

The Book of Judges

The Argument

The author of this book is not certainly known, whether it was Samuel, or Ezra, or some other prophet; nor is it material to know. 1. It matters not who was the king's secretary, or with what pen it was written, if it be once known that it was. the king who made the order or decree: it is sufficient that unto the Jews *were committed to the oracles of God*, [Ro 3:2](#), i.e. the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, one part of which this was, by confession of all; and that the Jews did not falsify their trust therein, but kept those holy books themselves, and delivered them to the world, entire, without addition or diminution; for neither Christ nor his apostles, who severely rebuke them for their mistakes and misunderstandings of some passages of Scripture, ever charge them with any perfidiousness about the canon or books of the Scripture. This book is called the Book of *Judges*, because it treats of the judges, or of the state of the commonwealth of Israel under all the judges, except Eli and Samuel, who being the last of the judges, and the occasions or instruments of the change of this government, are omitted in this book. The judges were a sort of magistrates inferior to kings, and could neither make new laws, nor impose any tributes, but were the supreme executors of God's laws and commands, and the generals of their armies.

Chapter 1

The tribe of Judah, by God's command, begin to make war against the Canaanites, [Jdg 1:1-4](#). Adoni-bezek justly requited, [Jdg 1:5-7](#). They take Jerusalem, [Jdg 1:8](#); and Hebron. Anak's sons slain, [Jdg 1:9-10](#). Othniel subdueth Debir, and so obtaineth Caleb's daughter to wife, [Jdg 1:11-15](#). The Kenites dwell in Judah, [Jdg 1:16](#). Simeon subdueth Zephath, [Jdg 1:17](#); and Judah divers cities of the Philistines, [Jdg 1:18-20](#). The Jebusites dwell with Benjamin, [Jdg 1:21](#). They of the house of Joseph subdue Beth-el, [Jdg 1:22-26](#). Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali, Dan drive not out the Canaanites; for which they are vexed by them, and are left to dwell one among another, [Jdg 1:27-36](#).

[Jdg 1:1](#)

After the death of Joshua; not long after it, because Othniel, the first judge, lived in Joshua's time.

The children of Israel asked the Lord; being assembled together at Shiloh, they inquired of the high priest by the Urim and Thummim. See [Nu 27:21](#); [Jdg 20:18](#); [1Sa 23:9](#).

Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first? Being sensible that the Canaanites are troublesome to them, and expected great advantage against them by their heedless condition, and finding their people to increase and multiply exceedingly, and consequently the necessity of enlarging their quarters, they renew the war. They do not inquire who shall be the captain-general to all the tribes; but (as appears by the answer) what tribe shall first undertake the expedition, that by their success the other tribes may be encouraged to make the like attempt upon the Canaanites in their several lots.

[Jdg 1:2](#)

Not a person so called, but the tribe of Judah, as is manifest from [Jdg 1:3-4](#), [8-9](#), which is chosen for the first enterprise, because they were both most populous, and so most needing enlargement; and withal most valiant, and therefore most likely to succeed; for God chooseth fit means for the work which he designs; and because the Canaanites were numerous and strong in those parts, and therefore were in time to be suppressed, before they grew too strong for them.

[Jdg 1:3](#)

Unto Simeon his brother; as nearest to him both by relation, being his brother by both parents, which few of them were; and by habitation, as appears from [Jos 19:1-2](#).

Against the Canaanites; specially so called because they are distinguished from the Perizzites, [Jdg 1:4](#).

[Jdg 1:4](#)

Not in the city, for that was not yet taken, [Jdg 1:5](#), but in the territory of it, or near to it; as *in Hor* is taken, [Nu 33:37](#); and *in Jericho*, [Jos 5:13](#).

[Jdg 1:5](#)

Adoni-bezek; the lord or king of Bezek, as his name signifies, *in Bezek*; whither he fled, when he had lost the field.

Against him, i.e. against the city wherein he had encamped himself, and the rest of his army.

[Jdg 1:6](#)

That he might be disabled to fight with his hands, or to run away upon his feet. And this they did, either by the secret instinct and direction of God, or upon notice of his former tyranny and cruelty expressed upon others, in this manner, as it follows: either way it was a just requital.

[Jdg 1:7](#)

Threescore and ten kings; which is not strange in those times and places; for these might be either, first, kings successively, and so there might be divers of those kings in one place, and so in others; or, secondly, contemporary kings. For it is well known that anciently each ruler of a city, or great town, was called a king, and had kingly power in that place; and many such kings we meet with in Canaan; and it is probable that some years before kings were more numerous there, till the greater devoured many of the less.

Having their thumbs cut off, that so their hands might be unable to manage weapons of war.

Gathered their meat under my table; an act of barbarous inhumanity thus to insult over the miserable, joined with abominable luxury.

God hath requited me: he acknowledgeth the providence and vindictive justice of God, which also Pharaoh did, and others too, without any true sense of piety.

They brought him; they carried him in triumph, as a monument of God's righteous vengeance.

To Jerusalem; it being the metropolis of the nation.

[Jdg 1:8](#)

To wit, in Joshua's time; which though done before, may be here repeated, to show why they brought Adoni-bezek to Jerusalem, because that city was in their hands, having been taken before, as may be gathered from [Jos 15:63](#). And the taking of this city may be ascribed *to the children of Judah* rather than to Joshua, because the city was not taken by Joshua and the whole body of the army in that time when so many kings were destroyed, [Jos 10:1-43](#); [12:1-24](#), (for there is mention made of the destroying of the king of Jerusalem, [Jos 10:23](#); [12:10](#); but not a word of the taking of Jerusalem, as there is of the taking of Makkedah, and Libnah, and other cities belonging to the kings there mentioned, [Jos 10:28](#), &c.,) but by the children of Judah after they had received their lot, when at the desire and with the consent of the Benjamites, in whose lot Jerusalem fell, [Jos 18:28](#), they assaulted and took it, and thereby, as it seems, acquired the right of copartnership with the Benjamites in the possession of that city. Though some think Jerusalem was twice taken; once in Joshua's lifetime; and being afterwards recovered by the Canaanites, was now retaken by the children of Judah.

[Jdg 1:9-10](#)

Judah went, under the conduct of Caleb, as it is recorded, [Jos 15:11](#), &c.; for that relation, and this here following, are doubtless one and the same expedition and war, as appears by all the circumstances; and it is mentioned either there by anticipation, or here by repetition. Of this and the following verses, see the notes there.

[Jdg 1:11-16](#)

Children of the Kenite, i.e. of Jethro, so called from the people from whom he descended, [Nu 24:21-22](#). And whatsoever he did, it is evident that his posterity came into Canaan with the Israelites, and were there seated with them. See [Jdg 4:11](#); [5:24](#); [1Sa 15:6](#); [1Ch 2:55](#).

Out of the city of palm trees, i.e. from Jericho, so called [De 34:3](#); not the city, which was utterly destroyed; but the territory belonging to it, where it seems they were seated as in a most pleasant, and fruitful, and safe place, according to the promise made by Moses to their father, [Nu 10:31-32](#), and whence they might remove, either to avoid the society or molestation of the neighbouring Canaanites; or out of love to the children of Judah, whom they went to; or to avoid temptations to luxury, and exercise themselves in self-denial and contempt of the present evil world, and the lusts thereof; as may be thought from [Jer 35:6](#), &c.; or for some other cause unknown to us at this distance.

In the south of Arad; in the southern part of the land of Canaan, where Arad was, [Nu 21:1](#).

They went, i.e. some of them, for others of them dwelt in the contrary quarter, in the most northern part of the land.

Among the people, Heb. *that people*, to wit, those children of Judah that lived there.

[Jdg 1:17](#)

Judah went with Simeon his brother, according to his promise, [Jdg 1:3](#), and the laws of justice and gratitude.

Hormah; either, 1. The same place so destroyed and called, [Nu 21:3](#), and so what was there vowed is here executed; Or, 2. Some other place called by the same name upon the like occasion, which was frequent among the Hebrews. This seems more probable, 1. Because this was but one city, that divers cities, [Nu 21:2-3](#). 2. Because that seems to have been done in Moses's time, though interpreters generally think otherwise; of which see my notes there.

[Jdg 1:18](#)

The principal cities of the Philistines.

Quest. How could this be, when among the people left to try Israel, are the five lords of the Philistines, [Jdg 3:3](#).

Answ. It is only said that they took the cities, and probably contented themselves with making them tributary; but it is not said that they slew the people, as they ought to have done, and as it is said of the other cities here, [Jdg 1:5](#), [8](#), [17](#), [25](#). And the people being thus spared, did by God's just judgement recover their strength, and expel the Jews out of their cities, as we find afterwards. It is further observable, that Ekron here taken was one of Dan's cities, [Jos 19:43](#), and it was attempted and taken here by Judah and Simeon, partly out of love to their brother Dan, and partly to secure their new conquests, and other adjoining territories, from such potent neighbours.

[Jdg 1:19](#)

On account of their unbelief, whereby they doubted and distrusted God's power to destroy those who had chariots of iron and so gave way to their own fear and sloth, whereby God was provoked to withdraw his helping hand from them, and so they were really made impotent, as they were unwilling. See [Jos 17:16](#).

[Jdg 1:20-22](#)

The house of Joseph, i.e. the tribe of Ephraim, as appears from their opposition to the tribe of Manasseh, [Jdg 1:27](#).

[Jdg 1:23-24](#)

The entrance into the city; on which side it is weakest, that we may best invade and take it.

[Jdg 1:25-26](#)

The land of the Hittites; where the Hittites seated themselves after they were driven out of Canaan, which seems to be northward from Canaan, and near unto it. See [1Ki 11:1](#); [2Ch 1:17](#).

[Jdg 1:27](#)

Manasseh, i.e. that half of this tribe which dwelt in Canaan.

Beth-shean; a place near Jordan, [Jos 17:11](#).

Taanach; of which see [Jos 12:21](#); [17:11](#).

Dor; a great city with large territories. See [Jos 11:2](#); [12:23](#); [17:11](#).

Megiddo; a royal city. See [Jos 12:21](#); [17:11](#).

[Jdg 1:28-33](#)

Beth-shemesh; a place differing from that *Beth-shemesh*, [Jos 15:10](#).

[Jdg 1:34](#)

Into the plain country; which was the occasion of that expedition for the getting of new quarters; of which we read [Jos 19:1-51](#); [Jdg 18:1-31](#).

[Jdg 1:35](#)

Of the house of Joseph, i.e. of the Ephraimites, who helped their brethren the Danites against the Amorites, and that with good success.

[Jdg 1:36](#)

Akrabbim was in the southern part of Canaan, [Jos 15:2-3](#), from whence it went up towards the north. This is added to show the great power and large extent of this people.

Chapter 2

An angel reproveth Israel at Bochim; they bewail their sins, [Jdg 2:1-5](#). The wickedness of the new generation after Joshua; their frequent idolatry, [Jdg 2:6-13](#); for which they are often punished of God by the enemy; and being delivered by the judges grow worse, [Jdg 2:14-19](#); wherefore God will leave the Canaanite to prove and vex them, [Jdg 2:20-23](#).

[Jdg 2:1](#)

An angel of the Lord: either, first, A created angel. Or, secondly, A prophet or man of God, for such are sometimes called *angels*, which signifies only *messengers of God*; and then the following words are spoken by him in the name of God, as may easily be understood. Or, thirdly, Christ, *the Angel of the covenant*, who is oft called *the Angel of the Lord*, as we have formerly seen, to whom the conduct of Israel out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, and into Canaan, here spoken of, is frequently ascribed, as [Ex 14:19](#); [23:20](#); [33:14](#); [Jos 5:13-14](#); [Jdg 6:12](#); [13:3](#); who alone of all the angels could speak the following words in his own name and person; whereas created angels and prophets do universally usher in their Divine messages with, *Thus saith the Lord*, or some equivalent expression. And this angel having assumed the outward shape of a man, it is not strange that he imitates the local motion of a

man, and comes as it were from Gilgal to the place where now they were; by which motion he signified that he was the person that brought them to Gilgal, the first place where they rested in Canaan, and there renewed covenant with them, and protected them there so long, and from thence went out with them to battle, and gave them success.

Bochim; a place so called here by anticipation, for the reason expressed here, [Jdg 2:5](#). And it seems to be no other than Shiloh, where it seems probable that the people were met together upon some solemn festival. And this was the proper and usual place of sacrificing, [Jdg 2:5](#). *And I said*, i.e. I promised, upon condition of your keeping covenant with me.

[Jdg 2:2-3](#)

I also said with myself; I have now taken up this peremptory resolution.

Thorns in your sides: [See Comment on Nu 33:55](#); [See Comment on Jos 23:13](#).

[Jdg 2:4](#)

Some of them from a true sense of their sins; but most of them from a just apprehension of their danger and approaching misery from the Canaanites' growing power, and God's forsaking of them; as the following history makes most probable.

[Jdg 2:5](#)

For the expiation of their sins, by which they had provoked God to this resolution; and for the regaining of God's favour.

[Jdg 2:6](#)

When Joshua had let the people go; when he had distributed their inheritances, and dismissed them severally to take possession of them. This was done before this time, whilst Joshua lived; but is now repeated in order to the discovery of the time, and cause, or occasion of the people's defection from God, and of God's desertion of them.

[Jdg 2:7-9](#)

Timnath-heres, called *Timnath-serah*, [Jos 19:50](#); [24:30](#).

[Jdg 2:10](#)

Which knew not the Lord; which had no experimental nor serious and affectionate knowledge of God, nor of his works.

[Jdg 2:11](#)

In the sight of the Lord; which notes the heinousness and the impudence of their sins above other people's sins; because God's presence was with them, and his eye upon them, in a peculiar manner, and he did narrowly observe all their actions, which also they were not ignorant of, and therefore were guilty of more contempt of God than other people.

Baalim, i.e. false gods. He useth the plural number, because the gods of the Canaanites and adjoining nations, which Israel worshipped, were divers, and most of them called by the name of Baal.

[Jdg 2:12-13](#)

i.e. The sun and the moon, whom many heathens worshipped, though under divers names; and so they ran into that error which God had so expressly warned them against, [De 4:19](#).

[Jdg 2:14](#)

Sold them, i.e. delivered them up, as the seller doth, his commodities unto the buyer. This the same phrase is used [Jdg 3:8](#); [4:9](#), compared with [Jdg 2:14](#); [Ps 44:12](#).

[Jdg 2:15](#)

Whithersoever they went out, i.e. whatsoever expedition or business they undertook; which is usually signified by *going out* and *coming in*.

[Jdg 2:16](#)

The Lord raised them up, by inward inspiration and excitation of their minds and hearts, and by outward designation, testified by some heroical and extraordinary action.

Judges; supreme magistrates, whose office it was, under God, and by his particular direction, to govern the commonwealth of Israel by God's laws, and to protect and save them from their enemies; to preserve and purge religion; to maintain the liberties of the people against all oppressors. See [Jdg 3:9-10](#), [15, 4](#); [6:25](#); [8:23](#).

[Jdg 2:17](#)

Their judges admonished them of their sin and folly, and of the danger and misery which would certainly befall them.

[Jdg 2:18](#)

It repented the Lord, i.e. the Lord changed his course and dealings with them, as penitent men use to do; removed his judgments, and returned to them in mercy, [Ge 6:6](#).

[Jdg 2:19](#)

They returned to their former, and usual, and natural, though interrupted course.

More than their fathers, in Egypt or in the wilderness.

From their own doings, i.e. from their evil practices, which he calls their *own* partly because they were agreeable to their own natures, which in all mankind are deeply and universally corrupted, [Ge 6:5](#); [8:21](#); and partly because they were familiar and customary to them. Compare [Isa 58:13](#); [66:3](#); [Eze 36:32](#); [Ac 14:16](#); [Jude 1:16](#).

Their stubborn way, Heb. hard way; so he calls their way of wickedness, either because it proceeded from a hard heart, and was managed with a hard and stiff neck; or to signify, that although it seemed at first very soft, and easy, and pleasant, yet they would certainly, and did constantly, find that it was hard, and difficult, and troublesome to them, as a hard way is to the traveller.

[Jdg 2:20-22](#)

That I may prove Israel; either, first, That I may try, and see whether Israel will be true and faithful to me, or whether they will suffer themselves to be corrupted by the evil counsels and examples of their bad neighbours, whom I will leave among them for their trial and exercise. Or, secondly, That by them I may afflict and punish Israel; for afflictions are commonly and justly called trials. But the former sense suits better with the following words.

[Jdg 2:23](#)

Hastily, or speedily; when the Israelites desired it and needed it.

Chapter 3

The nations left to prove Israel mentioned, [Jdg 3:1-4](#). The Israelites marrying their daughters, and serving their gods, they are delivered up to the king of Mesopotamia; are rescued by Othniel, [Jdg 3:5-11](#). Continuing to do evil, they are again punished and oppressed by the king of the Moabites; are rescued by Ehud: ten thousand Moabites are slain, [Jdg 3:12-30](#). They are afterwards delivered from the Philistines by Shamgar, [Jdg 3:31](#).

[Jdg 3:1](#)

i.e. Such who had no experience of those wars, nor of God's extraordinary power and providence manifested in them.

[Jdg 3:2](#)

Might know, to teach them war; that by the neighbourhood of such warlike potent enemies, they might be purged from sloth and security, and obliged to inure themselves to martial exercises, and to stand continually upon their guard, and consequently to keep close to that God whose assistance they had so great and constant need of.

[Jdg 3:3](#)

Five lords of the Philistines; whereof three had been in some sort subdued, [Jdg 1:18](#), but afterwards rescued themselves, and recovered their former strength. [See Comment on Jdg 1:18](#).

The Canaanites; properly so called, who were very numerous, and dispersed through several parts of the land whence they gave denomination to all the rest of the people.

The Sidonians; the people living near Sidon, and subject to its jurisdiction.

Mount Baal-hermon was the eastern part of Mount Lebanon: see [De 3:8-9](#).

[Jdg 3:4-6](#)

Were drawn to idolatry by the persuasions and examples of their yoke-fellows, through the just judgment of God, punishing their sinful marriages by giving them up to idolatry.

[Jdg 3:7](#)

i.e. In the groves, in which the heathens usually worshipped their *Baalims* or idols. Or, *the groves* are here put metonymically for the idols of the groves, which are distinguished here from their *Baalim*, which seem to have been worshipped in other places, as *the prophets of Baal* are distinguished from *the prophets of the groves*, [1Ki 18:19](#).

[Jdg 3:8-9](#)

Cried unto the Lord, i.e. prayed fervently for deliverance.

Caleb's younger brother; of which [See Comment on Jdg 1:13](#).

[Jdg 3:10](#)

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, with extraordinary influences, endowing him with singular wisdom, and courage, and resolution; and stirring him up to this great undertaking. Compare [Jdg 6:34](#); [11:29](#).

He judged Israel, i.e. pleaded and avenged the cause of Israel against their oppressors; as that phrase is oft used, as [De 32:36](#); [Ps 10:18](#); [43:1](#).

[Jdg 3:11](#)

The land had rest; either, first, It rested about forty years, or the greatest part of forty years; it being most frequent in Scripture to use numbers in such a latitude. Thus the Israelites are said to *bear their iniquities forty years in the wilderness*, [Nu 14:34](#), when there wanted near two years of that number; and *to dwell in Egypt four hundred and thirty years*, when there wanted many years of that number. Thus *Joseph's kindred*, sent for and called by him into Egypt, are numbered seventy-five souls, [Ac 7:14](#), although they were but seventy, as is affirmed, [Ge 46:27](#); [Ex 1:5](#). So here *the land* is said to *rest forty years*, although they were in servitude eight of those years, [Jdg 3:8](#). And in like manner *the land* is said to *have rest eighty years*, though eighteen of them they served the king of Moab, [Jdg 3:14](#). And so in some other instances. Nor is it strange and unusual, either in Scripture or in other authors, for things to be denominated from the greater part, as here it was; especially when they did enjoy some degrees of rest and peace, even in their times of slavery, which here they did. Or, secondly, *It rested*, i.e. began to rest, or recovered its interrupted rest, *in the fortieth year*, either after Joshua's death, or after the first and famous rest procured for them by Joshua, as is noted, [Heb 4:9](#), when he destroyed and subdued the Canaanites, and gave them quiet possession of the land; and *the land had rest from war*, as is said, [Jos 11:23](#); [14:15](#). So there is this difference between the years of servitude and oppression, and those of rest, that in the former he tells us how long it lasted; in the latter, when it began; by which, compared with the other years, it was easy also to know how long the rest lasted. To strengthen this interpretation, two things must be noted. 1. That *resting* is here put for beginning to rest, as *to beget* is put for *beginning to beget*, [Ge 5:32](#); [11:26](#); and *to reign*, for *to begin to reign*, [2Sa 2:10](#); and *to build*,

[1Ki 6:15](#), [36](#), for *to begin to build*, [2Ch 3:1](#). 2. That *forty years* is put for *the fortieth year*; the cardinal number for the ordinal, which is common both in the Holy Scripture, as [Ge 1:5](#); [2:11](#); [Ex 12:2](#); [Hag 1:1](#); [Mr 16:2](#) and in other authors.

[Jdg 3:12](#)

Strengthened Eglon, by giving him courage, and power, and success against them.

[Jdg 3:13](#)

i.e. Jericho, as may be gathered from [De 24:3](#); [Jdg 1:16](#); [2Ch 28:15](#). Not the city, which was demolished, but the territory belonging to it. Here he fixed his camp, partly for the admirable fertility of that soil; and partly because of its nearness to the passage over Jordan, which was most commodious, both for the conjunction of his own forces, which lay on both sides of Jordan; and to prevent the conjunction of the Israelites in Canaan with their brethren beyond Jordan; and to secure his retreat into his own country, which therefore the Israelites prevented, [Jdg 3:28](#).

[Jdg 3:14-15](#)

A *Benjamite*, Heb. *the son of Gemini*, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, [2Sa 16:11](#); [19:17](#); [1Ki 2:8](#). This tribe was next to him and doubtless most afflicted by him; and hence God raiseth a deliverer.

Left-handed; which is here noted, partly as a mark of his courage, and strength, and activity; see [Jdg 20:16](#); and principally as a considerable circumstance in the following story, whereby he might more advantageously and unsuspectedly give the deadly blow.

[Jdg 3:16](#)

A *cubit length*; long enough for his design, and not too long for carriage and concealment.

Upon his right thigh; which was most convenient, both for the use of his left hand, and for the avoiding of suspicion.

[Jdg 3:17](#)

The present was to be paid to him as a part of his tribute.

A *very fat man*, and therefore more unwieldy and unable to ward off Ehud's blow.

[Jdg 3:18](#)

He accompanied them part of the way, and then dismissed them, and returned to Eglon alone, that so he might have more easy access to him, and privacy with him; and that he might the better make his escape.

[Jdg 3:19](#)

He turned again, as if he had forgot and neglected some important business.

From the quarries; either, first, Whence they hewed stones. Or, secondly, The twelve stones which Joshua set up there; by the sight whereof he was animated to his work. Or, thirdly, The idols, as the word also signifies, which that heathen king might place there, either in spite and contempt to the Israelites, who had that place in great veneration; or that he might ascribe his conquest of the land to his idols, as the Israelites did to the true God, by setting up this monument in the entrance or beginning of it.

Keep silence till my servants be gone; whom he would not have acquainted with a business which he supposed to be of great and close importance.

[Jdg 3:20](#)

They had divers houses and chambers, some for *winter*, others for *summer*. See [Jer 36:22](#); [Am 3:15](#).

Which he had for himself alone; into which he used to retire himself from company; which is mentioned as the reason why his servants waited so long ere they went in to him, [Jdg 3:25](#).

I have a message, to be delivered not in words, but by actions; Heb. a *word*, or *thing*, or *business*. So that there is no need to charge Ehud with a lie, as some do.

From God: this he saith to amuse him, by raising his expectation and wonder, to divert him from any apprehension of his danger, and to oblige him to rise out of his seat, which he knew he would do from the common practice of the heathens in their intercourses with God. And he designedly useth the name Elohim, which was common to the true God and false ones, and not Jehovah, which was peculiar to the true God, because Ehud not knowing whether the message came not from his own false god, he would more certainly rise, and thereby give Ehud more advantage for his blow; whereas he would possibly show his contempt of the God of Israel by sitting still to hear his message.

He arose out of his seat, in token of humble subjection and reverence to God; see [Nu 23:18](#); [2Ki 23:3](#); which condemns those Christians that behave themselves irreverently in the presence and service of the true God.

[Jdg 3:21-22](#)

i.e. His excrements came forth, not at the wound, which closed up, but at the fundament, as is usual when persons die either a natural or violent death.

[Jdg 3:23](#)

Ehud went forth, with a composed countenance and gait, without any fear; being well assured that God, who by his extraordinary call had put him upon that enterprise, would by his special providence preserve him, and carry him through it.

Upon him; either upon the king, or upon or after himself.

Locked them; either by pulling it close after him, as we do when doors have spring-locks; or by taking the key with him for more caution; and this he did, that they supposing the king to be retired, might wait till he was gone.

[Jdg 3:24](#)

Covereth his feet: this phrase is used only here and [1Sa 24:3](#). It is commonly understood in both places, of easing nature; because the men not then wearing breeches, as we do, but long coats, they did in that act cover their feet, as women do: but a late judicious interpreter expounds it of composing himself to take a little sleep or rest, as was very usual to do in the day-time in those hot countries, [2Sa 4:5](#); [11:2](#). And when they did so in cool places, such as this summer parlour unquestionably was, they used to cover their feet, as appears from [Ru 3:7](#). And this may seem to be the more probable, both because the summer parlour was more proper for this use than for the former; and because this was a more likely reason of their long waiting at his door, lest they should disturb his repose. And this sense best agrees with Saul's case in the cave, when being asleep David could more securely cut off the lap of his garment, [1Sa 24:3](#), where [See Comment on 1Sa 24:3](#). annotations.

