeance on all who sought to destroy David. Her words had terrible fulfilment, in a way she possibly did not imagine at the time, when ten days later, Nabal died”.

“There is a question I would like to ask,” said Peter. “In v. 28, Abigail asks David to ‘forgive her trespass’. What ‘trespass’ had she committed?”

“The word in the Hebrew is *pasha* answered his father, “And it denotes a sin against lawful authority. Abigail had ignored Nabal in approaching David, and that was wrong, for the husband should be the head of the house. She therefore asked David to pardon the presumption she had shown. Notice, on the other hand, her promise in v. 41. In a true Godly home, the husband should be dominated by the Word of God, and the wife should be dominated by the word of her husband. Ignoring either of these makes for evil. But a husband who is like Nabal, and refuses to be dominated by the Word, cannot expect anybody to respect or hearken unto him. So Yahweh would bring responsibilities upon us all — both young and old alike”.

David's Last Meeting with Saul (1 Samuel 26)

Once again David changed his place of refuge and sojourned in the wilderness of Ziph. This was in the land of Judah, so that he was among those of his own tribe. But as in the days of the Lord Jesus, his own countrymen betrayed him.

On an earlier occasion when he had been in Ziphite territory,

they had informed Saul (see Ch. 23). Now they did so again.

And Saul, who had promised he would never again seek to destroy David also forgot his promise, and was eager to get at his enemy once more.

An army of 3,000 chosen men was organised, and at their head Saul marched down into the territory of Judah intent upon taking David.

But David was on his guard. He had set spies who had advised him of Saul's movements.

He decided to visit the camp of Saul. It was a dangerous thing to do, but David was skilled and fearless in such matters. He took with him Abishai, his nephew, a very brave man whom he knew he could trust, and who eagerly agreed to go with him (2 Samuel 23:18).

In the dead of night they crept down to the camp of their enemy. From a height above, they could see how the baggage (called "the trench", v. 7) was set out in a circle to form a barricade, and inside the barricade they could see Saul sleeping among his men. His presence was shown by the spear stuck in the ground at his head — a custom that the chiefs always followed in the east.

But where were the sentries? They were sleeping at their post (v. 12)! It was an opportunity that seemed God-given to the hot-tempered Abishai. He knew that David had let Saul escape on the earlier occasion at Engedi, but Saul had failed to keep his promise, and surely David would not let him go free again. If David were hesitant to slay Saul, he was prepared to do so! He knew that it would be a dangerous enterprise to creep down among the enemy and smite Saul to the ground, but he was ready to attempt it.

"God has delivered your enemy into your hand," he told David. "Let me smite him with his own spear but once, and I promise I will not need to do so a second-time!"

But David would not hear of it. Saul was Yahweh's anointed, and he would not touch him. If Saul was to be punished let Yahweh do it. All that David would permit was for them to creep into the camp, and take the spear and the cruse of water that lay at Saul's side, and bring them back to prove to Saul they could have killed him.

This they did. Quietly they crept down to the sleeping troops, and taking the cruse of water and the spear, they returned to the top of the hill, so having a deep valley between them and Saul. With this space between them, David called to the captain of the army; a man named Abner, the uncle of Saul.

The shout awakened Abner and the soldiers from their sleep. The startled camp wondered what it meant. In the stillness of the night, they heard the voice of David taunting Abner, accusing him of failing in his duty. "You are a brave man, Abner! There is none like you in Israel! Why have you not guarded your lord the king? The enemy has been in the camp, Abner! Your neglect is worthy of death! Where is the king's spear and the cruse of water that should be at his head?"

How Abner hated those words. As they rang out, the whole army could see that, indeed, the spear and cruse of water were gone! The enemy had been among them, and could have killed the king!

Once again Saul had evidence of David's kindness to him. He was overwhelmed with grief at his stupidity. Pitifully he called to David: "Is that your voice, my son David?"

David answered: "It is my voice, O king. Why do you thus pursue me? What evil have I done?" He warned Saul that he was guilty of interfering with his worship of Yahweh because, as an outcast he had no access to the Tabernacle (v. 19): he likened the king of Israel to a mighty hunter seeking a flea, or a partridge in the mountains: pursuits beyond the dignity of a King.

In comparing himself to a flea (v. 20), David tried to bring home to Saul the folly of his actions. What benefit would be derived from catching one flea, when so many abounded, for Saul had many more enemies than David; and enemies that would not merely irritate him, but would destroy him if they had the opportunity. In comparing himself to a partridge, he drew attention to the method of hunting. The partridge hides under bushes and will not rise to the wing unless forced to do so. The hunters usually beat the bushes, driving the partridge towards a falcon or hawk, which had been trained to tear its throat, and shed its blood. David likened Saul to this trained hawk, merely doing the bidding of others.