[Jdg 3:25](#)

Ashamed, or, confounded, not knowing what to say or think; lest they should either disturb him, or be guilty of neglect towards him.

A key; another *key*, it being usual in princes' courts to have divers keys for the same door.

[Jdg 3:26-27](#)

Doubtless he had prepared *the children of Israel*, and by his emissaries gathered together in considerable numbers.

[Jdg 3:28](#)

The fords, where they passed over Jordan, that neither the Moabites that were got into Canaan might escape, nor any more Moabites come over Jordan to their succour.

[Jdg 3:29-30](#)

How these are to be understood, [See Comment on Jdg 3:11](#). Instead of *eighty*, some copies read *eight* years.

[Jdg 3:31](#)

Slew six hundred men with an ox-goad; as Samson did a thousand with the jaw-bone of an ass; both being miraculous actions, and not at all incredible to him that believes a God, who could easily give strength both to the persons and to their weapons to effect this.

Chapter 4

King Jabin oppresses Israel; his captain-general was Sisera, [Jdg 4:1-3](#). The prophetess Deborah from the Lord commands Barak to go out against him; promiseth victory; she herself marcheth with him, [Jdg 4:4-14](#). Sisera's host is beaten; he flees: Jael hides him in her tent, and while he sleeps she kills him, [Jdg 4:15-23](#). King Jabin is destroyed, [Jdg 4:24](#).

[Jdg 4:1-2](#)

King of Canaan, i.e. of the land where the most of the Canaanites, strictly so called, now dwelt, which seems to be in the northern part of Canaan. This seems to be of the posterity of that Jabin, whom Joshua slew, [Jos 11:10](#) who watched all opportunities to recover his ancient possessions, and to revenge his own and father's quarrel upon the Israelites.

In Hazor; either, 1. In the city of Hazor, which though taken and burnt by Joshua, [Jos 11:11](#), yet might be retaken and rebuilt by the Canaanites. Or, 2. In the territory or kingdom of Hazor, which might now be restored to its former largeness and power, [Jos 11:10](#), the names of cities being oft put for their territories, as Zorah, a city, [Jos 15:33](#), is put for the fields belonging to it, [Jdg 13:2](#), in which Samson's parents lived, [Jdg 13:25](#); [16:31](#); [18:2](#).

Harosheth of the Gentiles; so called, because it was much frequented and inhabited by the Gentiles; either by the Canaanites, who being beaten out of their former possessions, seated themselves in those northern parts; or by other nations coming there for traffic, or upon other occasions, as Strabo notes of those parts; whence Galilee, where this was, is called Galilee of the Gentiles.

[Jdg 4:3](#)

More than the former tyrants; partly from his malice and hatred against the Israelites; and principally from God's just judgement, the growing punishment being most suitable to their aggravated wickedness.

[Jdg 4:4](#)

As there were men prophets, so there were also women prophetesses, as Miriam, [Ex 15:2](#), Huldah, [2Ki 22:14](#), and divers others; but the word *prophets* or *prophetesses* is very ambiguous in both Testaments; sometimes being used of persons extraordinarily inspired by God, and endowed with a power of working miracles, and foretelling things to come; and sometimes of persons endowed with special, though not miraculous, gifts or graces, for the better understanding of and discoursing about the word and mind of God, for praising of God, or the like; of which see [1Ch 25:1](#); [1Co 11:5](#); [14:1](#), [3-4](#) &c. And of this sort were the sons of the prophets, or such who were bred in the schools of the prophets, who are often called prophets, as [1Sa 10:5](#), [10-12](#). See, also [1Ki 18:4](#); [19:10](#). And because we read nothing of Deborah's miraculous actions, peradventure she was only a woman of eminent holiness and prudence, and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, by which she was singularly qualified for the judging of the people according to the laws of God. If it be alleged that she foresaw and foretold the following victory, so did all the sons of the prophets foresee and foretell Elijah's translation, [2Ki 2:3](#), [5](#), which yet were not extraordinary prophets.

The wife of Lapidoth; or, *a woman of Lapidoth*; and so *Lapidoth* is not the name of a man, but of the place of her birth or abode.

She judged Israel, i.e. determined causes and controversies arising among the Israelites, as is implied, [Jdg 4:5](#). And this Jabin might suffer to be done, especially by a woman; and the frequent discharge of this part of the judge's office, whereby she gained great power and authority with the people, did notably (though not observed by the tyrant) prepare the way for her sliding into the other part of her office, which was to defend and rescue the people from their enemies.

[Jdg 4:5-6](#)

She sent and called Barak, by virtue of that power which God had given her, and the people owned in her.

Kedesh-naphtali; so called, to distinguish it from other places of that name, one in Judah, [Jos 15:23](#), and another in Issachar, [1Ch 6:72](#).

Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded? i.e. assuredly God hath commanded thee: this is not the fancy of a weak woman, which peradventure thou mayst despise, but the command of the great God by my mouth. Which command of God, and the following assurance of success, she might either gather from the general rules of Scripture, and the common course of God's gracious providence, which was always ready to succour them when they cried to God; or receive by instinct or direction from God.

Go and draw, or, *go*; for so this word is oft used, as [Ge 37:28](#); [Jdg 20:37](#); [Job 21:33](#); *Hob. draw*, to wit, thyself, or thy feet. *Mount Tabor*; a place most fit for his purpose, as being in the borders of divers tribes, and having a large plain at the top of it, where he might conveniently marshal and discipline his army. She names *Naphtali and Zebulun* partly, because they were nearest and best known to Barak, and therefore soonest brought together; partly, because they were nearest to the enemy, and therefore must speedily be assembled, or else they were likely to be hindered in their design, whilst the other tribes, being at more distance, had better opportunity of gathering forces for their succour, and partly, because these had most smarted under their oppressor, who was in the heart of their country, and therefore were most forward in the present service: but these are not named exclusively, as appears by the concurrence of some other tribes, as is related, [Jdg 5:1-31](#).

[Jdg 4:7](#)

I will draw unto thee, by my secret and powerful providence, ordering and overruling his inclinations that way.

[Jdg 4:8](#)

His offer to go with her shows the truth of his faith, for which he is praised, [Heb 11:32](#); but his refusal to go without her shows the weakness of his faith, that he could not trust God's bare word, as he ought to have done, without the pledge of the presence of his prophetess, whom he thought God would preserve and deliver, and himself for her sake.

[Jdg 4:9](#)

Notwithstanding the journey, Heb. *the way*, i.e. the course or practice, as the way is taken, [Nu 22:32](#).

A woman; either, 1. Jael; Or rather, 2. Deborah, who being, as it were, the judge and chief commandress of the army, the honour of the victory would be ascribed to her. But for Jael, her fact would have been the same, though Barak had gone into the field without Deborah.

[Jdg 4:10](#)

At his feet, i.e. who followed him or his footsteps; possibly he intimates that they were all footmen, the Israelites neither now having, nor otherwise allowed to have, a multitude of horses; and so this is emphatically added, to signify by what contemptible means God overthrew Sisera's great host, wherein there were ten thousand horses, as Josephus reports.

[Jdg 4:11](#)

Heber; the husband of Jael, [Jdg 4:17](#).

The Kenite; of whom see [Nu 24:21-22](#); [Jdg 1:16](#). *Hobab*; called also *Jethro*. See [Nu 10:29](#). *From the Kenites*; from the rest of his brethren, who lived in the wilderness of Judah, [Jdg 1:16](#); which removal is here mentioned, lest any should wonder to find the Kenites in this place.

His tent, i.e. his dwelling, which probably was in tents, as shepherds used.

[Jdg 4:12](#)

They, i.e. his people dwelling there, or his spies; or, *he was told*, this being an impersonal speech.

[Jdg 4:13-14](#)

Up, Heb. *arise*, delay not, fall to thy work. *Gone out before thee*, to wit, as General of thine army, to fight for thee: see [Jdg 5:20](#); [2Sa 5:24](#).

Barak went down from Mount Tabor he doth not make use of the advantage which he had of the hill, where he might have been out of the reach of his iron chariots, [Jos 17:16](#), but boldly marcheth down into the valley, to give Sisera the opportunity of using all his horses and chariots, that so the victory might be more glorious and wonderful.

[Jdg 4:15](#)

The Lord discomfited Sisera, with great terror and noise, as the word signifies, [Ex 14:24](#); [Jos 10:10](#); [1Sa 10:1-27](#), most probably with thunder, and lightning, and hailstones, or other such instruments of destruction poured upon them from heaven, as is sufficiently implied, [Jdg 5:20](#).

With the edge of the sword, i.e. by the sword of Barak and his army, whose ministry God used; but so that they had little else to do but to kill these whom God by more powerful arms had put to flight.

Fled away on his feet, that he might flee away more secretly and securely in the quality of a common soldier, whereas his chariot would have exposed him to more observation and hazard.

[Jdg 4:16](#)

To wit, in the field; for there were some who fled away, as Sisera did.

[Jdg 4:17](#)

To the tent of Jael; for women had their tents apart from their husbands, [Ge 24:67](#); [31:33](#). And here he thought to lurk more securely than in her husband's tent.

There was peace; not a league or covenant of friendship, which they were forbidden to make with that cursed people, but only a cessation of hostilities, which he afforded them because they were a peaceable people, abhorring war, and wholly minding pasturage, and were not Israelites, with whom his principal quarrel was; and especially by God's overruling disposal of his heart to favour them who were careful to keep themselves uncorrupted with Israel's sins, and therefore are preserved from their plagues.

[Jdg 4:18](#)

Fear not: this was a promise of security, and therefore she cannot be excused from dissimulation and treachery in the manner, though the substance of her act was lawful and worthy.

[Jdg 4:19](#)

Gave him milk to drink; either because she had not water in her tent, and pretended fear of discovery or some inconvenience if she went out to fetch it; or as a signification of greater respect; or as a likely mean to cast him into a sleep, which she desired and designed; to which end possibly she might mix something with it to cause sleep, which she could not so conveniently have done with water. Covered him, upon pretence of hiding him, but really to dispose him to sleep.

[Jdg 4:20](#)

He speaks imperiously to her; but it is observable, that she gives him no promise to do so, nor makes him any answer; possibly because though she knew her design upon him was warrantable, yet she had proceeded too far in using dissimulation therein.

[Jdg 4:21-24](#)

A nail of the tent; wherewith they used to fasten the tent, which consequently was long and sharp, being headed with iron: these weapons she chooseth, either, 1. Because she had no better weapons at hand, this being only the woman's tent, where arms use not to be kept, and these people being wholly given to peace, and negligent of war, or Sisera having disarmed them before this time. Or, 2. Because she had more skill in the handling these than other

weapons, being probably accustomed to fasten the tents herewith. Or, 3. Because this was very proper for his present posture, and which she knew would be effectual.

Into his temples; which is the softest part of the skull, and soonest pierced. This might seem a very bold attempt; but it must be considered that she was encouraged to it, partly, by observing that the heavens and all the elements conspired against him, as against one devoted to destruction; partly, by the fair opportunity which God's providence put into her hands; and principally, by the secret instinct of God inciting her to it, and assuring her of success in it.

Quest. What shall we judge of this act of Jael's? It is a difficult question, and necessary to be determined, because on the one hand there seems to be gross perfidiousness, and a horrid violation of all the laws of hospitality and friendship, and of the peace which was established between Sisera and her; and on the other side, this fact of hers is applauded and commended in Deborah's song, [Jdg 5:24](#), &c. And some who make it their business to pick quarrels with the Holy Scriptures, from hence take occasion to question and reject their Divine authority for this very passage, because it commends an act so contrary to all humanity, and so great a breach of faith. And whereas all the pretence of their infidelity is taken from the following song, and not from this history, wherein the fact is barely related, without any reflection upon it, there are many answers given to that argument; as, 1. That there was no league of friendship between Jael and Sisera, but only a cessation of acts of hostility; of which [See Comment on Jdg 4:17](#). 2. That Deborah doth not commend Jael's words, [Jdg 4:18](#), *Turn in, my lord; fear not*; in which the great strength of this objection lies; but only her action, and that artifice, that *he asked water, and she gave him milk*; which, if impartially examined, will be found to differ but little from that of warlike stratagems, wherein a man lays a snare for his enemy, and deceives him with pretenses of doing something which he never intends. And Sisera, though for the time he pretended to be a friend, yet was in truth a bitter and implacable enemy unto God, and all his people, and consequently to Jael herself. But these and other answers may be omitted, and this one consideration following may abundantly suffice to stop the mouths of these men. It cannot be denied that every word, or passage, or discourse which is recorded in Scripture is not divinely inspired, because some of them were uttered by the devil, and others by holy men of God, but mistaken, (the prophets themselves not always speaking by inspiration,) such as the discourse of Nathan to David, [2Sa 7:3](#), which God presently contradicted, [2Sa 7:4-5](#), &c., and several discourses of Job's three friends, which were so far from being divinely inspired, that they were in a great degree unsound, as God himself tells them, [Job 42:7](#), *Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath*. This being so, the worst that any malicious mind can infer from this place is, That this song, though indited by a good man or woman, was not divinely inspired, but only composed by a person piously-minded, and transported with joy for the deliverance of God's people, but subject to mistake; who therefore, out of zeal to commend the happy instrument of so great a deliverance, might easily overlook the indirectness of the means by which it was accomplished, and commend that which should have been disliked. And if they further object, that it was composed by a prophetess, Deborah, and therefore must be divinely inspired; it may be replied, 1. That it is not certain what kind of prophetess Deborah was, whether extraordinary and infallible, or ordinary, and so liable to mistakes; for there were prophets of both kinds, as hath been proved above, on [Jdg 4:4](#). 2. That every expression of a true and extraordinary prophet was not divinely inspired, as is evident from Nathan's mistake above mentioned, and from Samuel's mistake concerning Eliab, whom he thought to be the *Lord's anointed*, [1Sa 16:6](#).

Chapter 5

Deborah exhorts to praise; she begins; recounts the former wonders and mercies of God to his people, [Jdg 5:1-5](#). From the miseries of former times glories in their present state, [Jdg 5:6-9](#). Excites the governors, &c. to praise the Lord, [Jdg 5:10-13](#). Commends the chief of the tribes who went forth willingly to this battle, and checks the unwilling who tarried at home, [Jdg 5:14-18](#). Describes the victory in all its circumstances, [Jdg 5:19-22](#). Curseth Meroz for not coming to their assistance, [Jdg 5:23](#). Extols Jael and her act, [Jdg 5:24-27](#). Derideth Sisera's court ladies, [Jdg 5:28-30](#). Prays for like judgment on their enemies, and prosperity to God's people, [Jdg 5:31](#).

[Jdg 5:1](#)

Deborah was the composer of this song as may be gathered from [Jdg 5:7](#).

[Jdg 5:2](#)

Praise ye the Lord; give him the praise who hath done the work.

For the avenging of Israel; or, for taking vengeance, to wit, upon his and their enemies, by Israel, or for Israel, for Israel's benefit, or for the injuries and violences offered by them to Israel. The people; chiefly Zebulun and Naphtali, below, [Jdg 5:18](#); [4:6](#), and others hereafter mentioned.

Willingly offered themselves, when neither Deborah nor Barak had any power to compel them.

[Jdg 5:3](#)

You especially that live near to Israel, and have evil minds and designs against Israel, know this for your instruction, and caution, and terror too, if you shall presume to molest them.

To the Lord God of Israel, who, as you see by this plain instance, is both able and resolved to defend them from all their enemies.

[Jdg 5:4](#)

Seir and Edom are the same place; and these two expressions note the same thing, even God's marching in the head of his people from Seir or Edom towards the land of Canaan. Whilst the Israelites were encompassing Mount Seir, there were none of the following effects; but when once they had done that, and got Edom on their backs, then they marched directly forwards towards the land of Canaan. The prophetess being to praise God for the present mercy, takes her rise higher, and begins her song with the commemoration of the former and ancient deliverances afforded by God to his people, the rather because of the great resemblance this had with them, in the extraordinary and miraculous manner of them.

The earth; either, 1. The inhabitants of the earth or land; Or, 2. The earth, properly taken, as the following passages are; God prepared the way for his people, and struck a dread into their enemies by earthquakes, as well as by other terrible signs.

The clouds also dropped water, i.e. thou didst send most dreadful showers of rain, storms and tempests, thunder and lightning, and other tokens of thy displeasure, upon thine enemies; as may appear by comparing this with other parallel texts.

[Jdg 5:5](#)

Melted, or flowed, with floods of water poured out of the clouds upon them, and from them flowing down in a mighty stream upon the lower grounds, and carrying down some part of the mountain with it, as is usual in excessive showers.

She slides into the mention of another and a more ancient appearance of God for his people, to wit, in Sinai; it being usual in Scripture repetitions of former actions to put divers together into a narrow compass, and in few words. The sense is, No wonder that the mountains of the Amorites and Canaanites melted and trembled when thou didst lead thy people towards them; for even Sinai itself could not bear thy presence, but melted in like manner before thee. Or, *as that Sinai* did upon a like manifestation of thyself; so there is only a defect of the particle *as*, which I have showed to be frequent.

[Jdg 5:6](#)

In the days of Shamgar; whilst Shamgar lived, who was, if not a judge, yet an eminent person for strength and valour, [Jdg 3:31](#).

In the days of Jael: Jael, though an illustrious woman, and of great authority and influence upon the people, did effect nothing for the deliverance of God's people till God raised me up, &c.

Through by-ways; partly because of the Canaanites, who, besides the public burdens and tributes which they laid upon them, waited for all opportunities of doing them mischief secretly; their soldiers watching for travellers in common roads, as is usual with such in times of war; and partly because of the *robbers* even of their own people, who having cast off the fear and worship of God, and there being no king or ruler in Israel to restrain or punish them, and being also many of them reduced to great want, through the oppression of the Canaanites, it is not strange, if, in those times of public disorder and ataxy, divers of the Israelites themselves did break forth into acts of injustice and violence, even against their own brethren, whom they could meet with in convenient places, which made travellers seek for by-paths.

[Jdg 5:7](#)

The villages ceased; the people forsook all their unfortified towns, as not being able to protect them from military insolence.

A mother, i.e. to be to them as a mother, to instruct, and rule, and protect them, which duties a mother oweth to her children as far as she is able.

[Jdg 5:8](#)

They did not only submit to idolatry when they were forced to it by tyrants, but they freely chose *new gods*; new to them, and unknown to their fathers, and *new* in comparison of the true and everlasting God of Israel, being but upstarts, and of yesterday.

In the gates, i.e. in their walled cities, which have gates and bars; *gates* are oft put for cities, as [Ge 22:17](#); [De 17:2](#); [Ob 1:11](#). Then their strongest holds fell into the hands of their enemies.

Was there, i.e. there was not; the meaning is not that all the Israelites had no arms, for here is mention made only of shields or spears; so they might have swords, and bows, and arrows to offend their enemies; but either that they had but few arms among them, being many thousands of them disarmed by the Canaanites; or that they generally neglected the use of arms, as being utterly dispirited, and without all hope of recovering their lost liberty, and being necessitated to other employments for subsistence.

[Jdg 5:9](#)

I greatly honour and love those, who being the chief of the people in wealth and dignity, did not withdraw themselves from the work, as such usually do; but did expose themselves to the same hazards, and joined with their meaner brethren in this noble but dangerous attempt, and by their examples and countenance engaged others in it.

Bless ye the Lord; who inclined their hearts to this undertaking, and gave them success in it. As she gives instruments their due, so she is careful the sovereign Cause and Lord of all lose not his glory.

[Jdg 5:10](#)

Speak; celebrate the praises of our mighty God, whose hand hath done this.

Ye that ride on white asses, i.e. magistrates and nobles, who used to do so, [Jdg 10:4](#); [12:14](#); horses being in a manner forbidden there, [De 17:16](#).

Ye that walk by the way, i.e. you that now can safely travel about your business in those highways, which before you durst neither ride nor walk in. So great and mean persons are jointly excited to praise God.

[Jdg 5:11](#)

From the noise of archers; either, 1. From the noise or sound, and consequently the force of those arrows which are shot at them; but she names the *noise*, because this epithet is frequently given to bows and arrows in poetical writings. Or, 2. From the triumphant noise and shout of archers rejoicing when they meet with their prey.

In the places of drawing water; at those pits or springs of water, which were scarce and precious in those hot countries, to which the people's necessities forced them oft to resort, and nigh unto which the archers did usually lurk in woods, or thickets, or hedges, that from thence they might shoot at them, and kill and spoil them. When they come to those places with freedom and safety, which before they could not, they shall with thankfulness rehearse this righteous, and faithful, and gracious work of God, in rescuing his people, and punishing his enemies. He mentions *the inhabitants of his villages*, because as their danger was greater, [Jdg 5:7](#), so was their deliverance, and their obligation to praise God.

To the gates, to wit, of their cities, which were the chief places to which both city and country resorted for public business and matters of justice, from which they had been debarred by their oppressors; but now they had free access and passage, either in or out of the gates, as their occasions required; and they who had been driven from their cities, now returned to

them in peace and triumph; so the citizens' deliverance is celebrated here, as the countrymen's is in the foregoing words.

[Jdg 5:12](#)

Awake, awake; stir up thyself and all that is within thee to admire and praise the Lord.

Lead thy captivity captive: how could this be done when there was none of them left? [Jdg 4:16](#).

Answ. 1. None were left to make head against them. 2. *None* is oft put for few, and those few might be taken after the battle, and carried captive, and led in triumph, and afterward slain.

[Jdg 5:13](#)

Thus God did not only preserve the poor and despised remnant of his people from the fury of the oppressor before this war, and from the destruction which Sisera designed and promised himself to bring upon them by this war; but also gave them the victory, and thereby the dominion over the princes and nobles of Canaan, who were combined against them.

Me, though but a weak woman.

[Jdg 5:14](#)

Now she relates the carriage and miscarriage of the several tribes in this expedition; and she begins with *Ephraim*.

Was there a root of them; either, first, Of the Ephraimites; or, secondly, Of them that came forth to this expedition. By *root* she seems to mean a *branch*, as that word is sometimes used, as [Isa 11:10](#); [53:2](#); by which also she may note the fewness of those that came out of Ephraim, that *fruitful bough* consisting of many branches, [Ge 49:22](#), yielding but one branch or a handful of men to this service.

Against Amalek, the constant and sworn enemy of the Israelites, who were confederate with their last oppressors the Moabites, [Jdg 3:13](#), and in all probability took their advantage now against the Israelites in the southern or middle parts of Canaan, whilst their main force was drawn northward against Jabin and Sisera. Against these therefore Ephraim sent forth a party; and so did Benjamin, as it here follows; and these hindered their conjunction with Jabin's forces, and gave their brethren the advantage of fighting with Sisera alone.

After thee, Benjamin: Benjamin followed Ephraim's example. Or, *after thee, O Benjamin;* and thus the pre-eminence is here given to Benjamin in two respects: First, That he was first in this expedition, as indeed he lay near the Amalekites, and by his example encouraged the Ephraimites. Secondly, That the whole tribe of Benjamin, though now but small, came forth to this war, when the numerous tribe of Ephraim sent only a handful to it.

Among the people; either, first, Among the people of Benjamin, with whom those few Ephraimites united themselves in this expedition. Or, secondly, Among the people or tribes of Israel, to wit, those who engaged themselves in this war.

Out of Machir, i.e. out of the tribe of Manasseh, which are elsewhere called by the name of *Machir*, as [Jos 13:31](#), to wit, out of the half tribe which was within Jordan; for of the other she speaks [Jdg 5:17](#).

Governors; either civil governors, the princes and great persons, who were as ready to hazard themselves and their ample estates as the meanest; or military officers, valiant and expert commanders, such as some of Machir's posterity are noted to have been.

They that handle the pen of the writer, i.e. even the scribes, who gave themselves to study and writing, whereby they were exempted from military service, did voluntarily enter into this service. Or, *they that drew*, to wit, the people after them, as that verb is used, [Jdg 4:6](#). *With the pen of the scribe or writer*, i.e. who did not only go themselves, but by their letters invited and engaged others to go with them to the battle.

[Jdg 5:15](#)

Were with Deborah, i.e. ready to assist her. *Even Issachar*. Heb. *and Issachar*, i.e. the tribe or people of Issachar, following the counsel and example of their princes, and being now at their commandments, as they were afterwards upon another occasion, [1Ch 12:32](#).

And also Barak, or, *even as Barak*, i.e. they were as hearty and valiant as Barak their general; and as he *marched on foot* here and [Jdg 4:10](#), against their enemies' horses and chariots, and that *into the valley*, where the main use of horses and chariots lies; so did they with no less courage and resolution.

The divisions, or separations; whereby they were divided or separated, not so much one from another in their thoughts, counsels, and carriage in this war, (for they seem to be all too well agreed in abiding at home with their sheep, as it follows,) as all from their brethren, from whom they were divided no less in their designs and affections, than in their situation by the river Jordan; and they would not join their interests and forces with them in this common cause.

Great thoughts, or, *great searchings*, as it is [Jdg 5:16](#); great and sad thoughts, and debates, and perplexities of mind among the Israelites, to see themselves deserted by so great and potent a tribe as Reuben was.

[Jdg 5:16](#)

Why wast thou so unworthy and cowardly, so void of all zeal for God, and compassion towards thy brethren, and care for the recovery of thy own liberties and privileges, that thou wouldst not engage thyself in so just, so necessary, and so noble a cause, but didst prefer the care of thy sheep, and thy own present case and safety, before this generous undertaking? Reuben thought neutrality their wisest course, being very rich in cattle, [Nu 32:1](#). They were loth to run the hazard of so great a loss, by taking up arms against so potent an enemy as Jabin was; and the bleatings of their sheep were so loud in their ears, that they could not hear the call of Deborah and Barak to this expedition.

[Jdg 5:17](#)

Gilead is sometimes taken more largely, for all the land of the Israelites beyond Jordan, as [Nu 32:1](#), [26](#), [29](#). So it is not here taken, because Gilead is here distinguished from Reuben and his land. Sometimes it is taken more strictly for that part of the land beyond Jordan which fell to the half tribe of Manasseh, as [Nu 32:39-40](#); [De 3:15](#); [Jos 17:1](#). And sometimes both for that part of Manasseh's, and for Gad's portion, as [Jos 13:24-25](#), [29-31](#). And so it seems to be understood here; and the land Gilead is here put for the people or inhabitants of it, Gad and Manasseh.

Beyond Jordan, in their own portions, and did not come over Jordan to the help of the Lord, and of his people, as they ought to have done.

Dan, whose coast was near the sea, was wholly intent upon his merchandise and shipping, as the great instrument both of his riches and safety; and therefore would not join in this land expedition.

On the sea-shore, where their lot lay.

In his breaches; either, first, In the creeks of the sea, whether in design to save themselves by ships in case of danger, as Dan also intended; or upon pretence of repairing the breaches made by the sea into their country. Or, secondly, In their broken and craggy rocks and caves therein, in which they thought to secure themselves.

[Jdg 5:18](#)

Jeoparded, Heb. *despised*, or *reproached*, or *contemned*, comparatively; they chose rather to venture upon a generous and honourable death, than to enjoy a shameful and servile life.

In the high places of the field, i.e. upon that large and eminent plain in the top of Mount Tabor, where they put themselves in battle-array, and expected the enemy; though when they saw he did not come up to them, they marched down to meet and fight him.

[Jdg 5:19](#)

The kings; either confederate with him, or subject to him: for it is known that there were divers petty kings in those parts; which also oftentimes were subject to one greater and more potent king; and particularly this Hazor, where this Jabin now reigned, [Jdg 4:2](#), was *beforetime the head* of divers petty kingdoms, [Jos 11:10](#). *Taanach and Megiddo* were two eminent cities, belonging indeed to Manasseh, [Jdg 1:27](#), but seated in the tribe of Issachar, [Jos 17:11](#), not far from Mount Tabor, [Jos 17:10](#); [Jdg 1:27](#), nor from the river Kishon.

They took no gain of money; either, first, From Sisera. They fought without pay, whether from mere hatred of the Israelites, and a desire to be revenged upon them; or from a full hope and confidence of paying themselves abundantly out of Israel's spoils. Or, secondly, From the Israelites; so the sense is, They fell, lost all their hopes of money, and rich spoils, and booty, which they assured themselves of; instead of gaining a prey, they lost themselves.

[Jdg 5:20](#)

Or, *they from heaven, or the heavenly host fought*, by thunder, and lightning, and hailstones, possibly mingled with fire. Compare [Jos 10:11](#); [1Sa 7:10](#).

The stars; which raised those storms by their influences, which they do naturally and ordinarily, but now far more, when God sharpened their influences, and disposed the air to receive and improve their impressions.

In their courses, or, *from their paths*, or *stations*, or *high places*. As soldiers fight in their ranks and places assigned them, so did these, and that with advantage, as those enemies do which fight from the higher ground.

[Jdg 5:21](#)

The river of Kishon, though not great in itself, and therefore fordable, was now much swelled and increased by the foregoing storm and rain, as Josephus affirms; and therefore drowned those who being pursued by the hand of God, and by the Israelites, were forced into it, and thought to pass over it, as they did before.

That ancient river; so called, either, first, In opposition to those rivers which are of a later date, being made by the hand and art of man. Or, secondly, Because it was a river anciently famous for some remarkable exploits, for which it was celebrated by the ancient poets or writers, though not here mentioned.

Thou hast trodden down strength, i.e. thou, O Deborah, though but a weak woman, hast, by God's assistance and blessing upon thy counsels and prayers, subdued a potent enemy. Such apostrophes and abrupt speeches are frequent in poetical scriptures.

[Jdg 5:22](#)

Their horses, in which they put most confidence, had their hoofs, which is their support and strength, broken, either by dreadful hailstones, or rather, by their swift and violent running over the stony grounds, when they fled away with all possible speed from God and from Israel.

By the means of the pransings; or, *because of their fierce or swift courses*. *Of their mighty ones*; either, first, Of their strong and valiant riders, who forced their horses to run away as fast as they could. Or, secondly, Of their horses, as this word signifies, [Jer 8:16](#); [47:3](#); [50:42](#), i.e. of themselves; the antecedent for the relative.

[Jdg 5:23](#)

Meroz; a place then, no doubt, eminent and considerable, though now there be no remembrance of it left, which possibly might be the effect of this bitter curse; as God curseth Amalek in this manner, that he would utterly *blot out their remembrance*, &c., [Ex 17:14](#); [De 25:19](#). And this place above all others may be thus severely cursed, either because it was near the place of the fight, and therefore had the greatest opportunity and obligation to engage with and to assist their brethren; and their denying their help was a great discouragement to all their brethren, whose hearts, no doubt, were greatly afflicted, and might have utterly

fainted at this great miscarriage, and scandalous example; or for some other great aggravation of their cowardice and treachery, which may easily be imagined, though it be not here expressed.

Said the angel of the Lord: she signifies that this curse proceeded not from her spleen or ill will towards that place, nor from her own private opinion or affection, but from Divine inspiration; and that if all the rest of the song should be taken but for the breathings and expressions of a pious and devout soul, but liable to mistake, yet this branch of it was immediately dictated to her by the Lord, by the ministry of an angel; otherwise she neither would nor durst have uttered so bitter a curse against them.

Of the Lord; either, first, Of the Lord's people; for God takes what is done for or against his people as if it was done to himself: see [Isa 63:9](#); [Zec 2:8](#); [Mt 25:45](#). Or, secondly, Of the Lord himself, who though he did not need, yet did require and expect their help and concurrence; and he expresseth it thus, to show the sinfulness and unreasonableness of their cowardly desertion of this cause, because it was the cause of God, and they had the call of God to it, whom they knew to be able easily to crush that enemy whom they dreaded, and who had promised to do it.

[Jdg 5:24](#)

Blessed above women; celebrated, and praised, and endowed with all sorts of blessings more than they. But of this fact of Jael's, [See Comment on Jdg 4:21](#).

In the tent; in her tent or habitation, in her house and family, and all her affairs; for she and hers dwelt in tents. The tent is here mentioned in allusion to the place where this fact was done.

[Jdg 5:25](#)

Butter, or, cream, i.e. the choicest of her milk; so the same thing is repeated in differing words.

In a lordly dish; which you are not to understand of such a stately and costly dish as the luxury of after-ages brought in, which is not agreeable to the simplicity, either of this family, or of those ancient times; but of a comely and convenient dish, the best which she had, and such as the better sort of persons then used.

[Jdg 5:26](#)

Her hand, i.e. her left hand, as appears from the nature of the thing; and from the *right hand*, which is opposed to it. *Smote off,* or, *struck through,* as the LXX. and Syriac render it; or *brake,* as the Chaldee hath it.

When she had pierced, Heb. *and she pierced;* or, *and the nail pierced.*

[Jdg 5:27](#)

Here is a lively representation of the thing done. At the first blow or wound he was awakened, and made some attempt to rise; but being astonished and very weak, she also

following her first blow with others, he found himself impotent, and fell down dead; and then she struck the nail quite through his head into the ground, as is said, [Jdg 4:21](#).

[Jdg 5:28](#)

Looked out at a window, expecting to see him returning; for she concluded that he went forth not so much to fight as to take the spoil.

[Jdg 5:29-30](#)

Have they not divided the prey? i.e. it is certain they have got the prey, only they tarry to view it and distribute it, according to every man's quality and merit.

Of them that take the spoil, Heb. of the prey; the prey put for the men of prey, those, or who take the prey; as kindred is put for a man of kindred, or a kinsman, [Ru 3:2](#); and Belial, for a man of Belial, [2Sa 16:7](#); and days, for a man of days, or an old man, [Job 32:7](#).

[Jdg 5:31](#)

So, i.e. so suddenly, so surely, so effectually and irrecoverably.

When he goeth forth in his might; when he first riseth, and so goeth on in his course, which he doth with great might, even as a strong man that runneth a race, [Ps 19:5](#), and so as no creature can stop or hinder him; even so irresistible let the people be.

Forty years; how to be computed, [See Comment on Jdg 3:11](#).

Chapter 6

The Midianites oppress Israel, [Jdg 6:1-6](#). A prophet raised rebukes them, [Jdg 6:7-10](#). An angel calls Gideon to Israel's deliverance, [Jdg 6:11-16](#); confirms him by a miracle, [Jdg 6:17-21](#). He builds an altar; calls it Jehovah-shalom; and offereth there. By God's command he breaks down the altar of BAAL: his name Jerub-baal, [Jdg 6:22-32](#). The Midianites gather together to fight; and Gideon prepares against them: God strengthens and confirms him by a miracle, [Jdg 6:33-40](#).

[Jdg 6:1](#)

For although the generality of the Midianites had been cut off by Moses about two hundred years ago, yet many of them doubtless fled into the neighbouring countries, whence afterwards they returned into their own land, and in that time might easily grow to be a very great number; especially when God furthered their increase, that they might be a fit scourge for his people Israel when they transgressed.

[Jdg 6:2](#)

In which they might secure their persons and provisions from the hands of the Midianites.

[Jdg 6:3](#)

The children of the east, i.e. the Arabians, who are commonly called *the children of the east*, as [Ge 29:1](#); [Jdg 8:10-11](#); [Job 1:3](#); [Eze 25:4](#). Not all the Arabians, for in that were many and divers people; but in the eastern part of Arabia.

[Jdg 6:4](#)

Till thou come unto Gaza, i.e. from the east, on which side they entered, to the west, where Gaza was near the sea; so they destroyed the whole land.

[Jdg 6:5](#)

Without number, i.e. so many that it was not easy to number them. It is an *hyperbole*.

[Jdg 6:6-11](#)

In Ophrah, to wit, in Manasseh; for there was another Ophrah in Benjamin, [Jos 18:23](#). *The Abi-ezrite*; of the posterity of Abi-ezer; of whom see [Jos 17:2](#); [1Ch 7:18](#). See [Jdg 8:27](#), [32](#).

Threshed wheat; not with oxen, as the manner was, [De 25:4](#); but with a staff, to prevent discovery.

By the wine-press; in the place where the wine-press stood, not in the common floor.

[Jdg 6:12](#)

i.e. Will assist thee against thine and mine enemies.

Thou mighty man of valour; to whom I have given strength and courage for this end.

[Jdg 6:13-14](#)

The Lord looked upon him, with a settled and pleasant countenance, as a testimony of his favour to him, and of his readiness to help him.

Go in this thy might; or, *go now*, or *at this time*, *in thy might*; the strength which thou hast already received, and dost now further receive from me, is sufficient with my help.

Have not I sent thee? I do hereby give thee command and commission for this work, and therefore am obliged in honour to assist thee in it.

[Jdg 6:15](#)

My family, Heb. *my thousand*; for the tribes were distributed into several thousands, whereof each thousand had his peculiar governor.

Poor, i.e. weak and contemptible.

I am the least either for age, or for wisdom, and fitness for so great a work.

[Jdg 6:16](#)

As easily as if they were all but one man; or, thou shalt destroy them to a man, as he did, [Jdg 8:1-35](#).

[Jdg 6:17](#)

That it is *thou*, to wit, an angel or messenger sent from God, that appears to me, and discourseth with me; and not a fancy or delusion; that thou art in truth what thou seemest and pretendest to be, [Jdg 7:12](#). Or, *a sign of that which thou talkest with me*, i.e. that thou wilt by me smite the Midianites.

[Jdg 6:18](#)

My present; not a sacrifice, because neither was Gideon a priest, nor was this the place of sacrifice, nor was any altar here, nor was there any such sacrifice as here follows appointed by God; but a repast, or some food for the angel, which he thought to be a man, as appears by [Jdg 6:22](#). Compare [Jdg 13:15](#); [Ge 18:5](#).

Set it before thee, that thou mayst eat and refresh thyself.

[Jdg 6:19](#)

Of an ephah of flour, to wit, out of the choicest part of a whole ephah; as also he brought to him the best part of a kid dressed; for a whole ephah and a whole kid had been very superfluous, and improper to provide for and set before one man.

[Jdg 6:20-21](#)

By these things he showed himself to be no man that needed such provisions, but a true angel of God, or the Son of God; and by this instance of his omnipotency, gave the assurance that he both could and would consume the Midianites.

[Jdg 6:22](#)

I am an undone man; I must die, and that speedily; for that he feared, [Jdg 6:23](#), according to the common opinion in that case; of which see [Ge 16:13](#); [32:30](#); [Ex 33:20](#); [De 5:25-26](#).

For because, or, for therefore, &c., i.e. therefore God hath showed me this sight as a presage of my death.

[Jdg 6:23](#)

The Lord spake by inward suggestion, rather than in a visible apparition.

Peace be unto thee; thou shalt receive no hurt by this vision, as thou fearest; but only peace, i. e. all the blessings needful for thy own happiness, and for the present work; for this is a very comprehensive phrase among the Hebrews.

[Jdg 6:24](#)

There, to wit, on the top of the rock, as is evident from [Jdg 6:20](#), and especially from [Jdg 6:26](#), where that which is here expressed only in general, and by anticipation, is more particularly described, according to the usage of the Scripture.

Jehovah-shalom, i.e. the Lord's peace; the sign or witness of God's speaking peace to me, and to his people; or the place where he spake peace to me, when I expected nothing but destruction.

[Jdg 6:25](#)

*Even the second bullock: thus there was but one bullock, which was young, to wit, comparatively, but not simply, for it was seven years old; and of such this Hebrew word is used, [Job 21:10](#); for these creatures are fruitful above seven years. Or thus, *thy father's young bullock, and the second bullock*: so there were two bullocks. But because there is but one of them mentioned both in the next verse, and in the execution of this command, [Jdg 6:28](#), it is probable it was but one; and the Hebrew particle *vau*, and, is put exegetically for even, or, to wit, as is very usual. And this he calls his *father's young bullock*, both because his father was the owner of it, and because his father kept and fed it for a sacrifice to Baal. But because it is likely his father kept divers of these cattle of differing ages and statures for that use, either at his own or at the people's charge, therefore he adds, by way of limitation, that he should not take the eldest and the greatest, but the second, to wit, in age, or stature, or goodliness, or in the order of sacrifice, that which was to have been sacrificed to Baal in the second place. And this he singled out because of its age; for being *seven years old*, it began with the Midianitish calamity, and being now to be sacrificed, did fitly signify, that the period of that misery was now come.*

That thy father hath; which thy father built in his own ground, though for the common use of the whole city, [Jdg 6:28-30](#).

The grove that is by it; planted by the altar for idolatrous or impure uses, as the manner of idolaters was. See [Jdg 3:7](#). This action might seem injurious to his father's rights and authority; but God's command was sufficient warrant, and Gideon was now called to be the supreme magistrate, whereby he was made his father's superior, and was empowered, and authorized, and enjoined to root out all idolatry and superstition, and the instruments thereof.

[Jdg 6:26](#)

*Upon the top of this rock; of which [Jdg 6:20-21](#). Heb. *of this strong hold*; for in that calamitous time the Israelites retreated to such rocks, and hid and fortified themselves in them.*

*In the ordered place, i.e. in a plain and smooth part of the rock, where an altar may be conveniently built. Or, *in order*, i.e. in such manner as I have appointed; for God had given rules about the building of altars.*

Offer a burnt-sacrifice: Gideon was no priest, nor was this the appointed place of sacrifice; but God can dispense with his own institutions, though we may not; and his call gave Gideon sufficient authority.

[Idg 6:27](#)

Doubtless he had acquainted the ten men with his design, and the assurance of success in it, whereby they were easily induced to assist him, if not sincerely, yet for the expectation of advantage to themselves by it.

Because he feared; not so much lest he should suffer for it, for he knew very well the doing it by night with so many hands could not hinder the discovery, and consequently the punishment of it; but lest he should be prevented from doing it.

[Idg 6:28](#)

Not upon Baal's altar, for which it was designed; but upon an altar erected in contempt of Baal.

[Idg 6:29](#)

Which they might easily conjecture, partly by his known aversion from the worship of Baal, and partly because no other person durst presume to do such a thing; but they might more certainly learn it from some of the persons employed in it, who through fear or favour might inform them.

[Idg 6:30-31](#)

Will ye plead for Baal? Why are you so zealous in pleading for that Baal, for the worship whereof you suffer such grievous calamities at this day, and from whom you have no help? It is plain that Joash had been a worshipper of Baal; either therefore he was now convinced by Gideon's information and action, or he makes use of this pretence to preserve his son, being indeed indifferent in matters of religion; and therefore as he did worship Baal to comply with his neighbours, so now he deserts him to rescue his son.

He that will plead for him, let him be put to death; he that shall further plead for such a god as this, deserves to die for his folly and impiety. It is not probable that this was all that he said for his son's defence; or that he would neglect to mention the call his son had from God to it, the apparition of an angel, the promise of deliverance; but it is usual in Scripture to give only some short hints of those things which were more largely discoursed.

Whilst it is yet morning, i.e. instantly, without delay; for it was now morning time, as appears from [Idg 6:28](#), &c.

Let him plead for himself, as the God of Israel hath often done when any indignity or injury hath been done to him. But Baal hath now showed that he is neither able to help you nor himself, and therefore is not worthy to be served any longer. This courageous and resolute answer was necessary to stop the torrent of the people's fury; and it was drawn from him, partly by the sense of his son's extreme danger, and partly by the confidence he had that God would plead his son's cause, and use him for the rescue of his people.

[Jdg 6:32](#)

He called him, i.e. Joash called *Gideon* so, [Jdg 7:1](#), in remembrance of this noble exploit, and to put a brand upon Baal.

[Jdg 6:33](#)

Not that Jezreel in Judah, of which [Jos 15:56](#); but another in the borders of Manasseh and Issachar, [Jos 17:16](#); [19:18](#), which is not far distant from Ophrah, where Gideon dwelt, and now was.

[Jdg 6:34](#)

Came upon Gideon, inspiring him with extraordinary wisdom, and courage, and zeal, to vindicate God's honour and his country's liberty. Compare [1Ch 12:18](#); [2Ch 24:20](#).

Abi-ezer, i.e. the Abi-ezrites, his kindred, And their servants, and others; who finding no harm coming to him for the destroying of Baal, but rather a blessing from God, in giving him strength and courage for so great and dangerous an attempt, changed their minds, and followed him as the person by whose hands God would deliver them.

[Jdg 6:35](#)

Throughout all Manasseh, on both sides of Jordan.

Unto Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; because these tribes were nearest to him, and so could soonest join with him; and were nearest the enemy also, [Jdg 6:33](#), and therefore were most sensible of the calamity, and would in all reason be most forward to rescue themselves from it.

[Jdg 6:36](#)

Gideon said this in way of humble supplication, partly for the strengthening of his own faith, and partly for the greater encouragement of his soldiers in this great and strange attempt.

[Jdg 6:37](#)

Upon all the earth beside, i.e. upon all that spot of ground which adjoineth to and encompasseth the fleece.

[Jdg 6:38-40](#)

Which was more difficult and preternatural than the former instance, because if there be any moisture, such bodies as fleeces of wool are most likely to drink it up.

Chapter 7

Gideon with two and thirty thousand men encamps against the Midianites; they, by God's command and token, are lessened to three hundred, [Jdg 7:1-8](#). He is encouraged by a dream,

and its interpretation, [Jdg 7:9-15](#); divideth; his army companies; who all with one accord blow the trumpets, and break the pitchers, wherein the lamps were, in pieces, [Jdg 7:16-20](#). The Midianites are terrified, flee and destroy one another, [Jdg 7:21-22](#). The next adjoining Israelites pursue them to stop their passage over Jordan: two princes of the Midianites are taken by the Ephraimites, [Jdg 7:23-25](#).

[Jdg 7:1-2](#)

Too many for me, i.e. for my purpose; which is, so to deliver Israel, that it may appear to be my own miraculous act, that so I may have all the glory of it, and they may be more strongly obliged to love and serve me.

[Jdg 7:3](#)

Mount Gilead; not that famous Mount Gilead which was beyond Jordan; for it is apparent that both the camps of the Israelites and of the Midianites were on this side Jordan: but another Mount Gilead in the tribe of Manasseh; which might be so called, either for some resemblance it had with the other Mount Gilead, or in remembrance of their father Gilead; or that this might be a memorial of their near relation to their brethren, notwithstanding their being divided one from another by Jordan; or for some other reason now unknown at this distance of time and place. Or, the words may be rendered *towards Mount Gilead*; for the Hebrew particle mid, or mere, is sometimes rendered *towards*, of which see [Ge 11:2](#); [13:11](#); [De 32:2](#); [2Sa 6:2](#). And so it may be understood of the famous Mount Gilead beyond Jordan, which he may mention here, either, 1. Because many of his soldiers were of that half tribe of Manasseh which dwelt there, and so it was most proper for them to return thither; Or, 2. Because that was their safest course, to get furthest from the danger which they feared; or, 3. Because though he would remove them from danger, yet he would not have them dispersed, but kept together in a body about Mount Gilead; knowing that they who had not courage enough to fight their enemies, might have valour enough to pursue them when they were beaten by others; and suspecting that the Midianites, if beaten, would probably flee that way.

Twenty and two thousand; who finding their whole army to be very small in comparison of their enemy's, who were a hundred and thirty-live thousand, [Jdg 8:10](#), and they, no doubt, well armed and disciplined, and encouraged by long success; whereas the Israelites were dispirited with long servitude, and many of them unfurnished with arms and provisions, lost the courage which in the beginning they seemed to have.

[Jdg 7:4](#)

Unto the water; either that which ran from the well of Harod, mentioned [Jdg 7:1](#), or some other brook.

I will try them for thee; because thy proclamation hath not sufficiently tried them; for many who are fearful indeed will put on the face, and desire the opinion of being valiant persons; I will take another course.

[Jdg 7:5](#)

It is true, there may be natural reasons given why some did only lap of the water, when others bowed down to drink; from the temperance, or fortitude, or patience, or strength, or diligence of the one, and the intemperance, or cowardice, or impatience, or weakness, or slothfulness of

the other; but these seem to be mere conjectures: the true reason and design of this course seems to be only this, that God would reduce them to a very small number, which was likely to be done by this means; for the season of the year being hot, and the generality of the soldiers weary, and thirsty, and faint, they would most probably bow down upon their knees, that they might more fully refresh themselves by a liberal draught, as indeed they did; and it could be expected that there would be but few, who either could or would deny themselves in this matter, especially when God concurred in the work, and so disposed of the minds and bodies of them, that all, except three hundred, should lie down to drink.

[Jdg 7:6](#)

Putting their hand to their mouth; taking up a little water in the palm of their hands to put into their mouths.

[Jdg 7:7-8](#)

And their trumpets, i.e. the trumpets belonging to the whole army, even to those who were gone away, which he retained for the use here following. See [Jdg 7:16](#).

[Jdg 7:9](#)

The same night; after he had dismissed all but the three hundred.

That the Lord said unto him, in a dream or vision of the night.

[Jdg 7:10](#)

If thou fear to go down, to wit, without some further assurance of thy success, I will condescend so far to thee, as to give thee another sign.

[Jdg 7:11](#)

Afterward shall thine hands be strengthened; thou wilt be encouraged to proceed, notwithstanding the smallness of thy number, which may deter thee.

[Jdg 7:12-13](#)

A cake of barley bread; a weak and contemptible thing, and in itself as unable to overthrow a tent as to remove a mountain; but being thrown by a Divine hand, bore down all before it; which fitly resembled Gideon's case, which was mean and despicable, as himself saith, [Jdg 6:15](#); yet he was mighty, through God, to destroy the Midianites.

[Jdg 7:14](#)

As there are many examples of significant dreams given by God to heathens, as [Ge 41:1-57](#); [Da 2:1-49](#); [4:1-37](#), so some of them had the gift of interpreting dreams; which they sometimes did by study and art, and sometimes by Divine direction, as in this case.

[Jdg 7:15](#)

Gideon understood *the telling of the dream*, though spoken in the Midianitish language; either because it was near akin to the Hebrew, being only a different dialect of it; or because the Israelites had now been accustomed to the Midianites' company and discourse for seven years.

He worshipped; he praised God for this miraculous work and special encouragement, whereby he was confirmed in his enterprise.

[Jdg 7:16](#)

Into three companies; to make a show of a vast army encompassing them.

Lamps, or, torches, made of such materials as would quickly take fire, and keep it for some time.

Within the pitchers; partly to preserve the flame from the violence of wind and weather; and partly to conceal it, and surprise their enemy with sudden and unexpected flashes of light.

[Jdg 7:17](#)

For though two hundred of his men were placed on other sides of the camp; yet they were so disposed, that some person or persons, set as watchmen, might see what was done, and give notice to the rest to follow the example.