Saul, as he listened to these words, and recalled that David could have slain him on several occasions, at long last saw the folly of his ways.

"I have sinned," he declared. "Return with me, my son David: for I will no more do you harm. My life was in your power today and you did me no harm. Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred badly".

Truer words were never spoken. Saul had played the fool, and in doing so, had ruined both his own life and the lives of members of his family. David refused to return with him to Gibeah, and so they parted, never again to meet.

**David Among
the Philistines
(1 Samuel 27,28)**

The Phillips' family had completed the Bible readings for the day, which took them through the closing chapters of First Samuel. These tell the sad, sorry story of Saul's defeat at the Battle of Mt. Gilboa, and the series of tragedies that overwhelmed him and all Israel at that time.

It was a time of gloom and disgrace for Israel. The army had fled in defeat before the Philistines, Saul was slain, and David, the only man qualified to help the nation was in the land of the Philistines.

"The position seemed completely hopeless to the people of Israel," remarked Mr. Phillips to his family. "To obtain a full picture, however, we must turn back the pages of the Bible a few chapters to 1 Samuel 27. There we learn, that after David had escaped from the hands of Saul, a feeling of depression and gloom settled on him. 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul!' he declared to himself (v. 1)". He decided that the best thing to do was to flee to the land of the Philistines, where Saul could not pursue him".

"Why should David say that?" asked Peter. "Yahweh had promised him the kingdom, and he had been delivered out of the hands of Saul; why should he now think that God would allow Saul to destroy him?"

"All you say is quite correct, Peter," observed Mr. Phillips, "and David does not appear in the best light in the incidents we are now considering. At the same time, we would be foolish to condemn such a wonderful man of faith. It is wiser to consider the circumstances that caused him to act as he did, and be on our guard lest we under trial also fail. David was probably worn out with anxiety and care at this time. He was doubtful as to who were friends and who were enemies. He had the heavy burden of keeping his own followers in order, and protectinng them against Saul, and was doubtless feeling depressed and tired, so that his spirit began to give way. This was quite unlike David, but all the great heroes of the past had their moments of weakness. It is easy for us to criticise, but it is better to remember how often we let the tiring, wearying, pressing duties of life get the better of us. We need to take care".

"What did David do?" interrupted Joan, who was becoming tired of her father's philosophising.

"He decided to hide from Saul in the land of the Philistines, replied her father. "He went down once more to the city of Gath, to Achish the king, who seems to have been a gullible man, easily deluded".

"What makes you say that?" asked Ann.

“Because David seemed to have no trouble in deceiving him,” answered Mr. Phillips. “On an earlier occasion (Ch. 21), he had sought refuge at this place, even though it was the birth-town of Goliath, and when danger threatened from the king, he had pretended to be mad, and had been driven away from Gath. On that occasion, he only had a handful of followers, but now he had a splendid army of 600 well-trained men with him, and Achish, as he inspected David’s bodyguard, thought that he would be able to find use for these men.

“He gave to David the city of Ziklag on the border of the territory of Judah and the Philistines, and there David set up his court. Apparently Saul in spite of his words of assurance, continued to persecute those who supported David in any way at all, and this caused a steady stream of those who were oppressed to seek out a safe hiding place. Among those who gathered to him from Saul at this time, was a body of skilled archers and slingers from Saul’s own tribe (1 Chronicles 12:1-7). There were also warriors from other tribes (1 Chronicles 12:19-22). Saul could feel his power gradually slipping from him, and doubtless blamed David for this. On the other hand, David was now virtually a prisoner in the land of the Philistines. And there he remained for 16 months.

“He was not idle, however. He knew that one day he would be king, and when that time came, he would be attacked by the numerous, powerful enemies that surrounded the land of Israel. He decided to weaken as many of them as he could. Accordingly, he began to lead out his bands to attack and destroy any Canaan-



ite centres that remained (Deuteronomy 7:1-2). He did this so thoroughly that none remained in the cities attacked to complain to Achish what David had done (1 Samuel 27:8-9). When Achish asked David whom he had attacked, David pretended that he had invaded the territory of Judah. Achish was delighted when he heard this. He rubbed his hands with glee. 'He will be my servant forever,' he said to himself, 'for he has caused his own people of Israel to hate him'. Little did Achish know how completely David had hoodwinked him!"

"In that case," interrupted Peter, "David told Achish a lie!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Phillips. "David shows up in his worst light whilst in the land of the Philistines. His association with Achish was not to his credit, and seems to have delayed his elevation to the kingdom. He little realised how close this was when he decided to seek refuge among the Philistines, but (possibly through this mistake) he had to wait several years before the Israelites would now accept him".

**Dark Days
for David
(1 Samuel 29,30)**

"Meanwhile, the Philistines were preparing to invade Israel. They decided to destroy the power of Saul once and for all.