[Jdg 7:18](#)

He mentions his own name, together with God's, not out of vain ostentation or arrogance, as if he would equal himself with God; for he mentions God in the first and chief place, and himself only as his minister; but from prudent policy, because his name was grown formidable to them, and so was likely to further his design, and their flight, as it did.

[Jdg 7:19](#)

Of the middle watch, i.e. of the second watch; for though afterwards the night was divided into four watches by the Romans, [Mt 14:25](#), yet in more ancient times, and in the eastern parts, it was divided into three. He chose the dark and dead of the night to increase their terror by the trumpets, whose sound would then be loudest and best heard, and the lamps, whose light would then shine most brightly, and seem biggest, to surprise them at disadvantage, and to conceal the smallness of their numbers.

[Jdg 7:20](#)

Held the lamps and the trumpets, that they might be thought to be a mighty host, having as many troops or companies as there were trumpets and lights.

[Jdg 7:21](#)

Every man in his place; as if they had only been torchbearers to the several companies.

[Jdg 7:22](#)

They slew one another, either because they suspected treachery, and so fell upon those they first met with; which they might more easily do, because they consisted of several nations, as may be gathered from [Jdg 6:3](#), and Josephus affirms; or because the darkness of the night made them unable to distinguish friends from foes; or because the suddenness of the thing struck them with horror and amazement; or because God infatuated them, as he hath done many others. Compare [1Sa 14:20](#); [2Ch 20:23](#).

Abel-meholah; of which see [1Ki 4:12](#); [19:16](#).

[Jdg 7:23-24](#)

Take before them the waters unto Beth-barah, i.e. the passes over those waters to which they are like to come.

And Jordan; the fords of Jordan, which river they must pass over into their own country.

[Jdg 7:25](#)

For Gideon in the pursuit had passed over Jordan, as we read, [Jdg 8:4](#), which, though mentioned after this, may seem to have been done before it, such transpositions being frequent in sacred story. Or, *on this side Jordan*, for the Hebrew word is indifferent to both sides: see [Ge 1:10](#). And so this is opposed to what follows of his passing over Jordan, [Jdg 8:4](#). And then there is no anticipation here.

Chapter 8

The Ephraimites are displeased with Gideon; he satisfies them, [Jdg 8:1-3](#). He pursueth two kings of the Midianites he punisheth those of Succoth and Penuel, [Jdg 8:4-17](#). He revengeth his brethren's death on the two kings, [Jdg 8:18-21](#). He refuseth government, [Jdg 8:22-23](#); demandeth a present of the spoil, and thereof makes an ephod; places it in Ophrah; it is a cause of idolatry, [Jdg 8:24-27](#). Gideon's children, wives, death, and burial, [Jdg 8:30-32](#). Israel revolts to idolatry; is ungrateful to Gideon's family, [Jdg 8:33-35](#).

[Jdg 8:1](#)

Why hast thou neglected and despised us, in not calling us in to thy help, as thou didst other tribes? These were a proud people, [Isa 11:13](#), puffed up with a conceit of their number and strength, and the preference which Jacob by Divine direction gave them above Manasseh, [Ge 48:19-20](#), of which tribe Gideon was, who by this act had seemed to advance his own tribe, and to depress theirs.

[Jdg 8:2](#)

What was done was done by God's immediate making them one to kill another; what I have done, in cutting off some of the fugitive common soldiers, is not to be compared with your exploit in destroying their princes; I began the war, but you have finished.

The gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim; what you have gleaned or done after me.

Of Abi-ezer, i.e. of the *Abi-ezrites*, to whom he modestly communicateth the honour of the victory, and doth not arrogate it to himself, as generals commonly do.

[Jdg 8:3](#)

His soft and humble answer allayed their rage and envy. See [Pr 15:1](#); [25:15](#).

[Jdg 8:4](#)

Passed over, or, *had passed over*: when he passed over, [See Comment on Jdg 7:25](#).

[Jdg 8:5](#)

Succoth; a place beyond Jordan, [Ge 33:17](#); [Jos 13:27](#); [Ps 60:6](#).

Kings of Midian; where before this time were five kings at once, [Nu 31:8](#), who either reigned separately in divers parts of the land, or governed by common counsel and consent, as sometimes there were two or three Roman emperors together.

[Jdg 8:6](#)

Art thou so foolish to think, with thy three hundred faint and weary soldiers, to conquer and destroy a host of fifteen thousand men?

[Jdg 8:7](#)

With the thorns which grow abundantly in the neighbouring wilderness; I will chastise or beat your naked bodies with thorny rods, even unto death. Or, I will lay you down upon thorns on the ground, and bring the cartwheel upon you, which will both tear your flesh, and bruise you to death.

[Jdg 8:8](#)

Penuel; another city beyond Jordan; of which see [Ge 32:30](#); [1Ki 12:25](#).

[Jdg 8:9](#)

Your confidence in which makes you thus proud and presumptuous. He implies that he would afterwards destroy their persons, as is expressed, [Jdg 8:17](#).

[Jdg 8:10](#)

i.e. Persons expert and exercised in war, besides the retainers to them, [Jdg 6:5](#).

[Jdg 8:11](#)

Of them that dwelt in tents, i.e. of the Arabians; so fetching a compass, and falling upon them where they least expected it.

Nobah and Jogbehah; of which cities see [Nu 32:35](#), [42](#).

The host was secure; being now got safe over Jordan, and a great way from the place of battle; and, probably, supposing Gideon's men, to be so tired with their hard service, and the great slaughter which they had made, that they would have neither strength nor will to pursue them so far.

[Jdg 8:12-13](#)

By which it may be gathered that he came upon them in the night, which was most convenient for him, who had so small a number with him; and most likely both to surprise and terrify them by the remembrance of the last night's sad work, and the expectation of another like it.

[Jdg 8:14-16](#)

By that severe punishment (of which [Jdg 8:7](#)) he made the men, i.e. the elders of Succoth, to know their sin and folly, though it was too late for their good, but not for the instruction and warning of others.

[Jdg 8:17-18](#)

What manner of men, i.e. for outward shape and quality?

At Tabor; whither he understood they fled for shelter, upon the approach of the Midianites; and where he learnt that some were slain, which he suspected might be they.

Each one resembled the children of a king; not for their garb, or outward splendour, for the family was but mean; but for the majesty of their looks; by which commendation they thought to ingratiate themselves with their conqueror.

[Jdg 8:19](#)

For being not Canaanites he was not obliged to kill them; but they having killed his brethren, and that in cool blood, he was by law the avenger of their blood.

[Jdg 8:20](#)

Up and slay them; partly, that he might animate him to the use of arms for his God and country against their enemies, and to the exercise of justice; partly, that the death of those

mischievous persons might be more shameful and painful; and partly, that he might have some share in the honour of the victory.

[Jdg 8:21](#)

As the man is, so is his strength: thou excellest him, as in age and stature, so in strength; and it is more honourable, as well as easy, to dig by the hands of a valiant man.

[Jdg 8:22](#)

Rule thou over us; not as a judge, for that he was already made by God; but as a king; and let the kingdom be hereditary to thee and to thy family. This miraculous and glorious deliverance by thy hands deserves no less from us.

[Jdg 8:23](#)

I will not rule over you, to wit, as a king, which you desire.

The Lord shall rule over you, in a special manner, as he hath hitherto done, by judges, whom God did particularly appoint and direct, even by Urim and Thummim, and assist upon all occasions; whereas kings had a greater power, and only a general dependence upon God, as other kings had. Compare [1Sa 8:6-7](#).

[Jdg 8:24](#)

Object. They are called Midianites before.

Answ. Here seems to have been a mixture of people, [Jdg 6:3](#), which are all called by one general name, Ishmaelites, or Arabians, who used to wear earrings, [Ge 35:4](#); but the greatest, and the ruling part of them, were Midianites.

[Jdg 8:25-27](#)

Made an ephod thereof; not of all of it, for then it would have been too heavy for use; but of part of it, the rest being probably employed about other things agreeable and appertaining to it; which elsewhere are comprehended under the name of the ephod, as [Jdg 17:5](#); [18:14](#), [18](#); [Ho 3:4](#).

Put it in his city; not as a monument of the victory, for such monuments were neither proper nor usual; but for religious use, for which alone the ephod was appointed. The case seems to be this, Gideon having by God's command erected an altar in his own city, Ophrah, [Jdg 6:26](#), for an extraordinary time and occasion, thought it might be continued for ordinary use; and therefore as he intended to procure priests, so he designed to make priestly garments, and especially an ephod, which was the chief and most costly; which besides its use in sacred ministrations, was also the instrument by which the mind of God was inquired and discovered, [1Sa 23:6](#); [30:7](#), which might seem necessary for the judge to have at hand, that he might consult with God upon all occasions.

All Israel went thither a whoring after it; committing superstition or idolatry with it; or going thither to inquire the will of God; whereby they were drawn from the true ephod, instituted by God for this end, which was to be worn by the high priest only.

A snare; an occasion of sin and ruin to him and his, as the next chapter showeth. Though Gideon was a good man, and did this with an honest mind, and a desire to set up religion in his own city and family; yet here seems to be many sins in it. 1. Superstition and willworship, worshipping God by a device of his own, which was frequently and expressly forbidden. 2. Presumption, in wearing, or causing other priests to wear, this kind of ephod, which was peculiar to the high priest. 3. Transgression of a plain command, of worshipping God ordinarily but at one place, and one altar, [De 12:5](#), [11](#), [14](#), and withdrawing people from that place to his. 4. Making a fearful schism or division among the people. 5. Laying a stumbling-block, or an occasion of superstition or idolatry, before that people, whom he knew to be too prone to it.

[**Idg 8:28**](#)

Lifted up their heads no more, i.e. recovered not their former strength or courage, so as to conquer or oppress others, as they had done.

Forty years, i.e. to the fortieth year, from the beginning of the Midianitish oppression: see on [Jdg 3:11](#).

In the days of Gideon, i.e. as long as Gideon lived.

[**Idg 8:29**](#)

Not in his father's house, as he did before; nor yet in a court, like a king, as the people desired; but in a middle state, as a judge, for the preservation and maintenance of their religion and liberties.

[**Idg 8:30-31**](#)

In Shechem; she dwelt there, and he oft came thither, either to execute judgment, or upon other occasions.

Abimelech, i.e. *my father the king;* so he called him, probably to gratify his concubine, who desired it either out of pride or design.

[**Idg 8:32**](#)

In a good old age; his long life being crowned with the continuance of his honour, tranquility, and happiness.

[**Idg 8:33-35**](#)

The children of Israel turned again; whereby we see the wicked temper of this people, who did no longer cleave to God than they were in a manner constrained to it by the presence and authority of their judges.

Baalim: this was the general name, including all their idols, whereof one here follows.

Baal-berith, i.e. The lord of the covenant, so called, either from the covenant wherewith the worshippers of this god bound themselves to maintain his worship, or to defend one another therein; or rather, because he was reputed the god and judge of all covenants, and promises, and contracts, to whom it belonged to maintain them, and to punish the violaters of them; and such a god both the Grecians and the Romans had.

Chapter 9

Abimelech, Gideon's son, by conspiracy with the Shechemites, and the murder of his brethren, Jotham the youngest escaping, is made king, [Jdg 9:1-6](#). Jotham by a parable rebuketh them, and foretelleth their ruin: he flees and dwells at Beer, [Jdg 9:7-21](#). The Shechemites conspire against Abimelech, [Jdg 9:22-25](#). Gaal joins himself to the Shechemites, [Jdg 9:26-29](#). Zebul reveals it, [Jdg 9:30-33](#). Betrayeth Gaal, [Jdg 9:34-38](#). Abimelech overcometh them, and soweth the city with salt, [Jdg 9:39-45](#). Sets the tower on fire; also the hold of the god Berith, [Jdg 9:46-49](#). He subdues Thebez: going near to the tower to burn it, a woman casts down a piece of a mill-stone on his head, and breaks his skull, [Jdg 9:50-53](#). He commands his armour-bearer to thrust him through, [Jdg 9:54](#). Jotham's curse is fulfilled, [Jdg 9:56-57](#).

[Jdg 9:1-2](#)

He supposeth that *the sons of Jerubbaal* would take that government which their father modestly refused, and that the multitude of his sons would occasion horrible divisions, and confusions, and contests about the sovereign power; all which they might avoid by choosing him king; and so they might enjoy the monarchy which they had long and oft desired.

Your bone and your flesh; your kinsman, of the same tribe and city with you; which will be no small honour and advantage to you.

[Jdg 9:3](#)

His mother's brethren, i.e. kinsmen, as that word is oft used, as [Ge 14:16](#); [29:12](#).

He is our brother; they were easily persuaded to believe and follow what served their own interest.

[Jdg 9:4](#)

Threescore and ten, agreeably to the number of his enemies, Gideon's seventy sons.

Pieces of silver; not shekels, as some fancy, which were too small a sum for this purpose; but far larger pieces, the exact worth whereof it is neither possible nor needful for us now to know.

Out of the house of Baal-berith; out of his sacred treasury; for even they; who were very parsimonious and base in their expenses about God's service, were liberal in their contributions to idols; having since Gideon's death built this temple, (which he would never have suffered whilst he lived,) and endowed it with considerable revenues.

Vain and light persons; unsettled, idle, and necessitous persons, the most proper instruments for tyranny and cruelty.

[Jdg 9:5](#)

The sons of Jerubbaal; the only persons who were likely to hinder him in establishing his tyranny.

Threescore and ten persons; wanting one, who is here expressed; and these synecdochical expressions are frequent in Scripture: see [Ge 35:26](#); [42:13](#); [Nu 14:32-33](#); [Joh 20:24](#); [1Co 15:5](#).

Upon one stone; whereby he would signify that this was either, 1. An act of justice, in cutting them all off in an orderly manner, for some supposed crime probably as designing sedition and rebellion; Or, 2. An act of religion, in avenging the dishonour and injury done to Baal by Gideon, [Jdg 6:27-28](#), upon his children, whom he offered up as so many sacrifices to Baal upon this stone, which served for an altar; and for this reason it seems the money was taken out of Baal's house, because it was to be laid out in his service.

[Jdg 9:6](#)

Of Millo; of a place or person so called; some eminent and potent family living in Shechem, or near to it; either the family of Abimelech's mother, or some other: or, and *all Beth-millo*; so *Beth* is not a house, but a part of the name of the place.

Made Abimelech king, to wit, over all Israel, [Jdg 9:22](#), which was a strange presumption for the inhabitants of one city to undertake; but they had many advantages and encouragements for it; as the eager, and general, and constant inclination of the Israelites to kingly government; Abimelech's being the son of Gideon, to whom and to his sons they offered the kingdom, [Jdg 8:22](#); and though the father could and did refuse it for himself, yet they might imagine that he could not give away his son's right, conveyed to them by the Israelites, in their offer; the universal defection of the Israelites from God to Baal, whose great patron and champion Abimelech pretended to be; the power and prevalency of the tribe of Ephraim, in which Shechem was, [Jos 20:7](#), whose proud and imperious spirit, manifested [Jdg 8:1](#); [12:1](#), would make them readily close with a king of their own brethren; and Abimelech's getting the start of all others, having the crown actually put upon his head, and an army already raised to maintain his tyranny. By *the plain of the pillar*, or, *by the oak of the pillar*, i.e. by the oak, where Joshua erected a pillar as a witness of the covenant renewed between God and Israel, [Jos 24:26](#). This place they chose, to signify that they still owned God, and their covenant with him; and did not worship Baal in opposition to God, but in conjunction with him, or in subordination to him.

[Jdg 9:7](#)

Mount Gerzim lay near Shechem, and near Mount Ebal. The valley between these two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal was a famous place, employed for a religious use, even for the solemn reading of the law, and its blessings and curses, [De 11:29](#); [27:12](#); [Jos 8:33](#); and therefore it is probable it was still used, even by the superstitious and idolatrous Israelites, for such-like occasions, who delighted to use the same places which their religious ancestors had consecrated and used.

Lifted up his voice, and cried; so as they that stood in the valley might hear him, though not suddenly come at him to take him.

Ye men of Shechem; who are here met together upon a solemn occasion, as Josephus notes, Abimelech being absent.

That God may harken unto you, when you cry unto him for mercy; so he conjures and persuades to give him patient audience, as they did.

[Jdg 9:8](#)

A parabolical discourse, usual among the ancients, especially in the eastern parts; wherein, under the names of trees, men are represented.

To anoint a king, i.e. to make a king, which was oft done among the Israelites, and some others, with the ceremony of anointing. By *the olive tree* he understands Gideon.

[Jdg 9:9](#)

In the worship and service of God oil was used for divers things; as, about the lamps, [Ex 35:14](#), and offerings, [Lev 2:6-7](#), and for the anointing of sacred persons and things. Oil was also used in the constitution of kings, and priests, and prophets, and for a present to great persons, and to anoint the head and face, &c.

To be promoted, Heb. *to move* hither and thither, to wander to and fro, to exchange my sweet tranquillity for incessant cares and travels for the good of others, as a king ought to do.

[Jdg 9:10](#)

This, as also the vine, [Jdg 9:12](#), signifies the same thing with the olive tree; but here are various expressions used, either for the decency of the parable; or because Gideon refused this honour, both for himself and for his sons; or to signify that the sons of Gideon, whom Abimelech had so cruelly slain, upon pretence of their affecting the kingdom, were as far from such thoughts as their father, and therefore were unjustly and wickedly murdered.

[Jdg 9:11](#)

My sweetness; for which that fruit is particularly commended.

[Jdg 9:12-13](#)

Wherewith God is well-pleased, because it was offered to God, [Nu 15:5](#), [7](#), [10](#). See also [Ps 104:15](#); [Pr 31:6](#).

[Jdg 9:14](#)

The bramble, or thorn; a mean, and barren, and hurtful tree, fitly representing Abimelech, the son of a concubine, and a person of small use, and great cruelty.

[Jdg 9:15](#)

If in truth you anoint me king over you; if you deal truly and justly in making me king.

Put your trust in my shadow; then you may expect protection under my government.

Let fire come out of the bramble; instead of protection, you shall receive destruction by me; especially you cedars, i.e. nobles, such as the house of Millo, who have been most forward in this work.

[Jdg 9:16-17](#)

Heb. *cast away his soul or life far off*, out of his reach or power to recover it, i.e. exposed himself to utmost hazard for your sakes.

[Jdg 9:18](#)

Abimelech's fact is justly charged upon them, as done by their consent, approbation, and assistance.

His maid-servant; his concubine, whom he so calls by way of reproach, because maid-servants were oft made concubines, [Ex 21:7-10](#).

Over the men of Shechem; by which limitation of their power, and his kingdom, he reflects contempt upon him, and chargeth them with presumption, that having only power over their own city, they durst impose a king upon all Israel.

[Jdg 9:19-20](#)

This is not a prediction, but an imprecation or curse, as it is called, [Jdg 9:57](#), which, being grounded upon just cause, and being the only way by which Jotham could perform the duty of the *avenger* of his brethren's blood, which was incumbent upon him, had its effect, as others in like case had, as [Jos 6:26](#), compared with [1Ki 16:34](#); [2Ki 2:24](#).

[Jdg 9:21](#)

He might easily flee, having the advantage of the hill and other accommodations for flight, and because the people were not forward to pursue a man whom they knew to have such just cause and great provocation to speak, and so little power to do them any hurt.

Beer; a place remote from Shechem, and out of Abimelech's reach. There were divers places of that name.

[Jdg 9:22](#)

For though the men of Shechem were the first authors of Abimelech's advancement, it is more than probable that the rest of the people easily consented to that form of government which they so much desired; or, at least, made no resistance against it.

[Jdg 9:23](#)

God gave the devil commission to enter into or work upon their minds and hearts; knowing that he of himself, and by his own inclination, would fill them with mistakes, and jealousies, and dissensions, and heart-burnings, which would end in civil wars and mutual ruin.

[Jdg 9:24-25](#)

Liers in wait for him, to seize his person.

All that came along that way by them, to wit, such as favoured or served Abimelech; for to such only their commission reached, though it may be they went beyond their bounds, and by military license robbed all passengers promiscuously.

It was told Abimelech; who, as it is here implied, exercised hostility towards the men of Shechem.

[Jdg 9:26](#)

It is not known who or of what tribe *Gaal* was; but it is evident that he was a man very considerable for wealth, and strength, and counsel, and interest, and ill-pleased with Abimelech's power.

Went over to Shechem, by his presence and counsel to animate and assist them against Abimelech.

[Jdg 9:27](#)

They went out into the fields, which, till his coming, they durst not do, for fear of Abimelech; but now took confidence to do so, in contempt of him.

Made merry; partly from the custom of rejoicing and singing songs in vintage time, [Lev 19:24](#); [Isa 16:10](#); [Jer 25:30](#); and partly for the hopes of their redemption from Abimelech's tyranny.

The house of their god, Baal-berith, [Jdg 9:4](#); either to beg his help against Abimelech, or to give him thanks, either for the fruits of the earth now received, or for the hopes of recovering their former and lost liberty.

Did eat and drink, to the honour of their idols, and out of the oblations made to them, as they used to do to the honour of Jehovah, and out of his sacrifices.

Cursed Abimelech; either by reviling and reproaching him after their manner; or rather in a more solemn and religious manner, cursing him by their god, as Goliath did David, [1Sa 17:43](#); or calling upon their god to ratify their curses pronounced against him.

[Jdg 9:28](#)

Who is Abimelech? what is he but a base-born person, an ambitious, imperious, and cruel tyrant, and one every way unfit and unworthy to govern you?

Who is Shechem? Shechem is here the name, either, 1. Of the place or city of Shechem; and so the Hebrew particle *mi*, *who*, is put for *mah*, *what*, as it is [Jdg 13:17](#); and then the sense of the place is this: Consider how obscure and unworthy a person Abimelech is, and what a potent and honourable city Shechem is; and judge you whether it be fit that such a city should be subject to such a person. Or rather, 2. Of a person, even of Abimelech, named in the foregoing words, and described in those which follow; *the son of Jerubbaal*, between which Shechem is hemmed in, and therefore cannot conveniently belong to any other. He is called Shechem for the Shechemite, by a metonymy of the subject, whereby the place is put for the person contained in it, and belonging to it; as Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba, Judea, Macedonia, and Achaia, &c., are put for the people of those countries [Job 1:15](#); [6:19](#); [Ps 68:31](#); [105:38](#); [Isa 43:3](#); [Mt 3:5](#); [Ro 15:26](#). Thus *mi* is taken properly, and the sense is, *Who is this Shechemite?* for so he was by the mother's side, born of a woman of your city, and she but his concubine and servant; why should you submit to one so basely descended?

The son of Jerubbaal, i.e. of Gideon; a person obscure by his own confession, [Jdg 6:15](#), and famous only by his boldness and fierceness against that Baal which you justly honour and reverence, whose altar he overthrew, and whose worship he endeavoured to abolish.

And Zebul his officer; and you are so unworthy and mean-spirited, that you do not only submit to him, but suffer his very servants to bear rule over you, and enslave you; and particularly this noble and hateful person Zebul. *Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem:* if you love bondage, call in the old master and lord of the place; choose not an upstart, as Abimelech is; but rather take one of the old stock, one descended from Hamor, [Ge 34:2](#), who did not carry himself like a tyrant, as Abimelech did, but like a father of his city of Shechem. This he might speak, either, 1. Sincerely, as being himself a Canaanite and a Shechemite, and possibly come from one of those little ones whom Simeon and Levi spared when they slew all the grown males, [Ge 34:29](#). And it may be that he was one of the royal blood, a descendant of Hamor, who hereby sought to insinuate himself into their minds and government, as it follows, [Jdg 9:29](#), *Would to God this people were under my hand!* which he might judge the people more likely to do, both because they were now united with the Canaanites in religion, and because their present distress might oblige them to put themselves under him, who seemed or pretended to be a valiant and expert commander. Or, 2. In way of derision, he being an Israelite: If you are so servile, serve some of the children of Hamor; which because you rightly judge to be absurd and dishonourable, do not now submit to a far baser person; but cast off his yoke, and recover your lost liberties.

[Jdg 9:29](#)

Under my hand, i.e. under my command; I wish you would unanimously submit to me, as your captain and governor; for he found them divided, and some of them hearkening after Abimelech, whom they had lately rejected, according to the levity of the popular humour.

Then would I remove Abimelech; as you have driven him out of your city, I would drive him out of your country.

He said to Abimelech; he sent this message or challenge to him, I desire not to surprise thee at any disadvantage; strengthen thyself as much as thou canst, and come out into the open field, that thou and I may decide it by our arms.

[Jdg 9:30](#)

It seems he had temporized and complied with the people's humour and plot against Abimelech, either in dissimulation and design, and by Abimelech's connivance or advice, or really; but when he heard Gaal's words, and himself traduced and struck at by them, he changed his mind, repented of his defection from Abimelech, and intended to return himself, and to bring the people again to the obedience of their lord and king.

[Jdg 9:31](#)

Privily, so as Gaal and his confederates might not know it. Or, in Tormah; or, who was in Tormah; for some make it the name of the place where Abimelech was, which is called with some variation Arumah, [Jdg 9:41](#).

They fortify the city against thee; they besiege or guard the city of Shechem, so as none may go out to thee, nor come in from thee.

[Jdg 9:32-35](#)

Stood in the entering of the gate of the city, to put his army in order, and to conduct them against Abimelech, whom he supposed to be at a great distance.

[Jdg 9:36](#)

Zebul concealed the anger which he had conceived, [Jdg 9:30](#), and pretended compliance with him in this expedition, that he might draw him forth into the field, where Abimelech might have the opportunity of lighting with him, and overthrowing him.

Thou seest the shadow of the mountains; for in the morning, as this was, and in the evening, the shadows are longest, and move most quickly. He intimates that he was afraid of shadows.

[Jdg 9:37](#)

*By the middle of the land, Heb. by the navel of the land. So he calls either, first, The middle of it, as the middle part of Greece and of Sicily are called the *navel* of them by the Roman writers, because the navel is in the midst of man's body; or, secondly, The higher part of it, called *the mountains*, [Jdg 9:36](#), and here *the navel*, because it was raised above the other ground, as the navel is above the rest of the body.*

[Jdg 9:38](#)

Thy mouth, i.e. thy brags. Now thou betrayest thy fears; and therefore now show thyself a man, and fight valiantly for thyself and people.

[Jdg 9:39-40](#)

He fled before him; being surprised by the unexpected coming of Abimelech, and possibly not fully prepared for the encounter.

Many were overthrown and wounded, being pursued and overtaken by Abimelech.

[Jdg 9:41](#)

Abimelech did not prosecute his victory, but retreated to Arumah, partly to see the effect of this fight, and whether the Shechemites would not of themselves return to his government, being either persuaded by Zebul upon this occasion, or terrified by his strength and valour, or now by his clemency in proceeding no further against them; and partly that, being hereby grown more secure, he might have the greater advantage against them, which accordingly he here makes use of.

Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren; which he was enabled to do, because the multitude, which is generally light and unstable, and judgeth of all things by events, were now enraged against Gaal, suspecting him guilty either of treachery, or cowardice, or ill conduct; and besides, they thought the expulsion of Gaal would sweeten and satisfy Abimelech, and make him give over the war against them. But though they were offended with Gaal, yet Zebul's interest was not so considerable with them, that he could prevail with them either to kill Gaal and his brethren, or to yield themselves to Abimelech; and therefore he still complies with the people, and waits for a fairer opportunity, though in vain.

[Jdg 9:42](#)

The people went out into the field; either, first, To renew the fight, and avenge themselves for their last loss, the great God hardening their hearts to their destruction, and the accomplishment of his word delivered to them by Jotham. But here is not one word about the people's arming, or resisting, or fighting, as there was before, [Jdg 9:39](#), but only of their slaughter, [Jdg 9:43-44](#). Or, secondly, To their usual and then proper employments about their lands; for though their vintage was past, the seed-time was now come, and other things were to be done in the fields. Or, thirdly, Upon some solemn occasion, not here expressed; possibly to make a solemn procession, or perform some other rites in the fields, to the honour of their god Baal-berith, as the manner of the heathen was, to make supplication to him for his help, and for better success; or only to go for that end to the house of their god Baal-berith, which is thought to have been in the fields, as may seem from [Jdg 9:27](#), [46](#), on a mountain upon the east side of the city.

[Jdg 9:43](#)

Three companies; whereof he kept one with himself, [Jdg 9:44](#), and put the rest under other commanders.

[Jdg 9:44](#)

Stood in the entering of the gate of the city, to prevent their retreat into the city, and give the other two companies opportunity to cut them off.

[Jdg 9:45](#)

Not to make the place barren, as salt will do, for then he would have sowed the fields, not the city; but in token of his detestation and desire of their utter and irrecoverable destruction; for salt is the symbol or sign of perpetuity: compare [Nu 18:19](#); [De 29:23](#); [2Ch 13:5](#); [Zep 2:9](#).

[Jdg 9:46](#)

The tower of Shechem; a strong place belonging to the city of Shechem, and made for its defence or security, but without the city. It is thought this was that Milo which was confederate with Shechem in their design for Abimelech, [Jdg 9:6](#), which also Jotham cursed with Shechem, [Jdg 9:20](#), and that curse is noted to have its effect, [Jdg 9:57](#). And this place may be called *the tower of Shechem*, either because those who possessed and defended it were sent from Shechem, or because it was built and kept for the safeguard of Shechem.

The house of the god Berith; or, *Baal-berith*, [Jdg 9:4](#). Hither they fled out of the town belonging to it, fearing the same event with Shechem; and here they thought to be secure; partly by the strength of the place, as the temples of idols were oftentimes built in the highest and strongest places, as the capitol at Rome, and the temple at Jerusalem; and such this place seems to have been, because they laid their treasure here, [Jdg 9:4](#), partly by the religion of it, thinking that either their god would protect them there, or that Abimelech would spare them there, if not out of piety to that god, yet out of thankfulness for the benefit which he received thence, [Jdg 9:4](#).

[Jdg 9:47-48](#)

Zalmon; a place so called from its shadiness, because there were many trees there.

[Jdg 9:49-50](#)

Thebez; another town near to Shechem; and, as it seems, within its territory.

[Jdg 9:51](#)

All the men and women; all that were not slain in the taking of the town; or they all forsook the town, and retired to their strong hold.

The top of the tower was flat and plain, after their manner of building.

[Jdg 9:52-53](#)

Such great stones no doubt they carried up with them, whereby they might defend themselves, or offend those who assaulted them. Here the justice of God is remarkable in suiting the punishment to his sin. He slew his brethren upon a stone, [Jdg 9:5](#), and he loseth his own life by a stone.

[Jdg 9:54-57](#)

The wickedness which he did unto his father, in rooting out, as far as he could, the name, and memory, and remainders of his father.

Chapter 10

Tola judgeth Israel; and Jair, whose thirty sons had thirty cities, [Jdg 10:1-5](#). The people's idolatry, [Jdg 10:6](#). The Philistines and Ammonites oppress them, [Jdg 10:7-9](#). They cry to God, who sendeth them to their false gods; but upon their repentance pitieth them, [Jdg 10:10-11](#). The Ammonites and Israelites encamp against one another, [Jdg 10:17-18](#).

[Jdg 10:1](#)

There arose; not of himself, but either chosen by the people; or rather, raised by God, as the other judges were. To defend Israel, or, to save, which he did not by fighting against and overthrowing their enemies, but by a prudent and pious government of them, whereby he kept them from sedition, and oppression, and tyranny, as also from idolatry, as may be gathered from [Jdg 10:6](#), which if not restrained and purged out, would have brought certain ruin upon them.

In Shamir in Mount Ephraim; which was in the very heart and midst of the land.

[Jdg 10:2-4](#)

Rode on ass colts, because horses were scarce there, and were not to be multiplied by the king himself, [De 17:16](#). Hence their kings and kings' children used to ride upon mules, [2Sa 13:29](#); [18:9](#); [1Ki 1:33](#), [38-39](#). Compare [Jdg 5:10](#); [12:14](#).

Havoth-jair.

Object. These villages were called so before this time from another *Jair*, [Nu 32:41](#); [De 3:14](#).

Answ. They are not said to be now first called by that name, but to be still so called, because the old name was revived and confirmed upon this occasion; as *Sheba* is said to be called *Beer-sheba*, upon an occasion mentioned [Ge 26:33](#), though it was so called before upon a more ancient occasion, [Ge 21:31](#). Possibly this *Jair* had enlarged or fortified these towns, and so they were justly denominated from him, no less than from the former.

[Jdg 10:5-6](#)

He shows how they grew worse and worse, and so ripened themselves for the ruin which afterward came upon them. Before they worshipped God and idols together; now they utterly forsake God, and wholly cleave to idols.

[Jdg 10:7](#)

The one on the west, the other on the east; so they were molested on both sides.

[Jdg 10:8](#)

Or, *that year they had vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years*. Or, *they vexed them in that year*, that was the eighteenth year, to wit, of that vexation. This was the eighteenth year from the beginning of that oppression. And these eighteen years are not to be reckoned from Jair's death, because that would enlarge the time of the judges beyond the just bounds, as may appear from [1Ki 6:1](#); nor from Jephthah's beginning to reign, because he reigned but six years, and in the beginning thereof put an end to this persecution; but from the fourth year of Jair's reign; so that the greatest part of Jair's reign was contemporary with this affliction. And although this oppression of the Ammonites and Philistines, and the cause of it, the idolatry of the Israelites, be not mentioned till after Jair's death, because the sacred penman would deliver the whole history of this calamity entirely and together; yet they both happened before it; and Jair's death is mentioned before that only by a *prolepsis* or anticipation than which nothing is more frequent in Scripture. The case of Jair and Samson seem to be much alike. For as it is said of Samson, that *he judged Israel in the days of the tyranny of the Philistines twenty years*, [Jdg 15:20](#), by which it is evident that his judicature and their dominion were contemporary; the like is to be conceived of Jair, that he began to judge Israel, and endeavoured to reform religion and purge out all abuses; but being unable to effect this, through the backwardness and baseness of the people, God would not enable him to deliver the people, but gave them up to this sad oppression; so that Jair could only perform one half of his office, which was to determine differences amongst the Israelites, but could not deliver them from their enemies.

[Jdg 10:9-10](#)

Because, not contented to add idols to thee, we have preferred them before thee, and rejected thee to receive and worship them.

[Jdg 10:11](#)

The Lord said; either by himself, the Son of God appearing in a visible shape, which then was usual; or by some prophet whom he raised and sent to this purpose; or by the high priest, who was consulted in the case.

The Amorites; both Sihon and Og, and their people, [Nu 21:1-35](#), and other kings of the Amorites within Jordan, [Jos 10:5](#).

The children of Ammon were confederate with the Moabites, [Jdg 3:13-14](#).

The Philistines. See [Jdg 3:31](#).

[Jdg 10:12](#)

The Zidonians also; for though we do not read of any oppression of Israel, particularly, by the Zidonians, yet there might be such a thing; as many things were said and done, both in the Old and New Testament, which are not recorded there; or they might join their forces with the king of Mesopotamia, [Jdg 3:8](#), or with some other of their oppressors; for it is certain these were *left* among others to prove Israel, [Jdg 3:1-3](#). Of *the Amalekites*, see [Jdg 3:13](#); [6:3](#).

Maonites; either, first, Those who lived in or near the wilderness of Maon, in the south of Judah, [1Sa 23:25](#); [25:2](#), whether Edomites or other. Or, secondly, The Mehunims, a people living near the Arabians, of whom [2Ch 26:7](#). For in the Hebrew the letters of both names are the same, only the one is the singular, the other the plural number. Or, thirdly, The Midianites, whose oppression he would not omit; it being usual for one and the same person or persons to have two names; although the Midianites may be comprehended under the Amalekites, with whom they were joined, [Jdg 6:3](#), [33](#). Or, fourthly, Some other people now unknown, and not expressed elsewhere in Scripture.

[Jdg 10:13](#)

To wit, except you repent in another manner than you yet have done; which when they performed, God suspends the execution of this threatening. Compare [Jer 18:7](#).

[Jdg 10:14](#)

You have not been forced to worship those gods by your oppressors and tyrants; but you have freely chosen these gods before me.

[Jdg 10:15](#)

Do not give us up into the hands of these cruel men, but do thou chastise us with thine own hand as much as thou pleasest, to wit, if we be not more faithful and constant to thee than we have hitherto been.

[Jdg 10:16](#)

They put away the strange gods: this was an evidence of the sincerity of their sorrow, that they did not only confess and bewail their sins, but also forsake them, and loathe themselves for them.

His soul was grieved; not properly, or as to inward affection; for God being infinitely happy, is not capable of grieving; but figuratively, and as to outward expression. He acted towards them like one that felt their sufferings; he had pity upon them, repented of his severe proceedings against them, and quite changed his carriage towards them, and punished their enemies as sorely as if they had grieved and injured his own person.

[Jdg 10:17-18](#)

That *Mizpeh* which was beyond Jordan in Gad or Manasseh; of which see [Ge 31:49](#); [Jos 18:26](#); [Jdg 10:17](#); [11:11](#), [29](#), [34](#). There were other cities of that name in Scripture.

Chapter 11

Jephthah dwells in the land of Tob, [Jdg 11:1-3](#); is called by the elders of Gilead to command in chief against the Ammonites, [Jdg 11:4-6](#). He demands to be continued head after the war should cease; they swear it shall be so, [Jdg 11:7-11](#). He sendeth twice messengers to the king of the Ammonites to treat of peace, but in vain, [Jdg 11:12-28](#). Jephthah marcheth against him; maketh a vow; smiteth the Ammonites; performeth his vow on his daughter, [Jdg 11:29-40](#).

[Jdg 11:1-2](#)

The Gileadite; so called, either from his father Gilead, [Jos 17:1-2](#), or from the mountain or city of Gilead, the place of his birth or abode.

The son of an harlot, i.e. a bastard; for though such were not ordinarily to enter into the congregation of the Lord, [De 23:2](#), yet God can dispense with his own laws, and hath sometimes done honour to base-born persons, so far, that some of them were admitted to be the progenitors of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gilead; one of the children of that ancients Gilead, [Nu 32:1](#); [Jos 17:1](#).

[Jdg 11:3](#)

The land of Tob, the name either of the land or territory, or of the man who was the owner or ruler of it. This place was in or near Gilead, as appears by the speedy intercourse which here was between Jephthah and the Israelites.

Vain men; idle persons, who desire to get their living rather by spoil and rapine, than by honest and diligent labour. These evil-minded persons Jephthah managed well, employing them against the enemies of God and of Israel that bordered upon them; and particularly, upon parties of the Ammonites, which made the Israelites more forward to choose him for their chieftain in this war. Went out with him, when he made excursions and attempts upon his and their enemies.

[Jdg 11:4](#)

In process of time, Heb. *after some days*; or, *after a year*; *days* being oft put for a *year*, as hath been showed, after that year mentioned [Jdg 10:8](#). The Ammonites had vexed and oppressed them eighteen years, and now that the Israelites begin to make opposition, they commence a war against them. Or, some time after Jephthah had been banished, and after he had taken up arms, and given them some disturbance. Or, after the Israelites assembled together, as is said, [Jdg 10:18](#).

[Jdg 11:5](#)

By direction or instinct from God, who both qualified him for and called him to the office of a judge. See [Jdg 12:7](#); [Heb 11:32](#). Otherwise they might not have chosen a bastard, [De 23:2](#). Unless we will say, that there being no other person among them fit for and willing to this work, necessity dispensed with this law, as it did with other positive laws, as those of the sabbath and sacrifices.

[Jdg 11:6](#)

Our captain: they say not *our king*; for the experience of Abimelech's kingship had cooled their appetite in that particular; but our captain.

[Jdg 11:7](#)

Did not ye expel me out of my father's house, and deprive me of all share in my father's goods, which, though a bastard, was due to me? This expulsion of him was the act of his brethren; but he here ascribes it to the elders of Gilead; either because some of them were among these elders, as is very probable from the dignity of this family; or because this act, though desired and promoted by his brethren, was executed by the decree of the elders, to whom the determination of all controversies about inheritances belonged; and therefore it was their fault that they did not protect him from the injuries of his brethren, as their duty was.

[Jdg 11:8](#)

Therefore we turn again to thee now; being sensible that we have done thee injury, we come now to make thee full reparations.

[Jdg 11:9](#)

If ye bring me home again; if you recall me from this place where I am now settled, to the place whence I was expelled.

Shall I be your head? will you really make good this promise? Jephthah was so solicitous in this case, either from his zeal for the public good, which required that he should be so; or from the law of self-preservation, that he might secure himself from his brethren; whose ill will he had experienced, and whose injuries he could not prevent, if, after he had served their ends, he had been reduced to his private capacity: or there might be some tincture of ambition in him; for which God therefore severely, though paternally, chastiseth him, as we see afterwards.

[Jdg 11:10-11](#)

*Jephthah uttered all his words, objectively so called; i.e. all that was spoken, not only by him, but also by the elders of Gilead concerning him, and concerning this whole transaction, and the conditions of it; or, *all his matters*, the whole business.*

Before the Lord, i.e. before the public congregation, wherewith God was usually and then especially present: see [Ex 20:24](#); [De 6:25](#); [Mt 18:10](#). Or, before the altar, which possibly they did erect upon this special occasion, by God's permission. Or, in God's presence, calling him to be present, as a witness and judge between them.

[Jdg 11:12](#)

Messengers, i.e. ambassadors, to prevent bloodshed, and make peace, as far as in him lay; that so the Israelites might be acquitted before God and men from all the sad consequences of this war: herein he showed great prudence, and no less piety.

What hast thou to do with me? what pretence or reasonable cause hast thou for this invasion?

My land; he speaks this in the name of all the people, whose the land was.

[Jdg 11:13](#)

My land, i.e. this land of Gilead, which was mine, but unjustly taken from me, by Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and the injury perpetuated by Israel's detaining it from me. This land, before the conquests of Sihon and Og, belonged partly to the Ammonites, as is affirmed, [Jos 13:25](#); and partly and principally to the Moabites, as appears from [Nu 21:24, 26](#); [De 3:11](#). And indeed Moab and Ammon did for the most part join their interests and their forces, as appears from Scripture story; and as Balak the king of the Moabites acted for the Ammonites, so now the king of Ammon seems to act for the Moabites; either as being now his subjects, or as his confederates; whence it comes to pass that Moab and Ammon are here promiscuously mentioned, as [Jdg 11:15, 17-18, 25](#); and Chemosh, the known god of the Moabites, [Nu 21:29](#); [1Ki 11:33](#); [2Ki 23:13](#); [Jer 48:13, 46](#), is here called the god of the Ammonites, [Jdg 11:24](#), though, to speak strictly, Moloch or Milcom was their god, [1Ki 11:5, 7, 33](#); [2Ki 23:13](#).

[Jdg 11:14-16](#)

Unto the Red Sea; unto which they came three times; once, [Ex 13:18](#); again, a little after their passage over it, [Ex 15:22](#); and a third time, long after, when they came to Ezion-gaber, [Nu 33:35](#); [De 2:8](#), which was upon the shore of the Red Sea, [1Ki 9:26](#); [2Ch 8:17](#), from whence they went to Kadesh, [Nu 20:1-29](#): of this time he speaks here.

[Jdg 11:17](#)

Peaceably, and did not revenge their unkindness and inhumanity, as they could have done.

[Jdg 11:18-20](#)

So Sihon was the aggressor or beginner of the war; and the Israelites were forced to it for their own defence.

[Jdg 11:21-22](#)

The coasts, or *borders*, together with all the land included within those borders; for so that word is oft used, as [Ex 8:2](#); [Ps 147:14](#); [Jer 15:13](#); [17:3](#).

The wilderness, to wit, the desert of Arabia.

[Jdg 11:23](#)

God, the sovereign Lord of all lands, hath given us this land: this he adds, as a further and a convincing reason; because otherwise it might have been alleged against the former argument, that they could gain no more right to that land from Sihon than Sihon himself had, and he had but an unjust claim to it.

[Jdg 11:24](#)

He speaks according to their fond and absurd opinion. The Ammonites and Moabites got their land by right of war, and conquest of the old inhabitants, whom they cast out; and this

success, though given them by the true God, for Lot's sake, [De 2:19](#), they impiously and ridiculously ascribe to their god Chemosh, whose gift they owned to be a firm and sufficient title.

[Jdg 11:25](#)

Art thou better than Balak? art thou wiser than he? or hast thou more right than he had? Balak, though he plotted against Israel, in defence of his own land, which he feared they would invade and conquer, [Nu 22:4](#); yet he never contended with them about the restitution of those lands which Sihon took from him or his predecessors, after the Israelites had conquered them.

[Jdg 11:26](#)

Three hundred years; not precisely, but about that time; either from their coming out of Egypt, or from their first conquest of those lands; and thus numbers are oft expressed: see [Nu 1:46](#); [2:32](#); [11:21](#); [Jdg 20:46](#). He urgeth prescription, which is by all men reckoned a just title, and it is fit it should be so for the good of the world, because otherwise the door would be opened both to kings and to private persons for infinite contentions and confusions.

[Jdg 11:27](#)

I have not sinned against thee; I have done thee no wrong.

The Lord be judge this day; let him determine this controversy by the success of this day and war.

[Jdg 11:28-29](#)

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah; endued him with a more than ordinary courage and resolution.

Manasseh, i.e. *Bashan*, which the half tribe of Manasseh, beyond Jordan, inhabited, [Jos 20:8](#); [21:6](#).

Mizpeh of Gilead; so called, to distinguish it from other cities of that name. Having gathered what forces he suddenly could, he came hither to the borders of the Ammonites.

[Jdg 11:30-33](#)

Minnith; a place not far from Rabbah, the chief city of; the Ammonites.

[Jdg 11:34](#)

With timbrels and with dances; in consort with other virgins, as the manner was. See [Ex 15:20](#); [1Sa 18:1-30](#).

[Jdg 11:35](#)

Thou art one of them that trouble me: before this, I was troubled by my brethren; and since, by the Ammonites; and now most of all, though but occasionally, by thee. I have opened my mouth, i.e. I have vowed, which was done by words, [Nu 30:2, 6](#).

I cannot go back, i.e. not retract my vow; I am indispensably obliged to perform it.

[Jdg 11:36](#)

Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; do not for my sake make thyself a transgressor; I freely give my consent to thy vow; wherewith, and with the success of his arms, he had now acquainted her, though it be not here expressed.

Forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies; I am willing to bear my burden, being abundantly satisfied with the great deliverance which God hath given to his people by thy hands.

[Jdg 11:37](#)

She chose *the mountains* as a solitary place, and therefore fittest both for lamentations, and for her preparation for her approaching calamity.

Bewail my virginity; that I shall die childless, which was esteemed both a curse and a disgrace for the Israelites, [Ge 30:23](#); [1Sa 1:6](#); [7:1-17](#); [Isa 4:1](#), because such were excluded from that great privilege of increasing the holy seed, and contributing to the birth of the Messiah, who was to be born of an Israelitish woman.

[Jdg 11:38-39](#)

Quest. What was it which Jephthah vowed and performed concerning his daughter?

Answ. Many, especially of modern writers, conceive that Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed, but only devoted to perpetual virginity, which then was esteemed a great curse and reproach. This they gather, 1. From [Jdg 11:37-38](#), where we read that she bewailed not her death, which had been the chief cause of lamentation, if that had been vowed, but *her virginity*. 2. From [Jdg 11:39](#), where, after he had said that *he did with her according to his vow*, he adds, by way of declaration of the matter of that vow, *and she knew no man*. But for the first, there may be a fair reason given, That she could not with honour bewail her death, which she had so generously and cheerfully accepted of, because it was attended with and occasioned by the public good, and her father's honour and happiness, [Jdg 11:36](#), and was a kind of martyrdom; and moreover, an act of religion, the payment of a vow, which ought to be done cheerfully; but only bewailed the circumstance of her death, that it was in some sort accursed and opprobrious; she having had no husband to take away her reproach, as they speak, [Isa 4:1](#), and leaving no posterity to her father's comfort, and the increase of God's people. And for the second, that clause, *and she knew no man*, is plainly distinguished from the execution of his vow, which is here mentioned before; and this is added, not as an explication of the vow, but as an aggravating circumstance, that this was executed when she had not yet known any man. Besides, this opinion seems liable to weighty objections: 1. There is no example in all the Scripture of any woman that was obliged to perpetual virginity

by any vow of her own, much less by the vow of her parents; nor have parents any such power over their children, either by the law of nature, or by the Holy Scripture. 2. The express words of the vow, [Jdg 11:31](#), mention nothing of her virginity. but only that she should surely be the Lord's, i.e. devoted to the service of the Lord, which might be without any obligation to perpetual virginity; for even Samuel, who was as fully devoted to the Lord by his parents as she could be, [1Sa 1:11](#); and Samson, who was devoted not only by his parents, but by God himself, and that in the highest degree, even to be a perpetual Nazarite, [Jdg 13:5, 7](#); yet were not prohibited marriage; nor were any of the most sacred persons, Levites, or priests, or high priests, though they were the Lord's in a singular manner, obliged to perpetual virginity: and therefore if she was not offered up for a burnt-offering, as the authors of this opinion say, but only was consecrated to God, there was no occasion to bewail her virginity, which, for any thing that appears, she was not tied to. 3. If this were all, here was no sufficient cause why so wise and valiant a man as Jephthah should so bitterly and passionately lament over himself or his daughter. And therefore it may seem most probable that Jephthah did indeed sacrifice his daughter, as he had vowed to do; which was the opinion of Josephus the Jew, and of the Chaldee Paraphrast, and of divers of the Jewish doctors, and almost all the ancient fathers, and many eminent writers; and this best agrees with the words of the vow, delivered [Jdg 11:31](#), *Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me—shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it for a burnt-offering*. Nor is there one word in all the following verses which denies that she was thus offered; only the execution of the vow is delivered in more ambiguous and general terms, [Jdg 11:39](#), which in all reason, and by the laws of good interpretation, ought to be limited and explained by the more plain and particular description of it. It is true, those words may seem capable of another interpretation; the conjunctive particle *and* may be here put for the disjunctive *or*, as it often is, as [Ex 21:16](#); [17:1-16](#); [Lev 6:3, 5](#); [2Sa 2:19](#), &c.; and so the meaning is, That what I first meet *shall surely be the Lord's*, or, *I will offer it up for a burnt-offering*, to wit if it be a creature fit to be offered; otherwise, say they, if a dog or an ass should have met him first, he should have been obliged to offer them, which was against the law. But it is sufficiently evident that he speaks of a human person, from the very phrase of *coming forth*. to meet him at his return; which plainly argues a design to meet him, purposely to congratulate his return; this phrase of going to meet a person coming being very oft used in Scripture, and constantly of one person meeting another, as [Ge 14:17](#); [17:2](#); [24:17](#), &c., and never of any brute creature. And although *and* is sometimes put for *or*, yet it is not to be so used without necessity, which seems not to be in this place; nor is it very proper to distinguish two sentences in this manner, where the one is more general, and the other being more special, is comprehended within it, which is the case here; for it *shall surely be the Lord's*, is the general; and its being *offered up for a burnt-offering* is the particular way or manner how it was to be the Lord's; as it were very improper to say, this is either a man, or it is my servant John; because the latter branch is contained in the former; and therefore in all the alleged instances where *and* is put for *or*, they are two distinct persons or things, and not one comprehended within another, as [Ex 21:17](#), *father or mother*; [2Sa 2:19](#), *right hand or left*. But the great objection against this opinion is this, that it seems a most horrid act, directly contrary to the law of nature, and to plain Scripture, thus to sacrifice his own daughter; and that it seems altogether incredible, either that such a man as Jephthah, so eminent for piety, and wisdom, and zeal, and faith, should either make so barbarous a vow, or pursue it for above two months' space; and that none of the priests of that time should inform him of the unlawfulness of executing so wicked a vow, and of the liberty he had to redeem such a vow, by virtue of [Lev 27:2-3](#), &c.; or that Jephthah would not willingly receive information, especially where it was so agreeable to his own interest and natural affection; or that the priests and people would suffer him to execute his own daughter, and not rather hinder him by force, as they afterwards did Saul which he