Each of the five lords of the Philistines agreed to bring his followers to Aphek, in the Plain of Sharon, where they would combine to form one great army and attack Saul.

"Aphek was a most significant place for such a meeting: for there the Philistines had won a notable victory in the days of Eli, when they had taken the ark captive (1 Samuel 4:1). Perhaps it was for that reason that they now selected this place in which to gather.

At Aphek, each of the five lords rode in his chariot at the head of the forces behind him. With the bright sunshine gleaming on the metal weapons of the assembled troops, and with the fiery horses drawing the highly-decorated war-chariots, the army looked splendid and powerful. The Philistines were confident of success.

"Behind Achish came David at the head of his men. It was for him a moment of great peril. Achish had commanded him to help, believing that David, banished from his country, now hated the Israelites and delighted in attacking them. David's deception had brought him into trouble, and he did not know how to get out of it.

"Fortunately for him, the other lords of the Philistines did not agree with Achish that David should be in their army. They were amazed at his presence. 'What do these Hebrews here?' they

asked Achish. Achish told them of the excellent service that he believed David had rendered him, and assured them that he would be a great aid in fighting the Israelites. But the other lords refused to believe it. They remembered the great exploits of David; and how the people had sung praises to his name because of his victories. They told Achish to instantly dismiss him.

“With regret Achish passed their request on to David, and commanded him to return to Ziklag. ‘But what have I done?’ asked David, ‘What have you got against me that you should treat me this way?’ David perhaps wondered whether his secret expeditions had become known. But no, the simple-minded Achish had been thoroughly deceived by his wily adversary. ‘You are good in my sight, as an angel of God,’ he told David, ‘but the other princes have decided that you will not go up to battle’.

“David must have been very relieved to hear those words. The request got him out of a very nasty predicament. He would have either had to fight his own people, or turn on the Philistines; and both alternatives were fraught with danger. But now he was free. Joyfully he made ready to return to Ziklag, little knowing the tragedy that awaited him there.

“Meanwhile, many other Israelites were making their way to join up with him in Ziklag. They had lost all confidence in Saul (see 1 Chronicles 12:20-22).

The Attack of the Amalekites

“David and his men returned to Ziklag,” continued Mr. Phillips,” and there they saw a sight that struck them with horror.

In their absence the Amalekites had attacked and the city was a smoking ruin! Houses were broken down and burning! Personal property was scattered everywhere! Complete destruction reigned!

“And what of the inhabitants? What of the wives and families of the men of David? They did not dare to hope that they were still alive! But no sign of them could be found anywhere! They had all been taken captive! Their fate could be even worse than death.

David’s men were horrified, and depressed and angry. This was the end of all their hopes. They were tired of the hard, bitter life they were living as refugees in their own land. They began to doubt that David would ever be king. They little realised that at that very moment, events were moving to bring about a wonderful change in their condition. They could only see the burning ruins of Ziklag, and the terrible loss they had experienced when they returned to the empty city. It seemed the end of their hopes.

And whose fault was all this? Who had led them down to the land of the Philistines? Who had attacked the inhabitants of the land and so incited this act of revenge? Who had forced them to follow Achish and leave Ziklag? There was but one answer: David! On him the disappointment and anger of the men now turned. They were tired of his leadership; they were made bitter by the loss of their families; they determined to destroy him! ‘Let us stone him to death!’ they cried (see 1 Samuel 30:6).

“This was David’s blackest moment,” continued Mr. Phillips, “and it teaches us all a wonderful lesson. The lesson is never to be cast down by reverses. Nothing is ever as bad as it may seem on the surface. If we trust in God, and faithfully continue on our way in spite of trouble, we shall win through to brighter days. Little did David know at that terrible moment of darkness and gloom that a few short days would see everything wonderfully changed: wives and families restored to his men — he, himself, proclaimed king — and the very men who then threatened to stone him, applauding him as a hero! For the moment, however darkness reigned. It is such moments of adversity that challenge faith, and provide us with the opportunity of showing our loyalty to God. This is what David did. Adversity tested him, but not in vain. That it is why in spite of all his faults he is described as “a man after God’s own heart”. Whilst all around him men were losing their heads and blaming it on to him, David did the only sensible thing. You can read of this in the last few words of v. 6, please Joan.”

Joan read: “David encouraged himself in Yahweh his God”.

“Thank you, Joan”, said her father. “It is interesting to learn that the word ‘encouraged’ is from the Hebrew word *chazaq*, and means ‘to fasten upon’. When all forsook him, he turned to One who has declared: ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee’ (Hebrews 13:5), and he fastened himself upon Yahweh, as, in the midst of a storm, sailors of a ship will fasten its anchor to that which will prevent it being swept away to destruction”.

“The Revised Version renders the word *encouraged* as ‘strengthened,’” said Graeham, who had been looking at various translations of the Bible in his father’s library as he had been speaking.