had sworn the death of Jonathan. These and other such difficulties I confess there are in the case; but something may be truly and fairly said to allay the seeming monstrousness of this act. 1. These were times of great and general ignorance and corruption of religion, wherein the Israelites had apostatized from God, and learnt and followed the practices and worships of the heathen nations, [Jdg 10:6](#), whereof this was one, to offer up human sacrifices to Moloch; and although they seem now to have repented and forsaken their idols, [Jdg 10:16](#), yet they seem still to have retained part of the old leaven, and this among the rest, that they might offer human sacrifices, not to Moloch, as they had done, but unto the Lord. And whereas some of the Jewish writers pretend that Phinehas was alive at this time; and tell a fine story concerning him and Jephthah, that both stood upon their terms, and neither would go to the other to advise about the matter; yet it is more than probable that Phinehas was dead long before this time, and whosoever was the high priest then, he seems to be guilty either of gross ignorance or negligence; so that a late learned writer conceives that this was the reason why the priesthood was taken from him, and from that line, and translated to the line of Ithamar, which was done in the time of the judges, as may be gathered from [1Sa 2:35-36](#). Moreover Jephthah, though now a good man, may seem to have had but a rude and barbarous education; having been banished from his father's house, and forced to wander and dispose himself in the utmost borders of the land of Gilead, beyond Jordan, at a great distance from the place of worship and instruction: nor is it strange that the priests and people did not resist Jephthah in this enterprise; partly because many of them might be under the same ignorance and mistake that Jephthah did; and partly because they knew Jephthah to be a stout, and resolute, and boisterous man, and were afraid to oppose him in a matter wherein he seemed to be so peremptory, and their persons and families were not much concerned. 2. This mistake of Jephthah's, and of the rest of that age, was not without some plausible appearance of warrant from the holy text, even from [Lev 27:28-29](#), wherein it is expressly provided, that *no devoted thing, whether man or beast, should be redeemed, but should surely be put to death*; a place which it is not strange that a soldier in so ignorant an age should mistake, seeing even some learned divines, in this knowing age, and Capellus, amongst the rest, have fallen into the same error, and justified Jephthah's action from that place; and though I doubt not they run into the other extreme, as men commonly do, those words being to be otherwise understood than they take them, (of which see my notes on that place,) yet it must be granted that place gave Jephthah a very colourable pretext for the action; and being pushed on by zeal for God, and the conscience of his vow, he might easily be induced to it; and though this was a sin in him, yet it was but a sin of ignorance; which therefore was overlooked by a gracious God, and not reproved by any holy men of God. It is probably conceived, that the Greeks, who used to steal sacred histories, and turn them into fables, had from this history their relation of Iphigenia, (which may be put for Jephthigenia,) sacrificed by her father Agamemnon, which is described by many of the same circumstances wherewith this is accompanied.

She knew no man, to wit, carnally; she, died a virgin.

[Jdg 11:40](#)

Went yearly, to a place appointed for their meeting to this end, possibly to the place where she was sacrificed.

To lament the daughter of Jephthah; to express their sorrow for her loss, according to thee manner. Or, *to discourse of* (so the Hebrew *lamed* is sometimes used) *the daughter of Jephthah*, to celebrate her praises, who had so willingly yielded up herself for a sacrifice.

Chapter 12

The Ephraimites wage war against Jephthah; are smitten by the Gileadites; and being discerned by Shibboleth, are slain to the number of two and forty thousand, [Jdg 12:1-6](#). Jephthah dies, [Jdg 12:7](#). After him Ibzan, [Jdg 12:8-10](#), Elon [Jdg 11:11-12](#), Abdon, [Jdg 12:13-15](#), were judges over Israel.

[Jdg 12:1](#)

Northward; over Jordan, so northward towards Mizpeh, where Jephthah was, [Jdg 11:34](#), and which was in the northern part of the land beyond Jordan.

Said unto Jephthah, through pride and envy, contending with him as they did before with Gideon, [Jdg 8:1](#). *Wherefore passedst thou over?* not over Jordan, for there he was already; but over the borders of the Israelites' land beyond Jordan, as appears by comparing this with [Jdg 11:29](#), where the same phrase is used.

[Jdg 12:2](#)

Hence it appears that he craved their assistance, which they denied, though that be not elsewhere expressed.

[Jdg 12:3](#)

I put my life in my hands, i.e. I exposed myself to utmost danger; as a man that carries a brittle and precious thing in his hand, which may easily either fall to the ground, or be snatched from him. The same phrase is used [1Sa 19:5](#); [28:21](#); [Job 13:14](#); [Ps 119:109](#).

Wherefore then are ye come up unto me? why do you thus requite my kindness in running into such hazard to preserve you and yours?

[Jdg 12:4](#)

According to this translation, these words are a scoffing and contemptuous expression of the Ephraimites concerning the Gileadites, whom they call fugitives of Ephraim; the word *Ephraim* being here taken largely, as it is elsewhere as [Isa 7:2](#), [5](#), so as it comprehends the other neighbouring tribes, of which Ephraim was in some sort the head or chief; and especially their brethren of Manasseh, who lived next to them, and were descended from the same father, Joseph; by reason whereof both these tribes are sometimes reckoned for one, and called by the name of *the tribe of Joseph*. And this large signification of Ephraim may seem probable from the following words, where, instead of *Ephraim*, is put the *Ephraimites and the Manassites*. By *Gileadites* here they seem principally to mean the Manassites beyond Jordan, who dwelt in Gilead, as appears from [De 3:13](#); [Jos 17:1](#), [5-6](#). And although other Gileadites were joined with them, yet they vent their passion against these; principally, because they envied them most; partly, because they seemed to have had a chief hand in the victory, [Jdg 11:29](#); and partly, because they were more nearly related to them, and therefore more obliged to desire their conjunction with them in the war. These they here opprobriously call *fugitives*, i.e. such as had deserted their brethren of Ephraim and Manasseh, and for some worldly advantage planted themselves beyond Jordan, at a distance from their brethren, and were alienated in affection from them, and carried on a distinct and separate interest of their

own, as appears by their monopolizing the glory of this success to themselves, and excluding their brethren from it. According to the Hebrew, the words lie and may be rendered thus, *Therefore* (so *chi* is oft rendered) *they said, Fugitives of Ephraim are ye*, (i.e. Ye Ephraimites are mere runaways; for the words next foregoing are, *the men, of Gilead smote Ephraim*. And having told you what they said, because the pronoun *they* was ambiguous, he adds by way of explication,) who said it, even the Gileadites, (and they said it when they had got the advantage over them, and got between them and home, as the next verse shows,) being *between Ephraim, and Manasseh*; i.e. having taken the passages of Jordan, as it follows, which lay between Ephraim and that part of Manasseh which was beyond Jordan. Or these latter words may be rendered thus, *And the Gileadites were between Ephraim and Manasseh*. So there is only an ellipsis of two small words, which are oft defective, and to be understood in Scripture. Or thus, *And the Gileadites were in the midst of the Ephraimites, and in the midst of the Manassites*, to wit, those Manassites who ordinarily lived within Jordan, who possibly were confederate with the Ephraimites in this quarrel. And so the meaning is, they followed close after them, and overtook them, and fell upon the midst of them, and smote them; and they sent a party to intercept them at the passages of Jordan, as it here follows.

[Jdg 12:5](#)

Those Ephraimites which were escaped, Heb. *the fugitives of Ephraim*, as before; for the Hebrew words are the same; which may make the latter exposition of the foregoing words more probable, to wit, that it is not the Gileadites, but the Ephraimites, who are there as well as here so called, because they are smitten before Jephthah, and fled from him.

If he said, Nay; to avoid the present danger.

[Jdg 12:6](#)

Shibboleth signifies *a stream or river*, which they desired to pass over; so it was a word proper for the occasion, and gave them no cause to suspect the design, because they were required only to express their desire to go over the *Shibboleth* or river.

He said Sibboleth. It is well known, that not only divers nations, but divers provinces, or parts of thee same nation, who use the same language, differ in their dialect and manner of pronunciation. *He could not frame to pronounce it right*, or rather, *he did not frame or direct himself to speak so, or to speak right*, i.e. so as he was required to do it. The Hebrew text doth not say that *he could not do it*, but that that *he did it not*, because he, suspecting not the design of it, uttered it speedily according to his manner of expression.

At that time; not in that place, at the passages of Jordan, but in that expedition, being slain either in the battle, or in the pursuit, or at Jordan.

[Jdg 12:7](#)

In one of the cities, Heb. *in the cities*; the plural number put for the singular, as [Ge 19:29](#), where *Lot* is said to dwell *in the cities*, i.e. *one of the cities*; and [1Sa 18:21](#), *the twain* is put for *one of the twain*; and [Jdg 18:11](#), *houses* for *house*; and [Jon 1:5](#), the *sides* for one of the *sides*.

[Jdg 12:8](#)

Of Beth-lehem; either that in Judah, of which [Mt 2:6](#); or that in Zebulun, [Jos 19:15](#).

[Jdg 12:9](#)

Took in thirty daughters, i.e. took them home for wives to his sons. See [Ge 24:67](#); [31:50](#); [De 21:12](#); [2Sa 11:27](#).

[Jdg 12:10-11](#)

This is added to distinguish it from other Aijalons, of which see [Jdg 1:35](#); [1Ch 6:69](#); [8:13](#).

[Jdg 12:12-15](#)

So called from some remarkable exploit done either by or upon the Amalekites in that place.

Chapter 13

The Philistines again oppress Israel, [Jdg 13:1](#). An angel appeareth to Manoah's wife, promising her a son that should be a Nazarite, and deliver Israel, [Jdg 13:2-5](#). She informs her husband hereof: he prayeth, and obtaineth a return of the angel, [Jdg 13:6-14](#). Manoah is desirous to provide food for the angel, and inquireth after his name, [Jdg 13:15-18](#). He sacrificeth to the Lord, and the angel ascendeth to heaven in the flame of the burnt-offering, [Jdg 13:19-21](#). Hereat Manoah is affrighted, but comforted by his wife; who beareth him a son; his name Samson, in whom is the Spirit of the Lord, [Jdg 13:22-25](#).

[Jdg 13:1](#)

Did evil, i.e. fell into idolatry, &c., not now after the death of Abdon the last judge, but in the days of the former judges.

Forty years, to be computed not from Abdon's death, but before that time, as is evident both from [Jdg 13:5](#), where it is declared that Israel was under the power of the Philistines; and from [Jdg 15:20](#), where only twenty of these years are said to have been in Samson's days. And it is probably conceived, that that great slaughter of the Ephraimites made by Jephthah did greatly encourage the Philistines to rise against Israel, when one of their chief bulwarks was so much weakened; and therefore that the Philistines began to domineer over them not long after Jephthah's death.

[Jdg 13:2](#)

Zorah; a city, of which see [Jos 15:33](#); [19:41](#).

Of the family, i.e. of the tribe or people, as family sometimes signifies, [Jos 7:17](#); [Jer 8:3](#); [10:25](#); [Am 3:1](#); [Mic 2:3](#); [Zec 14:18](#).

Barren, and bare not; an emphatical repetition of the same thing in divers words, which is a usual elegancy, both in Scripture and other authors.

[Jdg 13:3](#)

The angel of the Lord; the Son of God, oft so called in the Old Testament, as may be gathered from [Jdg 13:18](#), yet distinguished from the Lord, because he appeared here as it were in the form of a servant, as a messenger sent from God, and was really a distinct person from God the Father.

[Jdg 13:4](#)

Beware, I pray thee; because the child was to be a Nazarite from the womb, [Jdg 13:5](#), and from the conception; and because the mother's pollution extends to the child, she is enjoined from this time to observe the following rules belonging to the Nazarites.

And drink not wine, nor strong drink; under which by a synecdoche are comprehended the other particulars mentioned [Nu 6:2-4](#), as is implied [Jdg 13:14](#).

Any unclean thing; any of those meats forbidden [Lev 11:1-47](#), which were forbidden to all, but especially to the Nazarites.

[Jdg 13:5](#)

A Nazarite; a person separated from others, and consecrated to God's service.

He shall begin to deliver Israel; and the deliverance shall be carried on and perfected by others, as it was in part by Eli, and Samuel, and Saul; but especially by David.

[Jdg 13:6](#)

A man of God; a prophet, or sacred person, sent with a message from God.

Very terrible, or, *venerable*, or *awful*, full of majesty.

[Jdg 13:7-12](#)

Let thy words come to pass; or, *thy words shall come to pass*; I firmly believe that thy promises shall be fulfilled.

How shall we order the child? what rules shall we observe about his education?

[Jdg 13:13](#)

Whilst the child is in her womb, and after the child is born, let him observe the same orders.

[Jdg 13:14-15](#)

Supposing him to be a man and a prophet, to whom he would in this manner express his respect, as was usual to strangers. See [Ge 18:5](#); [Jdg 6:18](#).

[Jdg 13:16](#)

Bread, i.e. meat, as *bread* is commonly taken in Scripture.

Unto the Lord; not unto a man, as now thou apprehendest me to be; but unto the Lord, as thou wilt by and by perceive me to be.

[Jdg 13:17](#)

Either by making honourable mention of time, or by performing respect and service to thee, by a present, which they usually gave to prophets, [1Sa 9:7-8](#); [1Ki 14:3](#).

[Jdg 13:18](#)

Or, *hidden* from mortal men; or, *wonderful*, such as thou canst not comprehend; my nature or essence (which is oft signified by *name* in Scripture) is incomprehensible. This shows that this was the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God.

[Jdg 13:19](#)

Meat-offerings were generally joined with the chief sacrifices.

Offered it upon a rock; the angel's presence and command being a sufficient warrant for the offering of sacrifice by a person who was no priest, and in a place otherwise forbidden.

[Jdg 13:20](#)

The flame; either arising from the fire which Manoah brought for the offering, or produced by the angel out of the rock in a miraculous manner.

From off the altar, i.e. from that part of the rock which served instead of an altar, upon which the sacrifice was laid.

The angel ascended in the flame, to manifest his nature and essence to be spiritual, because not capable of hurt by the fire; and celestial.

Fell on their faces; partly in reverence to that glorious presence manifested in so wonderful a manner; and partly out of a religions horror and fear of death upon this occasion, as is expressed [Jdg 13:22](#), for the prevention whereof they fell down in way of supplication to God.

[Jdg 13:21-23](#)

Or, *at this time*; the particle *as* noting here, not likeness, but the truth and reality of the thing, as it doth [Nu 11:1](#); [De 9:10](#), and elsewhere. This expression seems to have some emphasis in it, to enhance God's mercy to them, as being afforded them in a time of such public and grievous calamity; and in a time when the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision, as it was afterwards, [1Sa 3:1](#).

[Jdg 13:24](#)

i.e. Endowed him with all those graces and gifts of mind and body which were necessary for the work he was designed for.

[Jdg 13:25](#)

To move him at times, i.e. to stir him up to heroical designs; to show forth his power in him in the frame of his mind, and in the strength of his body, discovered to his neighbours in extraordinary actions; to incline his heart to great attempts to the help and deliverance of God's people; and to give some essays of it to his brethren, and to seek all opportunities for it, as he did in the next chapter.

In the camp of Dan; a place so called, either from the expedition of the Danites, [Jdg 18:11-12](#); which though placed after this history, was done before it; or from some other camp which the Danites had formed there at this time, to give some check to the incursions of the Philistines.

Chapter 14

Samson desires to wife a daughter of the Philistines of Timnath; and this of the Lord, for an occasion against them, [Jdg 14:1-4](#). His parents go down with him to Timnath: a young lion meets him; he kills it, [Jdg 14:5-7](#); in his return he findeth honey in the carcass, [Jdg 14:8-9](#). Keepeth a marriage feast: hath thirty companions adjoined to him; to whom he propoundeth a riddle; with promise of a present, [Jdg 14:10-15](#). His wife extorts from him the explication, and discovereth it, [Jdg 14:16-18](#). He slayeth thirty Philistines of Ashkelon, and therewith payeth his present, [Jdg 14:19](#). His wife is given to another, [Jdg 14:20](#).

[Jdg 14:1](#)

After he was come to mature age.

Timnath; a place not far from the sea; of which see [Ge 38:12](#); [Jos 15:57](#); [19:43](#).

[Jdg 14:2-3](#)

The uncircumcised Philistines, with whom the Israelites were forbidden to marry, [Ex 34:12](#), &c. And although the Philistines were not Canaanites in their original, [Ge 10:14](#); [De 2:23](#); yet they were so in their habitation, and concurrence with them in wickedness, and therefore were liable to the same censures and judgments with them.

Get her for me: this action of Samson's, though against common rules, seems to be warranted, partly by the greatness and goodness of his design in it, and principally by the instinct and direction of God, which is mentioned in the following words, which was known to Samson, but not to his parents.

She pleaseth me well; not so much for her beauty, as for the design mentioned in the next verse.

[Jdg 14:4](#)

He sought an occasion against the Philistines; which he knew by very probable conjecture, if not by particular inspiration, that marriage would give him many ways.

[Jdg 14:5](#)

His father and his mother accompanied him, either because they were now acquainted with his design, or to order the circumstances of that action which they saw he was set upon, or to watch if they could find any occasion to take him off from his intention.

Came to the vineyards of Timnath, whither he had turned aside, either by a Divine impulse, or upon some real or pretended occasion.

[Jdg 14:6](#)

Came mightily upon him; stirred up and increased his courage and bodily strength.

As he would have rent a kid; as soon and as safely.

He told not his father or his mother, lest by their means it should be publicly known; for he wisely considered that it was not yet a fit time to awaken the jealousies and fears of the Philistines concerning him, as this would have done.

[Jdg 14:7-8](#)

After a time, Heb. after days, i.e. either after some days; or rather, after a year, as that word oft signifies; as [Ex 13:10](#); [Lev 25:29](#); [Nu 9:22](#); [Jdg 17:10](#); [1Sa 1:3](#); [27:7](#); when the flesh of the lion, which by its strong smell is offensive to and avoided by bees, was wholly consumed, and nothing was left but the bones.

There was a swarm of bees; not generated of the dead lion's body, but elsewhere, and settling themselves there, as they have sometimes done in a man's skull, and in a sepulchre, and such-like places.

[Jdg 14:9](#)

He took thereof in his hands, out of the lion's carcass.

Quest. Did not Samson transgress in touching a carcass?

Answ. It was in itself a legal pollution; but some such pollutions were involuntary and unavoidable, as in one that hath an issue running in his sleep; and some were necessary duties, as in those who were to attend upon a woman in her month, or upon the burial of a dead body. And such was this pollution, being contracted by Divine instinct and direction, and in order to God's honour, and therefore dispensed with by the author of that law, and required by him for his service.

Came to his father and mother; from whom he had turned aside for a season, [Jdg 14:8](#), upon some pretence or other.

[Jdg 14:10-11](#)

When they saw him, or, observed or considered him, his stature, and strength, and countenance, and carriage, which were extraordinary.

They brought thirty companions to be with him; partly in compliance with the custom of having bridemen; of which see [Mt 9:15](#); [Mr 2:19](#); [Joh 3:29](#), though they were not so numerous; and principally by way of caution, and as a guard put upon him under a pretence of respect and affection.

[Jdg 14:12](#)

A riddle, i.e. an obscure sentence for you to resolve and explain.

The seven days of the feast; for so long marriage-feasts lasted. See [Ge 29:27](#).

Thirty sheets; fine linen clothes, which were used for many purposes in those parts. See [Mt 27:59](#); [Mr 14:51](#).

Thirty change of garments, i.e. changeable suits of apparel, as below, [Jdg 14:19](#); [Ge 45:22](#).

[Jdg 14:13-14](#)

i.e. Out of that strong and devouring creature, the lion, came forth sweet meat, to wit, honey; withal it is covertly implied, that the Philistines, though now they had strength on their side, and dominion over Israel, whom they did devour upon all occasions, yet at last they should become meat to the Israelites.

[Jdg 14:15](#)

On the seventh day; they had doubtless spoken to her before this time, but with some remissness, supposing that they should find it out; but now their time being nigh slipped, they press her with more vehemency, and put her under a necessity of searching it out.

To take that we have, i.e. to strip us of our garments; and so your civility will end in gross unkindness and injustice.

[Jdg 14:16](#)

Though I have had much more experience of their fidelity and taciturnity than of thine.

[Jdg 14:17](#)

The seven days, while their feast lasted, i.e. on the residue of the seven days, to wit, after the third day. It is a familiar synecdoche. Or, *on the seventh of the days on which the feast was;* and then the following clause, *on the seventh day,* is only the noun repeated for the pronoun,

on that day; as is most frequent, as [1Ki 8:1](#), *Solomon assembled—unto Solomon*, i.e. unto himself.

[Jdg 14:18](#)

If you had not employed my wife to find it out, as men plough up the ground with a heifer, thereby discovering its hidden parts: he calls her *heifer*, either because he now suspected her wantonness and too much familiarity with that friend which she afterwards married; or because she was joined with him in the same yoke; or rather, because they used such in ploughing.

[Jdg 14:19](#)

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him; though he had a constant habit of eminent strength and courage, yet that was exceedingly increased upon special occasions, by the extraordinary influences of God's Spirit.

To Ashkelon; either to the territory, which oft comes under the name of the city; or to the city itself, where he had both strength and courage enough to attempt what here follows; and upon the doing hereof they were doubtless struck with such a terror, that every one sought only to preserve himself, and none durst oppose or pursue him.

Change of garments, together with their sheets or shirts, which it sufficed to imply here, being expressed above, [Jdg 14:13](#).

His anger was kindled, for the treachery of his wife and companions.

And he went up, to wit, alone, or without his wife.

[Jdg 14:20](#)

Samson's wife was given, by her father, to the chief of the bridemen, to whom he had showed most respect and kindness.

Chapter 15

Samson desireth to visit his wife; is denied her; wherefore he tieth firebrands to three hundred foxes' tails, and sets the corn on fire, [Jdg 15:1-5](#); for which they burn his wife and her father, [Jdg 15:6](#). Samson's revenge, [Jdg 15:7-8](#). The Philistines pitch in Judah, and demand Samson: the men of Judah bind and deliver him, [Jdg 15:9-13](#). He breaketh his bands, and slayeth one thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, [Jdg 15:14-17](#). He is athirst; prays; obtains water out of it, [Jdg 15:18-20](#).

[Jdg 15:1](#)

In the time of wheat harvest; which circumstance is noted as the proper season for the following exploit.

Into the chamber; into her proper chamber, which women had distinct and separate from the men's.

[Jdg 15:2](#)

I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her, because thou didst desert her in great wrath: but this was not sufficient cause; for he should have endeavoured a reconciliation, or waited for it; and not have disposed of another man's wife without his consent; which is not only against the law of God, but of nature also.

[Jdg 15:3](#)

Because they have first provoked me by an irreparable injury. But although this may look like an act of private revenge, yet it is plain enough that Samson acted as a judge, (for so he was,) and as an avenger of the public injuries and oppressions of his people; as plainly appears from hence, that Samson designed this very thing before he had received any personal injury, [Jdg 14:4](#).

[Jdg 15:4](#)

There were great numbers of foxes in Canaan, as appears from [Ne 4:3](#); [Ps 63:10](#); [Song 2:15](#); [La 5:18](#); [Eze 13:4](#). So that divers places there have their names from the foxes which abounded there; as [Jos 15:28](#); [19:42](#); [1Sa 13:17](#). Add to this, that some learned men conceive that the Hebrew name *schual* is more general, and contains not only the foxes, but another sort of creature very like to them, called *thoes*, whereof there were so many, there, that sometimes two hundred of them have been met together in one company, its some who have lived in those parts have left upon record. But infidels are much scandalized at this history, and pretend it incredible that Samson should catch so many foxes together; so nice and delicate is the faith of these men in things concerning God and Scripture, that can devour things ten times more difficult and absurd, concerning the production of the world, and of men, &c. But there is no cause of wonder here, for any man that is tolerably wise; for it is not said that Samson caught them all, either at one time, or by his own hands; for being so eminent a person, and the judge of Israel, he might require assistance of as many persons as he pleased, and all his people would readily assist him; nor can it at all perplex any man's reason or faith, if it be allowed that the God who made the world, and by his singular providence watched over Israel, and intended them deliverance at this time, could easily dispose things so that they might be taken. He chose to do this exploit, not by his brethren, whom he would preserve from the envy, and hatred, and mischief which that might have occasioned to them, but by brute creatures, thereby to add scorn and contempt to their calamity, and particularly by foxes; partly, because they were fittest for the purpose, being creatures very fearful of fire; and having such tails as the firebrands might most conveniently be tied to; and not going directly forward, trot crookedly and involvedly, whereby the fire was likely to be dispersed in more places.