“That is a good rendering”, said Mr. Phillips. “David was strengthened by his adverse experience, and we, too, can be strengthened by adversity. No longer did he have any doubts and fears. He saw clearly what he should do (see Psalm 42:5; 56:3,4,11), and he took steps to do it”.

“What did he do?” asked Joan.

“He did what Isaiah exhorts all those of faith should do at simi-

lar moments of trial. Isaiah declared: "Who among you that feareth Yahweh, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of Yahweh, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10). David called for Abiathar, the High-Priest, and in the presence of all his men sought Yahweh's help and guidance. He was told to pursue the raiders for he would recover all that they had taken. The men were greatly encouraged by such news as this, and eagerly prepared for the attack. Among their number was a group from the tribe of Manasseh, who had joined forces with David at that time, and were ready to be of service to him (1 Chronicles 12:19-21). These were fresh for the pursuit, whilst many of those with David, having already been three days on the march from Aphek to Ziklag, and overcome with horror at the scene of the burning city, were worn out with fatigue.

"David's followers pursued the raiders south to the brook Besor, near Beersheba, where two hundred of the men became so faint that they had to give up the chase. The rest continued full of hope, however, for they had come upon an Egyptian slave who had been cruelly left to die in the field by his master, one of the Amalekite raiders who had attacked Ziklag. From him they learned they were on the right track, and that the raiders with their captives and spoil from David's city were not far ahead. The Egyptian promised to lead David to them in exchange for his life.

"They soon came upon the raiders, and hidden by surrounding hills, were able to spy upon them, waiting for the right moment to attack. The Amalekites did not realise the danger they were in. They were confident that David and his men were miles away fighting with the Philistines. They gave themselves over to feasting and merriment, rejoicing in the victory they had, and the spoil they had gained.

"But how depressed the Hebrew captives must have been, the women and children that belonged to David and his men! They had given themselves over to despair, not realising that Yahweh was working for their release. Incidents such as this show us that we must never allow ourselves to give way to circumstances. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples how that we should "always pray and not faint" (Luke 18:1), and Paul also taught the same lesson, saying that God is "able to do exceedingly above all we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

"Suddenly David charged. From the hills above, his men swooped down upon the camp of the Amalekites. Fiercely they attacked these men who had burned and destroyed their city, and taken their families captive. The rejoicing of the Amalekites turned quickly to fear as the men of David grappled with them

hand to hand, cutting them down as they turned to flee. Four hundred managed to escape, riding away on swift camels they had with them, but the rest were soon overcome. When the battle was over, the Israelites found that they had recovered all.

"There was no talk of stoning David now! He was a hero to his men. Joyfully they made the journey back. At the brook Besor they joined the 200 men whom they had left there. They returned with much more spoil than they had lost. But now some of the men with David revealed a spirit of selfishness. They suggested that they should not share the spoil with the men who had been unable to continue to the end of the attack. 'Let them have what belongs to them and go!' they said to David. But he would not hear of it. 'Those who stay behind will share equally with those who go to the battle', he commanded. It was a principle that David always upheld, and his fairness endeared him to his men.

"So they returned to Ziklag very pleased with the way in which tragedy had been turned into triumph. The dark days of David were passing away. A short time after they returned, the men of David brought before him a young man who had fled to Ziklag from the field of battle. He had news which at once plunged the camp of David into deep sorrow as well as into a state of excitement and wonderment. A new era was about to dawn for the shepherd boy of Bethlehem.



The Philistines occupied the coastal plain and were a constant threat to Israel until finally defeated and dominated by David.

Chapter Two

SAUL'S FINAL DISGRACE AND DEATH

Saul Seeks Help From A Witch

“Meanwhile the camp of Saul was dominated by worry and fear said Mr. Phillips, as he continued the story. “He had heard how the Philistines had gathered their armies together to Aphek in the plain of Sharon, and with a large company of chariots and horsemen **had marched north up the coastal plains** of the Land, through the Pass of Megiddo, and into the Valley of Esdraelon.

“They had gathered together a very large army, and Saul could see that they were determined to destroy him if they could.

“But what caused them to move north? Gibeah of Saul was further south, not far from Jerusalem. But evidently Saul had left his fortress city and the easily defended hill country there about, and had likewise ascended into the north. By the time his infantry had reached that area, the swifter chariots of the Philistines had taken up their position at Shunem on the lower slope of a hill not far from Jezreel. They were so placed that the chariots could swiftly move down into the valley and attack the Israelites.

“Meanwhile, Saul had taken up a position at the foot of Mount Gilboa, at the Spring of Harod which, with other springs, helps to feed a stream of considerable size (Judges 7:1). The bed of this river, as well as its soft mud banks acted as a barrier against the Philistine chariots”.

“Doesn’t the word ‘Harod’ mean *fear*” asked Graeham.

“Yes”, replied his father, “it means *fear* or *trembling*, and this describes the state of Saul and his followers at this moment”. You remember it was so named when Gideon gathered his army at the same place, and the people became fearful when they saw how numerous and powerful the enemy was against whom they had to fight”.

“Gideon defeated the enemy, nevertheless,” said Ann.

“True”, said her father. “Possibly Saul remembered such incidents. Not far from there Barak had defeated the better armed and more numerous forces of Sisera (Judges 4:13), and later Gideon with 300 men had routed the 135,000 Midianites who opposed him (Judges 7). But they were men of faith, and Saul had lost faith in Yahweh. Samuel was dead (1 Samuel 28:3), the High Priest was with David, (1 Samuel 23:6), and though

Jonathan, his son continued to support him, others were even then deserting from Saul, feeling that his cause was lost (1 Chronicles 12:1,2,19-22).

"It was, I believe, these considerations that had caused him to leave the more easily defended fortress city of Gibeah, and move north.

"Saul was depressed and dejected. He needed help, and did not know where to go for it. He had deserted God, and knew not where to turn. He decided to seek a witch, to see if she could help him. This had caused him to ascend north where the last of such women was to be found. This showed how inconsistent Saul was, for on an earlier and happier occasion as the Law of Moses commanded he had put to death those who pretended to be able to speak to the dead" (see Leviticus 19:31; 1 Samuel 28:3).

"Is that what you mean by a witch?" asked Ann.

"Yes", replied her father.

"The Bible describes the woman as one 'who had a familiar spirit'", said Graeham. "What does that mean?"

"The word in the Hebrew is *ob*" explained Mr. Phillips, "and it means 'skin' or 'murmuring voice' from within. The *Septuagint* version renders the word as *ventriloquist*. Such people speak deep in their body, and their lips scarcely move. They make out that the voice, which is really their own, belongs to somebody else, and so they are said to have 'a familiar spirit'. They claimed to be able to speak with the dead, much the same as a modern medium in a spiritualist meeting. This, of course, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, which declares that the dead are unconscious (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, 10), and describes the grave as a place of 'silence' (Psalm 115:17). These 'wizards' and women 'with familiar spirits' contradicted the teaching of Yahweh, and declared that the dead were not really dead, and that they could through such mediums, speak to the living".

"What does the word *wizard* mean?" asked Ann.

"The word in the Hebrew (*yiddeoniy*) means 'knowing one', " answered her father. "They were men who pretended to have an insight into matters beyond human understanding. Like the witches, they used this pretended knowledge to draw people away from the worship of Yahweh".

"Why did Saul seek guidance from such a terrible creature?" asked Ann.

"Because he had lost faith in Yahweh," replied her father.

"But it says that Saul enquired of Yahweh, and He would not answer him (v. 6)," said Peter, triumphantly, thinking he had trapped his father.

"That is true," agreed his father, "but the same verse indicates



In the dead of night Saul heavily disguised penetrates into enemy territory to seek out the witch of Endor.

that he was not very sincere in his approach”.

“How can you say that?” asked Peter.

“Saul turned to Yahweh in prayer, it is true,” answered Mr. Phillips. “But it was too late for that. His prayers had become an abomination to Yahweh (Proverbs 28:9); and a much more earnest approach than merely seeking help in prayer was required. It is interesting to contrast the two words used in vv. 6 and 7 of this chapter (1 Samuel 28). We read that Saul ‘enquired’ of Yahweh, but he ‘sought out’ the woman. He went to great pains to find her, but he did not do so to find Yahweh. Many people make the same mistake as Saul. They do not *seek out* Yahweh, do not go to any pains to find Him; they think He should be there whenever they like to utter a prayer. But they will go to great pains and trouble to *seek out* other forms of aid, as Saul did the witch on this occasion.

“Saul sent out his servants to seek for a woman who claimed to be able to speak to the dead, and they found one in a place called Endor, about eight miles distance from where he was encamped with his army. He decided to visit her, even though it would take him into enemy territory, for Endor was behind where the Philistines were encamped. On the night before the battle, the shameful visit took place. The gloomy, fear-ridden king, in agony of mind, crept through the darkness of the night, past the tents of the sleeping Philistines, disguised lest he should be recognised by friend or foe. He was lonely and dejected. How different from the time when he had been anointed King by Samuel, and all Israel had shouted in his honour! The bright hopes that he had then were now withered and blighted, as he made his way through the darkness of the night without hope, having turned from those who would have helped him.

“Soon the disguised king, with two servants, came to the house of the witch. She invited them in and asked them what they wanted. Saul told her that he wanted to call up someone from the dead; he promised her that no punishment would result if she helped him. ‘Whom shall I bring up for you?’ asked the witch. ‘Bring me up Samuel,’ replied the king.