Fire-brands; made of such matter as would quickly take fire, and keep it for a long time; which was easy to procure.

Between two tails, that the foxes might not make too much haste, nor run into their holes, but one of them might delay and stop another in his course, and so continue longer in the places where they were to do execution.

[Jdg 15:5](#)

He let them go, to wit, successively at several times, and in divers places, with great care and discretion, so as they might not hinder one another, nor all run into the same field; but being dispersed in all parts, might spread the plague further; and withal might be kept at a distance from the fields and vineyards of the Israelites. It is not worthy of our inquiry what became of these foxes afterward, whether they were burnt by the firebrands, or run into holes, or were taken and killed by the Philistines. The truth of this history is notably attested by a custom of the Romans, which it is very probable they had from the Phoenicians, upon this occasion; for every year they had a solemnity in April, the very time of Canaan's wheat harvest, wherein foxes were let loose with burning torches fastened to their backsides, &c.

[Jdg 15:6](#)

Partly for her adultery, which divers heathens punished with death; and partly for that mischief which she had occasioned to them; thus she brought upon herself that mischief which she studied to avoid, [Jdg 14:15](#), as wicked persons oft do, [Pr 10:24](#).

[Jdg 15:7](#)

Whereby it appears, that it was not his private injuries, but the public, which he did revenge.

[Jdg 15:8](#)

Hip and thigh; upon their hips and thighs, peradventure not designing to kill them, but to make them incapable of military employment, or of doing hurt to the Israelites. Or, *He smote them with his leg upon their thigh*, i.e. without any other weapon but his leg and foot he kicked them, and made them lame and useless for war.

With a great slaughter, *Heb. with a great stroke*; for so it was, even to them whom it did not kill.

He dwelt in the top of the rock Etam; partly because there he could better defend himself from his enemies; and partly because he would not involve his brethren in the same danger with himself, but, like a worthy magistrate, would secure them even with his own greater hazard.

[Jdg 15:9](#)

The rock Etam was *in Judah*: see [1Ch 4:32](#); [2Ch 11:5-6](#).

Spread themselves, as coming in great numbers with a powerful host.

Lehi; a place so called by anticipation, [Jdg 15:17](#).

[Jdg 15:10-11](#)

What is this that thou hast done unto us? thou hast by these actions punished not them, as thou intendest; but us, who being under their dominion, are sure to smart for it.

[Jdg 15:12](#)

Not that he feared them, or could not as easily have conquered them, as he did the whole host of the Philistines; but because he would be free from all obligation or temptation of doing them any harm, though it were in his own just and necessary defence.

[Jdg 15:13](#)

i.e. from the cave or hole in the rock, in which he had secured himself, out of which he was first brought up, and then carried down from the rock to the plain.

[Jdg 15:14](#)

The Philistines shouted against him, for joy and triumph, because they had now their great enemy, as they supposed, in their hands.

His bands loosed, Heb. *were melted*, i.e. were dissolved, as things are which are melted in the fire.

[Jdg 15:15-16](#)

This, though it might seem difficult, yet is not at all impossible or incredible; especially seeing the learned affirm of the asses of Syria, that they were larger and stronger than ours, and so consequently were their bones. And withal, it must be acknowledged that there was something extraordinary and miraculous in this, as there was unquestionably in Samson's strength, and so all the difficulty vanisheth.

[Jdg 15:17](#)

And by contraction, *Lehi*, [Jdg 15:14](#), it being usual so to contract proper names; as *Salem* is put for *Jerusalem*, [Ps 76:2](#); *Sheba* for *Beer-sheba*, [Jos 19:2](#); and many other.

[Jdg 15:18](#)

He was sore athirst, so as he was ready to faint and die with thirst; which was partly natural, from his excessive toil and heat; partly sent by God, that by the experience of his own impotency he might be forced to ascribe the victory to God only, and not to himself.

Now shall I die for thirst? Wilt thou not finish what thou hast begun? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done?

[Jdg 15:19](#)

Clave an hollow place, i.e. by *cleaving a place*, made it hollow; an expression like that [Isa 47:2](#), *grind meal*, i.e. grind corn into meal; and that [Ps 74:15](#), *thou didst cleave the fountain*, i.e. cleave the rock so as to make a fountain in it.

In the jaw; in the jawbone which he had used, which God could easily effect, either by causing the jawbone to send forth water, as the rock formerly did, the miracle being in effect

the same, though in a differing subject, causing a spring to break forth in *Lehi*: or, *in that Lehi* mentioned before, [Jdg 15:14](#); for *Lehi* is both the name of a place, and signifies a *jawbone*. *En-hakkore*, i.e. *the fountain of him that cried for thirst*; or, *that called upon God for deliverance*; i.e. the fountain or well which was given in answer to my prayer.

Which is in Lehi unto this day. According to this translation, *Lehi* is the name of a place, and not a jawbone, because it seems improbable that a jawbone should continue there so long, which every traveller might take away, and would be forward enough to carry a fountain with them in those hot countries; although it is not incredible that passengers would generally forbear to meddle with or remove so great a monument of God's power and goodness; or that the same God who made it instrumental to so great a wonder, should add one circumstance more, to wit, fix it in the earth, as a testimony to posterity of the truth of this glorious work. But these words may be otherwise rendered thus, *which fountain was in that jawbone*; and for the following words, *unto this day*, they may not be joined with the words next and immediately foregoing, as if the fountain was there to this day; but with the former words, *he called, &c.*, and so the sense may be this, that it was so called unto this day; and the place may be thus read, *he called the name thereof*, or, *the name thereof was called*, (such active verbs being frequently put passively and impersonally,) *The well or fountain of him that called or cried (which was in Lehi) unto this day*.

[Jdg 15:20](#)

i.e. He pleaded their cause, and avenged them against the Philistines.

In the days of the Philistines, i.e. whilst the Philistines had the power and dominion, from which he was not fully to deliver, but only *to begin to deliver them*, as it was foretold, [Jdg 13:5](#). From this place it is manifest, that in the computation of the times of the judges, the years of servitude or oppression are not to be separated from the years of the judges, and added to them, but are comprehended within them; which proposition is of great importance for clearing this difficult part of Scripture chronology, and for justifying that account of times given [1Ki 6:1](#).

Chapter 16

Samson goeth in to a harlot; is hemmed in; riseth at midnight; taketh the city gates, posts, and bars on his shoulders, and carrieth them up into a mountain, [Jdg 16:1-3](#). Is in love with Delilah; she enticeth him to discover wherein his strength lay; is thrice deceived; at last she overcomes him, [Jdg 16:4-20](#). They put out his eyes, and cast him into prison, [Jdg 16:21](#). His hair grows again, [Jdg 16:22](#). The lords of the Philistines and the people gather together to make sport with him to the honor of their idols; and sacrifice, [Jdg 16:23-25](#). Samson getteth them to place his hands on the two pillars of the house; he prays to God; pulls down the house; and dieth: but more slain at his death than in his life, [Jdg 16:26-30](#). He is buried, [Jdg 16:31](#).

[Jdg 16:1](#)

Samson went to Gaza, a chief city, to make some new attempt upon the Philistines, whom he feared not either in their cities or in their camps, having had such large experience of his own strength, and of God's assistance; possibly he came in thither by night, unknown and unobserved till afterwards.

Saw there an harlot; going into a house of public entertainment to refresh himself, as the manner was, [Jos 2:1](#). He there saw this harlot; which implies that he did not go thither upon so evil a design, but accidentally saw her there, and by giving way to lustful looks upon her, was ensnared by her.

[Idg 16:2](#)

This they chose to do, rather than to seize upon him in his house and bed by night; either because they knew not certainly in what house or place he was; or because they thought that might cause great terror, and confusion, and mischief among their own people; whereas in the day time they might more fully discover him, and more unexpectedly surprise him, and more certainly direct their blows and use their weapons against him.

[Idg 16:3](#)

Arose at midnight; being either smitten in conscience for his sin, when he first awaked, and thence fearing danger, as he had just cause to do; or being secretly warned by God in a dream, or by an inward impulse, for the prevention of his designed destruction.

The doors of the gate of the city; not the great gates, but lesser doors made in them, and strengthened with distinct posts and bars.

Went away with them; the watchmen not expecting him till morning, and therefore being now retired into the sides or upper part of the gate-house, as the manner now is, to get some rest, whereby to fit themselves for their hard service intended in the morning; or if some of them were in his way, he could easily and speedily strike them dead, and break the door, whilst the rest were partly astonished with the surprise, and partly preparing themselves for resistance: nor durst they pursue him, whom they now again perceived to have such prodigious strength and courage; and to be so much above the fear of them, that he did not run away with all speed, but went leisurely, having so great a weight on his shoulders, wherewith they knew he could both defend himself and offend them.

Up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron; either, 1. To a hill near Hebron, which was above twenty miles from Gaza; Or, 2. To the top of a high hill not far from Gaza, which looked towards Hebron, which also stood upon another high hill, and might be seen from this place, though it was at a great distance from it. And Samson did this not out of vain ostentation, but as an evidence of his great strength, for the encouragement of his people to join with him more vigorously for their own deliverance than yet they had done, or durst do, and for the greater terror and contempt of the Philistines. It may seem strange that Samson immediately after so foul a sin should have the courage in himself, and the strength from God, for so great a work. But, 1. It is probable that Samson had in some measure repented of his sin, and begged of God pardon and assistance, which also he perceived by instinct that God would afford him. 2. This singular strength and courage was not in itself a grace, but a gift, which might have been in a graceless person, and therefore might continue in a good man, notwithstanding a heinous act of sin; and it was such a gift as did not depend upon the disposition of his mind, but upon the right ordering of his body, by the rule given to him, and others of that order.

[Jdg 16:4](#)

He loved a woman; either, first, With conjugal love, so as to marry her, as divers both Jews and Christians have thought. Or, secondly, With lustful love, as a harlot; which though not certain, because the phrase is here ambiguous, she being neither called a *harlot*, as she of Gaza was, [Jdg 16:1](#), nor yet his *wife*, as she of Timnath was, [Jdg 14:2-3](#), [20](#), yet it may seem more probable; partly, because the dreadful punishment now inflicted upon Samson for this sin, whom God spared for the first offence, is an intimation that this sin was not inferior to the former; partly, because the confidence which the Philistine lords had in her, and their bold and frequent treating with her, and the whole course of her carriage towards Samson, show her to be a mercenary and perfidious harlot, and not a wife, whose affection and interest would have obliged her to better things; and partly, because Samson did not carry her home to his house, as husbands use to do their wives; but lodged in her house, as appears from the whole story.

[Jdg 16:5](#)

The lords of the Philistines; the lords of their five principal cities, who seem to have been united together at this time in one aristocratical government; or at least were leagued together against him as their common enemy. To afflict him; to chastise him for his injuries done to us. They mean to punish him severely, as they did; but they express it in mild words, lest the horror of it might move her to pity him.

Pieces of silver, i.e. shekels, as that phrase is commonly used, as [Nu 7:13](#), [85](#); [2Sa 18:12](#); [2Ki 6:25](#).

[Jdg 16:6](#)

Wherein thy great strength lieth; what is the cause of this prodigious strength, or wherein doth it consist? She seems to ask merely out of curiosity, to understand the state of a person whom she so highly values.

[Jdg 16:7](#)

Samson is guilty both of the sin of lying, though he dress up the lie in such circumstances as might make it most probable; and of great folly, in encouraging her inquiries, which he should at first have checked: but as he had forsaken God, so God had now forsaken him, and deprived him of common prudence; otherwise the frequent repetition and vehement urging of this question might easily have raised suspicion in him.

[Jdg 16:8-9](#)

With her in the chamber; *with her*, i.e. in the same house, *in a chamber*, i.e. in a secret chamber within her call. Nor is it strange that they did not fall upon him in his sleep; partly because they feared to awake a sleeping lion; and partly because they expect an opportunity for doing their work more certainly, and with less danger.

[**Jdg 16:10-13**](#)

Or, *thread* which is woven about a weaver's loom; or, *with a weaver's beam*. If my hair, which is all divided into seven locks, be fastened about a weaver's beam, or interwoven with weavers' threads; understand out of the foregoing verses, then I shall be weak as another man.

[**Jdg 16:14**](#)

Having done what Samson directed, she adds this for sureness' sake; she fastened the hair thus woven with a pin.

[**Jdg 16:15**](#)

When thine heart is not with me; when thy love consists only in outward expression, not in affection, and thou wilt not open thy heart to me, as one true friend doth to another.

[**Jdg 16:16**](#)

Being tormented by two contrary and violent passions; desire to gratify her whom he so much doted upon, and fear of betraying himself to utmost hazard. But being deserted by God, it is no wonder that he chooseth the worst part.

[**Jdg 16:17**](#)

Not that his hair was in itself the seat or cause of his strength, but because it was the chief condition of that vow or covenant, whereby as he stood obliged to him, so God was pleased graciously to engage himself to fit him for, and assist him in, that great work to which he called him; but upon his violation of his condition, God justly withdraws his help, and leaves him to himself.

[**Jdg 16:18**](#)

It was not hard for her to discover that he had told her all his heart by the change of his countenance, and the matter of his discourse, and the whole carriage of the business.

[**Jdg 16:19**](#)

She made him sleep, by some sleepy potion, which it is like she gave him upon other pretences, agreeable enough to his present and vitiated inclination.

Upon her knees; resting his head upon her knees.

She caused him to shave off, with a gentle hand, as if she herself had been but sporting with him. She did this more securely, partly because she had cast him into a deep sleep, and partly because if he had discovered it before it was finished, she would have said it was only an innocent intention to try the sincerity of his affection to her, and the truth of this last relation, which she had so just reason to doubt of, from his frequent dissimulation and lies.

She began to afflict him, i.e. to disturb, and awaken, and affright him, as by other ways, so particularly by crying out in a terrible manner, *The Philistines are upon thee*, as she had done before, and as it follows, [Jdg 16:20](#).

His strength went from him; which, as is here implied, she perceived, because he could not now shake himself as he did before, i.e. with equal rigour and might, as is intimated in the next verse; or because she had bound him, though it be not here expressed, and found him unable to break his bands.

[Jdg 16:20](#)

He awoke out of his sleep, and said within himself, i.e. he purposed and attempted it.

Shake myself, i.e. put forth my strength to crush them, and to deliver myself.

He wist not; being not yet well awake, and not distinctly feeling the loss of his hair, or not duly considering what would follow upon it.

The Lord was departed from him; in respect of the strength and help he had formerly given him.

[Jdg 16:21](#)

The Philistines now durst apprehend him, because they rested in the assurance which Delilah had given them, that now all was discovered and done.

Put out his eyes; which was done by them out of revenge and policy, to disenable him from doing them much harm, in case he should recover his strength; but not without God's providence, punishing him in that part which had been greatly instrumental to his sinful lusts.

Brought him down to Gaza, because this was a great and strong city, where he would be kept safely; and upon the sea-coast, at sufficient distance from Samson's people; and to repair the honour of that place, upon which he had fastened so great a scorn, [Jdg 16:3](#). God also ordering things thus, that where he first sinned, [Jdg 16:1](#), there he should receive his punishment.

He did grind in the prison-house, as captives and slaves use to do: see [Ex 11:5](#); [Isa 47:2](#); [Mt 24:41](#). He made himself a slave to vile lusts and harlots, and now God suffers men to use him like a slave.

[Jdg 16:22](#)

This circumstance, though in itself inconsiderable, is noted as a sign of the recovery of God's favour, and his former strength, in some good degree, upon his bitter repentance, and his renewing of his vow with God, which was allowed for Nazarites to do, [Nu 6:9](#), &c., and which it is here supposed he did, and by the effects proved.

[Jdg 16:23](#)

The lords of the Philistines gathered them together; either upon some annual or customary solemnity; or rather, upon this special occasion, to praise Dagon for this singular favour. And they did not appoint this solemn service as soon as Samson was taken, but some considerable time after, as appears by the growth of Samson's hair in the mean time, because they would give sufficient time and warning for all their friends and allies to come thither, and for the making of all necessary preparations for so great an occasion.

Dagon is by most supposed to be an idol, whose upper part was like a man, and whose lower part was like a fish; whence there is mention of *Dagon's hands*, but not of his feet, in [1Sa 5:4](#). And this place being near Egypt, where some of their gods were worshipped in the form of fishes, and being near the sea, it seems most probable that it was one of the sea gods of the heathens, and that it had in some part the resemblance of a fish.

[Jdg 16:24-25](#)

He made them sport; either, first, Passively, being made by them the matter of their sport and derision, and of many bitter scoffs, and other indignities or injuries; or, secondly Actively, by some ridiculous actions, or some proofs of more than ordinary strength yet remaining in him, like the ruins of a great and goodly building; whereby he halted them asleep in security, until by this seeming complaisance he prepared the way for that which he designed; otherwise his generous soul would never have been forced to make them sport, save in order to their destruction.

[Jdg 16:26-27](#)

The roof, after the manner of the times, was flat, and had windows through which they might see what was done in the lower parts of the house.

[Jdg 16:28](#)

This prayer was not an act of malice and revenge, but of faith and zeal for God, who was there publicly dishonoured; and justice, in punishing their insolences, and vindicating the whole commonwealth of Israel, which was his duty, as he was judge, to do. And this is manifest from hence, because God, who heareth not sinners, and would never use his omnipotency to gratify any man's impotent malice, did manifest by the effect that he accepted and owned his prayer, as the dictate of his own Spirit. And that in this prayer he mentions only his personal injury, the loss of his eyes, and not their indignities to God and his people, must be ascribed to that prudent care which he had, and declared upon former occasions, of deriving the rage and hatred of the Philistines upon himself alone, and diverting it from the people. For which end I conceive this prayer was made with an audible voice, though he knew they would entertain it only with scorn and laughter, which also he knew would quickly be turned into mourning.

[Jdg 16:29](#)

Quest. How could so great a building, containing so many thousands of people, rest upon two pillars so near placed together? Here infidels triumph, as if they had got an unanswerable argument against the truth of the Scriptures. But it is a far more incredible and ridiculous

thing to imagine that the penman of this book should feign such a circumstance as this is, if it had been false, whereby he would have utterly overthrown the credit of the whole book; and that he should do this before a people that could easily have confuted him; and that people should have so high a veneration for that book in which they knew so notorious a falsehood to be: these things, I say, are for more absurd to believe, than the truth of this relation. But to this I shall add two answers. First, It is no sufficient argument to prove that this was not true, because we do not at this day understand how it was done. There were many great works and excellent pieces of art, some footsteps whereof are left in ancient writers; but the exact way and particular manner of them is wholly, or in a great measure, unknown and lost; so that Pancirollus hath written a whole book of such things. Particularly, the old way of architecture is much in the dark, as is confessed by the learned. It may be pretended, that though there might be curious arts of building in the learned and ingenious part of the world, it is not probable they were among such a rude and barbarous people as the Philistines. But this is certainly a very great mistake; for these people were either in part of, or very near neighbours to, the Phoenicians, from whom it is confessed the arts came to the Grecians. And forasmuch as many things which were concluded by the ancients to be impossible, are by the wit and industry of later ages found to be possible, and certainly true; it cannot be strange if some things now seem impossible to some men, which were then known to be practicable. And he that will venture his faith and salvation upon this proposition, that such a building as this was simply impossible, because he doth not see the possibility of it; or, which is all one, That no man understands more than he doth; will find few admirers of his wisdom. And to question the truth and divinity of the Holy Scriptures, which is so fully and clearly proved by sundry arguments, upon such a nicety as this, is but a more learned kind of doting.

Ans. 2. Instances are not wanting of far more large and capacious buildings than this, that have been supported only by one pillar. Particularly, Pliny, in the 15th chapter of the 36th book of his Natural History, mentions two theatres built by one C. Curio, who lived in Julius Caesar's time, each of which was supported only by one pillar, or pin, or hinge, though very many thousands of people did sit in it together. And much more might two pillars suffice to uphold a building large enough to contain three thousand persons, which is the number mentioned, [Jdg 16:27](#). Or the pillars might be made two in the lower part merely for ornament sake, which might easily be so ordered as to support a third and main pillar in the middle, which upheld the whole fabric.

[Jdg 16:30](#)

Let me die with the Philistines, i.e. I am contented to die, so I can but therewith contribute any thing to the vindication of God's glory, here trampled upon, and to the deliverance of God's people. This is no example nor encouragement to those that wickedly murder themselves; for Samson did not desire nor procure his own death voluntarily, but only by mere force and necessity, because he did desire, and by his office was obliged to seek, the destruction of these enemies and blasphemers of God, and oppressors of his people; which in these circumstances he could not effect without his own death: and his case was not much unlike theirs, that in the heat of battle run upon the very mouth of the cannon, or other evident and certain danger of death, to execute a design upon the enemy; or theirs, who go in a fire-ship to destroy the enemy's best ships, though they are sure to perish in the enterprise. Moreover, Samson did this by Divine instinct and approbation, as God's answer to his prayer manifests, and that he might be a type of Christ, who by voluntarily undergoing death destroyed the enemies of God, and of his people.

[Jdg 16:31](#)

His brethren; either, first, Largely so called, his kinsmen. Or, secondly, Strictly so called; Samson's parents having had other children after him; as it was usual with God when he gave an extraordinary and unexpected power of procreating a child, to continue that strength for the generation or conception of more children, as in the case of Abraham, [Ge 25:1-2](#); and Hannah, [1Sa 2:21](#). They adventured to bury him; partly, because the most barbarous nations allowed burial even to their enemies, and would permit this oftentimes to be done by their friends; partly, because Samson had taken the blame of this action wholly to himself, for which his innocent relations could not upon any pretence be punished; and principally, because they were under such grief, and perplexity, and consternation for the common calamity, that they had neither heart nor leisure to revenge themselves of the Israelites, but for their own sakes were willing not to disquiet or offend them; at least, till they were in a better posture to resist them.

He judged Israel twenty years: this was said before, [Jdg 15:20](#), and is here repeated, partly to confirm the relation of it, and partly to explain it; and to show when these twenty years ended, even at his death, as is here noted.

Chapter 17

Micah stealeth money of his mother; then confesseth and restoreth it. She dedicates it to the Lord; maketh images: he sets them up in the house of his gods; and consecrates one of his sons for his priest; there being then no magistrates in Israel, [Jdg 17:1-6](#). A Levite travelling that way, he hireth and consecrateth him to be his priest, [Jdg 17:7-12](#); is confident that God would therefore favour and bless him, [Jdg 17:13](#).

[Jdg 17:1](#)

The things mentioned here, and in the following chapters, did not happen in the order in which they are put; but much sooner, even presently after the death of the elders that overlived Joshua, [Jdg 2:7](#), as appears by divers passages; as first, Because the place called *Mahaneh-dan*, or *the camp of Dan*, [Jdg 13:25](#), was so called from that which was done, [Jdg 18:12](#). Secondly, Because the Danites had not yet got all their inheritance, [Jdg 18:1](#), which is not credible of them above three hundred years after Joshua's death. Thirdly, Because Phinehas the son of Eleazar was priest at this time, [Jdg 20:28](#), who must have been about three hundred and fifty years old, if this had been done after Samson's death, which is more than improbable.

[Jdg 17:2](#)

About which thou cursedst, i.e. didst curse the person who had taken them away, and that in my hearing, as it follows. *I took it*; the fear of thy curse makes me acknowledge mine offence, and beg thy pardon.

Blessed be thou of the Lord; I willingly consent to and beg from God the removal of the curse, and a blessing instead of it. Be thou free from my curse, because thou hast so honestly restored it.

[Jdg 17:3](#)

The Lord; in the Hebrew it is *Jehovah*, the incommunicable name of God; whereby it is apparent that neither she nor her son intended to forsake the true God or his worship; as appears from his rejoicing when he had got a priest of the Lord's appointment, of the tribe of Levi, [Jdg 17:13](#); but only to worship God by an image; which also it is apparent that both the Israelites, [Ex 32:1](#), &c., and Jeroboam afterwards, designed to do.

For my son; either, first, For the honour and benefit of thyself and family; that you need not be continually going to Shiloh to worship, but may do it as well at home by these images. Or, secondly, That thou mayst cause these things to be made; to which end she restored all the money to him, as it here follows.

A graven image and a molten image; many think this was but one image, partly graven, and partly molten. But it seems more probable that they were two distinct images, because they are so plainly distinguished, [Jdg 18:17-18](#), where also some other words come between them. It is true, the graven image alone is mentioned, [Jdg 18:20](#), [30-31](#), not exclusively to the other, as appears from what is said just before; but by a common synecdoche, whereby one is put for all, especially where that one is esteemed the chief.

I will restore it unto thee to dispose of, as I say.

[Jdg 17:4](#)

Yet he restored the money unto his mother; though his mother allowed him to keep it, yet he persisted in his resolution to restore it, that she might dispose of it as she pleased; and did actually restore it, as was said before; and now confirms the former restitution, and therefore is twice said to *restore it*.

His mother took two hundred shekels of silver; reserving nine hundred shekels, either for the ephod and teraphim, or for other things relating to this worship, or for her own private use; being, it seems, cooled in her first zeal, and willing to have as cheap a religion as she could, as also her son Micah was, [Jdg 17:10](#).

Who made thereof; made them, either first, of that matter; or secondly, for that money.