“The woman had fallen into a trance, as is the custom of such people,” continued Mr. Phillips. “and gradually she could sense the atmosphere of tension and tragedy that overshadowed the king. She could tell, also, that he was the king, for despite the fact that he was wearing different raiment, his tall figure was well known in Israel. As she recognised who he was, and as she sensed the impending tragedy that had brought him to her, she shrieked out in terror. She told Saul she could see an old man coming up out of the grave covered with a mantle. Saul could see nothing,

for all that happened was the imagination of her mind. But he recognised this as a description of Samuel, and he conversed with this imaginery prophet. The conversation was conducted through the woman. She, as a ventriloquist, answered on Samuel's behalf, though in the Bible, it is recorded as though Samuel himself spoke".

"Why do you say that?" asked Graeham. "Could not Yahweh have raised Samuel from the dead?"

"Nothing is impossible with Yahweh", answered Mr. Phillips, "but to me it would appear inconsistent for God to have called up Samuel at the request of such a woman, whereas He refused to answer Saul when Saul appealed directly to Him (v. 6)."

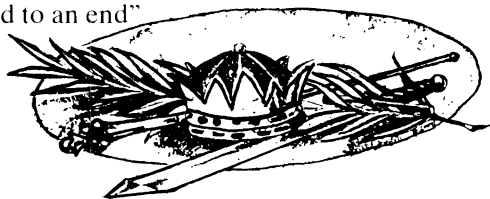
"I do not agree with you," interjected Peter. "The prophecy that Samuel made on this occasion was completely fulfilled (vv. 16-19), which indicates to me that Samuel was indeed, raised from the dead".

"There was nothing remarkable in the prophecy," answered his father. "All that was said on this occasion was that Yahweh had rejected Saul and had given the kingdom to David because he had disobeyed His instructions, and that Saul would be defeated in the battle on the morrow and that he and his sons would die. There was nothing remarkable in such a prediction, for the first part was known to all Israel, and the second part was surely obvious when the forces gathered against Saul, and the divided state of Israel were considered".

"Was she a fake?" asked Peter.

"No, not really. She was what we would call today a self-deceived mystic. She was able to discern people's thoughts, and detecting what Saul was thinking, was able to describe Samuel, and also give expression to Saul's fears.

"When Saul heard her words, he was so overcome with emotion that he fainted. He was worn out with fatigue and the depression of the sense of impending doom. He was physically weak for he had eaten nothing all that day. The woman prepared a meal for him, and with his servants he partook of it before travelling again through the night, back to the shelter of his camp at the foot of Gilboa. But the king was now filled with the greatest forebodings for the morrow, overcome with the agony of utter despair and misery, as the final tragic acts in his life of failure moved to an end"



**The Tragic
Battle of Gilboa
(1 Samuel 31)**

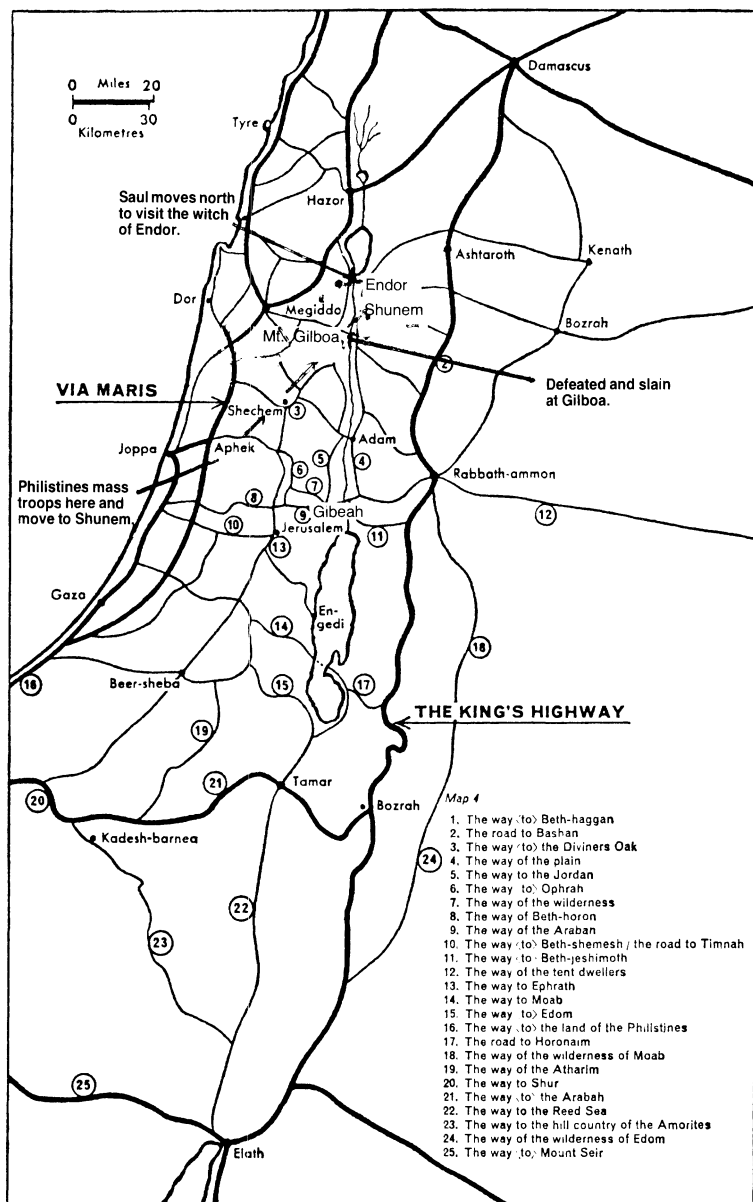
Saul's bodyguard was far from confident. His forces were camped at the foot of Gilboa which rises steeply from the plain. They had little heart for the battle. The nation was divided, and even some of Saul's own tribe were now deserting to David.

Early in the morning the battle commenced. The Philistines swiftly advanced, driving their chariots across the valley of Esdraelon towards the Spring of Harod. Saul's warriors, already weakened by a spirit of defeat turned and fled. They climbed the steep, precipitous slope of Gilboa, and then dispersed down its rough, steep and deep valleys in all directions, but particularly towards the shelter of the Jordan Valley (1 Samuel 31:7). As they went, they spread news of the defeat. People learned that the country was now dominated by a hated and brutal enemy. Panic spread throughout the towns and villages (1 Samuel 31:7). The inhabitants fled east to the shelter of the Jordan and beyond. The roads were filled with refugees carrying with them what household property they could gather up. Confusion reigned. It was a dark hour for the nation; yet it was to emerge therefrom to an epoch of greatest glory.

Meanwhile Saul had gathered a few of his special bodyguards about him. His sons remained loyal to their father, and protectively gathered around him. In front, the slopes of Gilboa were too steep for chariots, but behind, an easy ascent permitted them to advance. Accordingly, the full weight of the Philistine attack advanced upon Saul and his valiant few. The cause of the Israelites was hopeless. Clouds of arrows darkened the sky, bringing death to many of the defenders.

Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Mechishua were slain; most of his bodyguard was wounded or dead; and Saul realised that further resistance was hopeless. He, too, was badly wounded (1 Samuel 31:3). He may have been able to escape, but remembering the words of the witch at Endor, and feeling that he could not face the shame and disgrace that awaited him if death did not come, he decided to commit suicide. He asked his armour-bearer to slay him, and when he refused, he fell on his sword and died. When the armour-bearer saw that his King was dead, he did likewise. This ended the resistance, and the Philistines swept on to complete victory.

Next day they returned to the field of battle, to find Saul and his sons among the slain. They took the bodies of these men, and stripping Saul of his armour, and beheading him, they sent his armour around as an exhibit to be shown in the temples of their gods. The bodies of Saul and his sons they hung up to the wall of



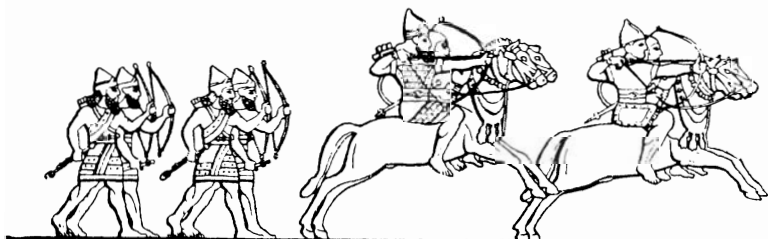
The Main Roads of Palestine

THE TRAGEDY OF GILBOA

Saul's shame, disgrace and death culminated at Gilboa. It is difficult to follow the strategy of this battle. The Philistines assembled at Aphek, which is a long distance from Gilboa. Aphek was on an important crossroads. The Via Maris moved up from the south to the north through Aphek, whilst at this point another important road moved east giving access to Shechem and then south to Gibeah, Saul's capital, and to Jerusalem. But Saul abandoned Gibeah to move north with his depleted forces (for many had deserted him) to the Valley of Jezreel. Apparently learning of this, the Philistines also moved their chariot forces north up the pass of Megiddo to take their stand at Shunem. And so the drama moved to its tragic end.

Why did Saul abandon his comparative position of strength in the central highlands for the flat country around the Spring of Harod in the Valley of Jezreel which was ideal for chariot warfare and which contributed to his defeat?

Obviously to make contact with the witch of Endor. It was this that lured him from the shelter of Gibeah to Gilboa and his defeat and death. Having failed spiritually, Saul also failed militarily; having lost his crown he also lost his life. So folly led to his disgrace and defeat. What a sad and terrible lesson his life presents for all called to Kingship in the age to come (Revelation 5:9-10).



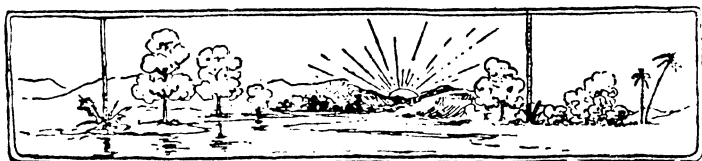
the main street of Bethshan, in the valley of Jezreel. This was a disgrace to all Israel, and a triumph for the Philistines.

But there was one city in Israel that determined it would not permit for this disgrace. The men of Jabesh-Gilead, on the east of the Jordan, remembered the way in which Saul had come to their help in their time of need (see 1 Samuel 11), and prepared themselves to avenge his death. At dead of night they crossed the Jordan, and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons, and buried them in Jabesh. After which they mourned for seven days.

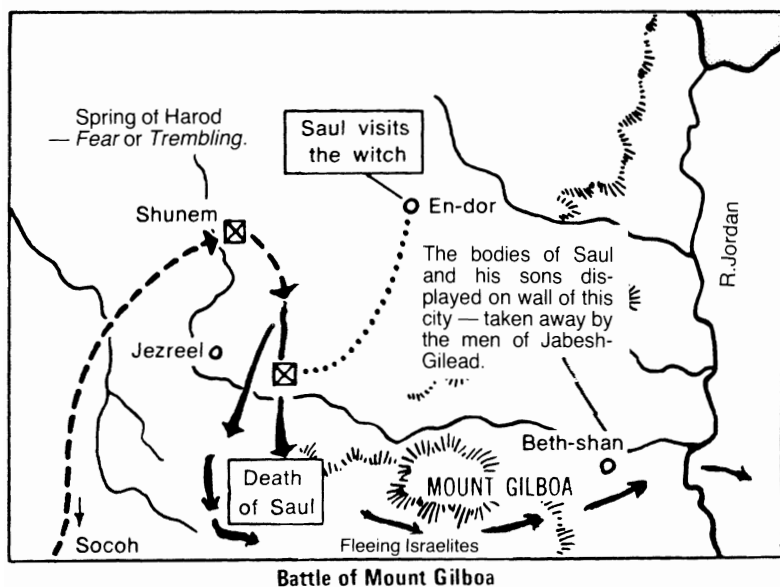
This was the final act in the tragic drama of Saul's life. Forty years of misrule had come to an end (Acts 13:21), and a brighter time was about to dawn. As Saul himself declared, he had "played the fool, and erred exceedingly" (1 Samuel 26:21); but that time was now over.

Before closing this chapter on the life of Saul, let us briefly consider the man again in comparison with that other great character of the Bible whose name was Saul, but who changed it to Paul. Both were of the tribe of Benjamin; both were moved by a zeal that was not according to knowledge; both were men of strong passions; both were leaders. But Saul of Gibeah was a failure, whereas Saul of Tarsus was a success. And the reason that one was a failure and the other a success, was because the former refused to allow the Word of Yahweh to mould him, whereas the latter used it to discipline and guide his every action. Paul allowed God's Word to work through him, and it changed his life. It caused him to expend his zeal in profitable ways; it modified his passion, and guided his leadership. Saul the king, on the other hand, had as great an opportunity for good as Saul the disciple, but he wasted his opportunities, and proved a failure. The words of Samuel spell the failure of Saul: "Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of Yâhweh, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23). Saul the king was rejected from his high position, but Saul the humble disciple will yet be elevated to kingship in a glorious future (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Let us follow the example of such as Paul, and eschew that of Saul the King of folly.



Saul's Tragic End



The disgrace and tragedy of Israel's first king was compounded by his insistence upon consulting a witch. To do so he had to penetrate the enemy's line of battle at great personal risk. On the morrow the battle took place. Saul's forces ascended Mount Gilboa to escape the chariots of the Philistines, but the easy slopes on the southern part of the mount permitted them to advance at the rear of his remaining soldiers, and encompass his defeat and death. This moment of dark gloom and disgrace for Israel was followed by the epoch of its greatest glory under David and Solomon.



An artist's impression of Philistine warriors derived from archaeological findings and illustrations and weapons.

When, in times past, the people of Israel were trustful and believing they soon routed and vanquished their enemies. But when they distrusted God and set at nought His Word and commandments the reverse happened. This information has been recorded for our learning and encouragement. Do we give sufficient heed to what the Scriptures record upon these matters? To do so leads to happiness now, as well as a reward in the future. To ignore these instructions brings misery in the present, and a hopelessness for the future.

“All these things happened to them as examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Therefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” — 1 Corinthians 10:11-12.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” — 1 Timothy 4:8.