[Jdg 17:5](#)

An house of gods, i.e. an house or place consecrated for the service of God in this manner.

An ephod; an eminent part of the priestly garments, [Ex 28:4](#), which, some think, is here put for all of them.

Teraphim; some sort of images so called, of which see [Ge 31:19](#); [Ho 3:4](#).

Who became his priest; because the Levites in that corrupt estate of the church neglected the exercise of their office, and therefore were neglected by the people, and others put into their employment. But this kind of priesthood was condemned, [Nu 16:40](#); [18:2](#), [7](#).

[Jdg 17:6](#)

No king, i.e. no judge to govern and control them. The word *king* being here used largely for a supreme magistrate; as [Ge 36:31](#); [De 33:5](#). God raised up judges to rule and deliver the people when he saw fit; and at other times for their sins he suffered them to be without them, and such a time this was; and therefore they ran into that idolatry from which the judges usually kept them, as appears by that solemn and oft-repeated passage in this book, that after the death of such or such a judge the people forsook the Lord, and turned to idols.

That which was right in his own eyes, i.e. not what pleased God, but what best suited his own fancy or lusts.

[Jdg 17:7](#)

Out of Beth-lehem-judah, or, *of Beth-lehem-judah*; so called here, as [Mt 2:1](#), [5](#), to difference it from Bethlehem in Zebulun, [Jos 19:15](#). There he was born and bred. Of the family of Judah, i.e. of or belonging to the tribe of Judah; not by birth, for he was a Levite; nor by his mother, for though that might be true, the mother's side is not regarded in genealogies; but by his habitation and ministration. For the Levites, especially in times of confusion and irreligion, were dispersed among all the tribes; and this man's lot fell into the tribe of Judah; which seems to be here noted by way of reflection upon that tribe, and as an evidence of the general defection, that a Levite could not find entertainment in that great and famous tribe, which God had put so much honour upon, [Ge 49:8-11](#), and therefore was forced to wander and seek for subsistence elsewhere.

He sojourned there; so he expresseth it, because this was not the proper nor usual place of his abode, this being no Levitical city.

[Jdg 17:8](#)

Where he could find a place, for employment and a livelihood; for the tithes and offerings, which were their maintenance, not being brought in to the house of God, the Levites and priests must needs be reduced to great straits.

[Jdg 17:9-10](#)

A father and a priest; for, *a father*; that is, *a priest*; a spiritual father, a teacher or instructor, for such are called fathers: see [2Ki 6:21](#); [8:9](#); [13:14](#); [Isa 22:21](#). He pretends reverence and submission to him; and what is wanting in his wages he pays him in empty titles.

[Jdg 17:11](#)

The Levite was content; being constrained by necessity, and infected with the common contagion of the superstition and idolatry of the times.

Was unto him as one of his sons, i.e. treated with the same degree of kindness and affection.

[Jdg 17:12](#)

Consecrated the Levite, to be a priest, for which he thought a consecration necessary, as knowing that the Levites were no less excluded from the priest's office than the people.

Became his priest, instead of his son, whom he had consecrated for want of a fitter, [Jdg 17:5](#); but now seems to restrain him from the exercise of that office, and to devolve it wholly upon the Levite, who was nearer akin to it.

[Jdg 17:13](#)

I am assured God will bless me. So blind and grossly partial he was in his judgment, to think that one right circumstance would answer for all his substantial errors, in making and worshipping images against God's express command, in worshipping God in a forbidden place, and in that he, being an Ephraimite, presumed to make a priest, &c.

Chapter 18

Those of the tribe of Dan, having not sufficient inheritance, send forth five men to spy out a place; they come to the house of Micah, and desire the Levite to ask counsel of God touching their journey, [Jdg 18:1-5](#). He encouraging them, they spy out the city Laish; and at their return instigate their brethren to set upon the city, [Jdg 18:6-10](#). Six hundred go forth armed: in their march they seize upon Micah's priest and idols; which he in vain, demandeth again, [Jdg 18:11-25](#). They pull down Laish; build it again; inhabit it; and call it Dan, [Jdg 18:26-29](#); consecrate their priest, and set up Micah's images, [Jdg 18:30-31](#).

[Jdg 18:1](#)

In those days; not long after Joshua's death, of which [See Comment on Jdg 17:6](#).

The tribe of the Danites; a part or branch of that tribe, consisting only of six hundred men of war, [Jdg 18:16](#), with their families, [Jdg 18:21](#): or, *a family of the Danites*; for the word *schebet*, which properly signifies a *tribe*, is sometimes taken for a *family*, as [Jdg 20:12](#), as elsewhere *family* is put for a *tribe*, as [Zec 12:13](#). All their inheritance had not fallen unto them; the lot had fallen to them before this time, [Jos 19:40](#), &c., but not the actual possession of their lot, because therein the Philistines and Amorites opposed them, not without success. [See Comment on Jos 19:40](#); [See Comment on Jdg 1:34](#).

[Jdg 18:2](#)

Of their family; which shows that it was but one, though a large family, which was engaged in this expedition. *Eshtaol*; of which see [Jos 19:41](#); [Jdg 13:2](#), [25](#).

They lodged there; not in the same house, but near it, as appears from the next verse, in a neighbouring place.

[Jdg 18:3](#)

They knew the voice of the young man; either, 1. By his manner of pronunciation, which was differing and distinguishable in several tribes, as appears from [Jdg 12:6](#); [Mr 14:70](#). Or, 2. By the celebration of some part of his office, which they, then lodging in the neighbourhood,

might be invited to. Or rather, 3. By some acquaintance which some of them formerly had with him which they might have upon many occasions.

What makest thou in this place; this being not thy usual place, nor proper for thy employment?

[Jdg 18:4-5](#)

Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, to wit, by thine ephod, or teraphim, or images, which they knew he had, [Jdg 18:14](#).

[Jdg 18:6](#)

Your way, i.e. your journey or design, is under the eye of God, i.e. under his care, and protection, and direction, which *the eye of God being upon a person* commonly notes in Scripture, as [Ps 32:8](#); [34:15](#). Compare [Jer 39:12](#); [40:4](#). So the phrase is here taken in a restrained sense, which is elsewhere taken more largely, as [Pr 5:21](#). This answer he either feigns to gratify their humour, or did indeed receive from the devil, who transformed himself into an angel of light, and in God's name gave them answers, and those not seldom very true, which God suffered for the trial of his people. See [De 13:1-3](#). But it is observable, that his answer was, as the devil's oracles usually were, ambiguous, and such as might have been interpreted either way, as they had success or disappointment.

[Jdg 18:7](#)

Laish, called also *Leshem*, [Jos 19:47](#).

After the manner of the Zidonians, who living in a very strong place, and abounding in wealth, and understanding that they were not a part of that land which God gave to his people, and perceiving that the Israelites never attempted any thing against them, were grown secure and careless.

That might put them to shame in any thing, or, that might rebuke or punish any thing, i.e. any crime; Heb. *that might put any thing to shame*, or, make any thing shameful. Putting to shame seems to be used metonymically for inflicting civil punishment, because shame is generally the adjunct or effect of it.

They were far from the Zidonians, who otherwise could have succoured them, and would have been ready to do it.

Had no business with any man; no league of confederacy, nor much converse with other cities, it being in a pleasant and plentiful soil, between the two rivulets of Jor and Dan, not needing supplies from others, and therefore minding only their own ease and pleasure.

[Jdg 18:8-9](#)

Are ye still, Heb. *silent?* Silence is oft put for *stillness* or *cessation from action or motion*, as [Ex 14:14](#); [Isa 62:1](#); [La 2:18](#). For they do not accuse them for want of speaking, for that they did; but for want of doing, and putting their words and resolves into execution.

[Jdg 18:10](#)

God hath given it into your hands: this they gather partly from God's word or promise, which they supposed they had from the Levite's mouth; and partly from his providence, which hath so disposed them, that they will be an easy prey to you.

[Jdg 18:11](#)

Of the family; by which it again appears, that the *tribe*, [Jdg 18:1](#), is put for family.

[Jdg 18:12](#)

Kirjath-jearim, called *Kirjath-baal*, [Jos 15:60](#); a city lying in the northern parts of Judah, in the road to Laish; yet not in the city, but in the fields belonging to it, as the following words evince.

Behind Kirjath-jearim, i.e. westward from it, as the western sea is called the hindermost sea, [De 11:24](#); and as, on the contrary, the east is called *Keedem*, which signifies the forepart.

[Jdg 18:13](#)

i.e. To the town in which his house was, for they were not yet entered into it.

[Jdg 18:14](#)

Then answered, i.e. spake, the word *answering* being oft used in Scripture of the first speaker, as [1Ki 1:28](#); [13:6](#); [Ezr 10:2](#); [Isa 14:10](#).

In those houses, i.e. in one of these houses, the plural number for the singular, as [Jdg 12:7](#).

Consider what ye have to do, i.e. whether it be not expedient, either, 1. To consult them again for your own satisfaction; Or rather, 2. To take them away for your further use, as you shall have occasion; for their action is the best comment upon their words.

[Jdg 18:15](#)

Heb. *asked him of peace*, i.e. if he were in peace, *peace* being commonly put for health and prosperity.

[Jdg 18:16-17](#)

Come in thither, to wit, into the house, and that part of it where those things were.

In the entering of the gate; whither they had drawn him forth that they might without noise or hinderance take them away.

[Jdg 18:18](#)

These, to wit, the five mentioned [Jdg 18:17](#).

What do ye? what do you mean to do? I hope you will not do so impious and injurious an action.

[Jdg 18:19](#)

Lay thy hand upon thy mouth, i.e. be silent, as this phrase is used, [Job 21:5](#); [29:9](#); [40:4](#); [Pr 30:32](#). The same thing repeated in other words.

A father and a priest: [See Comment on Jdg 17:10](#).

A family in Israel, to wit, a tribe that is (and being oft put for that is) a family. For it is certain this was not an expedition of the whole tribe, which numbered 64,000 men, [Nu 26:43](#), but only of one family, which it seems were more vexed with the Philistines or Amorites, and therefore resolved to seek new habitations at a great distance from them. And after this time we find the body of the Danites in their old and proper portions in Samson's time, which, though placed before this, was long after it.

[Jdg 18:20](#)

The priest's heart was glad; being wholly governed by his own interest, and making all his obligations of justice and gratitude give place to it. But it is not strange, if he who was before perfidious to God, should prove so to men.

In the midst of the people, i.e. among the people; or properly in the midst, both for the greater security of such precious things, and that Micah might not be able to come at him, either to injure or upbraid him; and it may be, because that was the place where the ark used to be carried.

[Jdg 18:21-24](#)

So far was he besotted with superstition and idolatry, that he esteemed those gods which were man's work. But he could not be so stupid as to think these were indeed the great Jehovah that made heaven and earth; but only a lower sort of gods, by whom, as mediators, he offered up his worship unto the true God, as it is manifest divers of the heathens did.

What have I more? I value nothing I have in comparison of what you have taken away. Which zeal for idolatrous trash may shame multitudes that call themselves Christians, and yet apparently value their worldly conveniences more than all the concerns even of the true religion, and of their own salvation.

[Jdg 18:25](#)

Thy voice; thy complaints and reproaches.

Angry fellows; the soldiers, who are in themselves sharp and fierce, and will soon be inflamed by thy provoking words.

And thou lose thy life; which, notwithstanding all thy pretences, thou dost value more than thy images, as indeed appeared from his following practice.

[Jdg 18:26-27](#)

Not wholly, but in great measure, to strike the greater terror into the inhabitants, and to make their conquest of the place more easy.

[Jdg 18:28](#)

Beth-rehob; a place near Libanus and Hamath; of which see [Nu 13:21](#); [Jos 19:28](#); [21:31](#); [Jdg 1:31](#).

[Jdg 18:29](#)

After the name of Dan their father; that it might be manifest that they belonged to the tribe of Dan, though they were seated at a great distance from them, even in the most northerly part of the land; whereas the lot of their tribe was in the southern part of Canaan.

[Jdg 18:30-31](#)

Having succeeded in their expedition according to the prediction which, as they supposed, they had from this image, they had a great veneration for it.

Until the day of the captivity of the land; either, 1. When the ark and the Israelites were taken captives by the Philistines, [1Sa 4:10-11](#); though there is no mention of any who were then taken captives, or that the Philistines did pursue the victory, and conquer the land at that time, for their victory was quickly damped, and turned to mourning, [1Sa 5:1-12](#). Or, 2. After that time, when the Philistines slew Saul and Jonathan, and discomfited the whole host of Israel, and made the rest of the people flee out of their cities, and took possession of their cities and land. Or, 3. When the whole land of the ten tribes, whereof Dan was one, was conquered, and the people carried captive by the Assyrian, [2Ki 17:6](#), [23](#). which is called by way of eminency *the captivity*, [1Ch 5:22](#). But against this it is objected, that it is not probable that this idolatry should continue so long in such a public place and manner; or that David and Solomon would suffer it.

Ans. It is not said that the graven image was there so long, for that is restrained to a shorter date, even to the continuance of the ark in Shiloh, [Jdg 18:31](#), which was removed thence, [1Sa 4:1-22](#); but only that Jonathan's posterity were priests to this tribe or family of Dan, which they might be under all the changes, even till the Assyrian captivity, sometimes more openly and allowedly, sometimes more cunningly, sometimes more secretly, sometimes in one way of superstition or idolatry, and sometimes in another; and in and after Jeroboam's time, in the worship of the calves, for which service, though he did make priests of the meanest of the people, [1Ki 12:31](#), yet that was not by choice, but out of necessity, because the priests and Levites generally forsook him, [2Ch 11:13-14](#); and therefore when he could engage any of the priests or Levites in that service, he was doubtless very glad of them to gain reputation to his impious and absurd device.

Chapter 19

A Levite's concubine runs from him to her father's house at Beth-lehem; he goeth to fetch her back; is kindly entertained by her father; he departs, and comes to Gibeah of Benjamin, and his concubine with him, [Jdg 19:1-14](#). An old man of Mount Ephraim entertains them, [Jdg](#)

[19:15-21](#). *The men of the city encompass the house, to debauch the Levite, who through necessity delivers unto them his concubine, whom they abuse to death, [Jdg 19:22-28](#). He carrieth her body home; divideth it into twelve parts; sendeth them into all the coasts of Israel, [Jdg 19:29-30](#).*

[Jdg 19:1](#)

In those days; of which [See Comment on Jdg 17:1](#).

On the side, Heb. *in the sides*, i.e. in one of the sides, as [Jdg 19:18](#).

A concubine, Heb. *a wife a concubine*, i.e. such a concubine as was also his wife, as appears from [Jdg 19:3-5](#), [7](#), [9](#), [26-27](#); [20:4](#). See of these [Ge 22:24](#); [25:1](#).

[Jdg 19:2](#)

Against him, i.e. against her faith given to him, or to his wrong; or, *with him*, i.e. in his house; or whilst she lived with him, which is opposed to her *going away*, which here follows.

Went away from him; either for fear of his severe rebukes or punishment, or because her heart was alienated from him.

Four whole months, Heb. *some days*, to wit, *four months*; or, *a year* (so days commonly signify) and four months; wherein not only she sinned, but her father by some indulgence and connivance at her sin, and neglect of just endeavours for her reconciliation to her husband, the ill effects whereof he speedily felt, in the loss of his daughter in so dreadful a manner.

[Jdg 19:3](#)

To speak friendly unto her, or, to speak to her heart, i.e. kindly and comfortably, as that phrase is taken, [Ge 1:1-31](#); [21:1-34](#); [Ho 2:14](#), to offer, her pardon and reconciliation, and restitution to her former state.

To bring her again, to wit, to his own house.

A couple of asses; partly for himself or his wife to ride upon, as there was occasion; and partly for carrying their provision, as appears from [Jdg 19:19](#).

He rejoiced to meet him, hoping the breach would be made up by this means.

[Jdg 19:4-9](#)

The day groweth to an end, Heb. *it is the encamping time of the day*, i.e. the evening, when armies having marched in the day, begin to pitch their camp; or, when the sun that makes the day begins to encamp himself and go toward rest; so it is a poetical expression taken from hence, that the sun, when he sets, seems to vulgar eyes to go to rest.

[Jdg 19:10-12](#)

Of a stranger, i.e. of a strange nation, which the Canaanites possess; for though the city Jerusalem had been taken by Caleb, [Jdg 1:1-36](#), yet the strong fort of Zion was still in their hands, [2Sa 5:6-7](#), whence it is likely they did much molest, and afterwards, by God's permission, and for the punishment of their sin, drive out the Israelites who dwelt there.

[Jdg 19:13](#)

Both which places lay in Benjamin's portion, a little northward from Jerusalem, and in the road from Bethlehem-judah to Gibeah.

[Jdg 19:14](#)

This is added to difference it from another Gibeah in Judah, [Jos 15:57](#). Possibly this is that which was called *Gibeah of Saul*, [1Sa 11:4](#).

[Jdg 19:15](#)

Though they were soft and effeminate in other respects, yet they were hard-hearted towards strangers or indigent persons. Either there were no public houses to receive and entertain travellers, as may be gathered from [Ge 28:1-22](#); [42:1-38](#); [45:1-28](#); [Jos 9:1-27](#) &c.; or, if there were such a one here, they might perceive it to be a very wicked house, as being in so lewd a place, and therefore might decline it, and expect that some private person would exercise hospitality to them, as persons of any worth used to do, as [Ge 18:1-4](#); [19:1-2](#); [Heb 13:2](#).

[Jdg 19:16](#)

Of Mount Ephraim; whence also the Levite was, which obliged and inclined him to show the more kindness to his countryman.

The men of the place were Benjamites: this was indeed one of thee cities belonging to the priests, [Jos 21:1-45](#); [1Ch 6:1-81](#); but you consider that the cities which were given to the priests, and whereof they were possessors and owners, were not inhabited by the priests or Levites only, especially at this time when they were but few in number, but many other persons of differing professions and callings, which was necessary for their conveniency.

[Jdg 19:17-18](#)

The house of the Lord was in Shiloh, [Jos 18:1](#); [22:12](#) Thither he went, either because he lived there, for that in the tribe of Ephraim; or rather, because he would there offer prayers, and praises, and sacrifices unto God, for his mercy in reconciling him and his wife together, and for his blessing upon them again, and to make atonement for his wife.

[Jdg 19:19-20](#)

It matters not whether thou wantest nothing or every thing, I will take care to supply all thy wants.

[Jdg 19:21](#)

They washed their feet, as they used to do to travellers in these hot countries, [Ge 18:4](#); [19:2](#); [24:32](#), &c.

[Jdg 19:22](#)

Making their hearts merry, i.e. refreshing themselves with the provisions set before them.

Certain sons of Belial; wicked and licentious men: see [De 13:13](#).

That we may know him; an ambiguous expression, whereby they pretended only a desire to know and see what person he had brought among them, and yet carry on their wicked design of knowing him carnally. Compare [Ge 19:5](#), where the same phrase is used in that sense upon a like occasion. But though they name only the man, yet it is plain from the following relation that their design was principally upon the woman, and therefore under the name of the man, they comprehend those that belong to him.

[Jdg 19:23](#)

This man is come into mine house, and therefore I am obliged to protect him by the laws of hospitality. Compare [Ge 19:17](#), [8](#).

[Jdg 19:24](#)

He offers this to avoid a greater and more unnatural sin, which he thought they designed; but it seems they did not, their abuse being confined to the woman, and not extended to the man, who also was in their power, if they had lusted after him. But this offer was sinful, because he offered that which was not in his nor in the man's power to dispose of, even the chastity of his daughter, and the man's wife; and because no man must do any evil, though never so small, for the prevention of any evil of sin or misery, or for the procuring of the greatest good, [Ro 3:8](#); though his sin was much mitigated by his ignorance, by his honest and generous intention of protecting a stranger, by the force which was in some sort put upon him, and by the suddenness and violence of the temptation.

[Jdg 19:25](#)

The man took his concubine; being willing to expose her rather than the daughter of his host, who had expressed such a singular care and affection for him.

[Jdg 19:26](#)

Fell down, to wit, dead, as the following words show, and as that word is oft used, as [Ex 19:21](#); [Ps 82:7](#); [91:7](#); [Ho 5:5](#); killed, partly with grief of heart, and partly with excessive abuse of her body, of which there have been divers instances. Thus the sin she formerly chose, [Jdg 19:2](#), is now her destruction; and though her husband and pardoned her, God would punish her, at least as to this life.

Her lord; so he is called, either because he was her husband; for which cause *Sarah called Abraham lord*, [1Pe 3:6](#); or because she had been his maid-servant, as concubines oftentimes were; as [Ge 30:3, 9](#).

[Jdg 19:27](#)

The posture either of one that had fallen down, or of one that was laid down to sleep, her hands or arms (for the Hebrew word signifies both) leaning upon the threshold and being put under her head; and therefore he thought to awake her, and raise her up.

[Jdg 19:28-29](#)

Together with her bones, or, *according to her bones*, according to the joints of her body, for there he made a division. This might seem to be a barbarous and inhuman act in itself; but may seem excusable, if it be considered that the sadness of the spectacle did highly contribute to stir up the zeal of all the Israelites to avenge his concubine's death, and to execute justice upon such profligate offenders; and was necessary, especially in this time of anarchy and general corruption, [Jdg 17:6](#), to awaken them out of that lethargy in which all the tribes lay.

Into twelve pieces; that one piece might be sent to every tribe; whereof none to Levi because they would meet with it in every tribe, being dispersed among them; but one to Benjamin; for he might well presume, that they would as much abhor so villainous an action, though done by some of their own tribe, as any of the rest.

Sent her into all the coasts of Israel, by several messengers, by whom also he sent a particular relation of the fact.

[Jdg 19:30](#)

No such deed; so wicked and abominable.

Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds; let us meet together, and seriously consider, and every one freely speak what is to be done in this case.

Chapter 20

The Israelites assemble at Mizpeh: the Levite declares his wrong, [Jdg 20:1-7](#). Their decree, [Jdg 20:8-11](#), They require the delinquents of the Benjamites to do justice on them; they are denied, [Jdg 20:12-17](#). Whereupon, having consulted God, they march to fight against them; are twice foiled; and lose forty thousand men, [Jdg 20:18-25](#). Being humbled, and receiving clearer revelation from God, they, by a stratagem, destroy the whole tribe, six hundred men excepted, (who fled away,) and burnt their cities, [Jdg 20:26-48](#).

[Jdg 20:1](#)

All the children of Israel, i.e. a great number, and especially the rulers of all the tribes, except Benjamin, [Jdg 20:3, 12](#).

Went out, from their several habitations.

As one man, i.e. with one consent.

From Dan even to Beer-sheba; Dan was the northern border of the land, near Lebanon; and Beer-sheba the southern border, [Ge 21:33](#). Compare [1Ki 4:25](#).

The land of Gilead, beyond Jordan, where Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh were.

Unto the Lord; as to the Lord's tribunal; for God was not only present in the place where the ark and tabernacle was, but also *in the assemblies of the gods*, or judges, [Ps 82:1](#), and in all the places where God's name is recorded, [Ex 20:24](#), and where two or three are met together in his name, [Mt 18:20](#), for his service, and to seek for counsel and mercy from him: compare [Jdg 11:11](#).

In Mizpeh; a place in the borders of Judah and Benjamin, and therefore ascribed to both of them, [Jos 15:38](#); [18:26](#). This they chose, as a place most fit and proper in many respects. First, As a place they used to meet in upon solemn occasions: see [Jdg 10:17](#); [11:11](#); [1Sa 7:5](#); [10:17](#). Secondly, For its convenient situation for all the tribes within and without Jordan. Thirdly, As being near the place where the fact was done, that it might be more thoroughly examined; and not far from Shiloh, where the tabernacle was, whither they might go or send, if need were.

[Jdg 20:2](#)

The chief, Heb. *the corners*, i.e. the nobles and rulers, which are oft so called, because, like corner-stones, they both unite, and support, and adorn the whole building.

Four hundred thousand, or, and *four hundred thousand*. It is an ellipsis of the particle [and,] of which examples have been given before: for the chief of the people were not so many; but the common soldiers, and these were all footmen; whereas many of the rulers rode upon horses, or asses, [Jdg 5:10](#); [10:4](#); [12:14](#). The number is here set down, to show both their zeal and forwardness in punishing such a villany; and the strange blindness of the Benjamites that durst oppose so great and united body; and that the success of battles depends not upon great numbers, seeing this great host was twice defeated by the Benjamites, but wholly upon God's blessing.

Footmen; for horsemen they had few or none in their armies.

[Jdg 20:3](#)

The children of Benjamin heard; like persons unconcerned and resolved, they neither went nor sent thither; partly, from their own pride, and stubbornness, and self-confidence; partly, because as they were loth to give up any of their brethren to justice, so they presumed the other tribes would never proceed to a war against them; and partly, from a Divine infatuation hardening that wicked tribe to their own destruction.

Tell us; the verb is of the plural number, because they speak to the Levite, and his servant, and his host, who doubtless were present upon this occasion.

[**Idg 20:4**](#)

The Levite; to whose relation the other two gave them consent.

[**Idg 20:5**](#)

Thought to have slain me; except I would either submit to their unnatural lust, which I was resolved to withstand even unto death; or deliver up my concubine to them, which I was forced to do.

[**Idg 20:6-7**](#)

Children of Israel; the sons of that holy man, who for one filthy action left all eternal brand upon one of his own sons; a people in covenant with the holy God, whose honour you are obliged to vindicate, and who hath expressly commanded you to punish all such notorious enormities.

[**Idg 20:8**](#)

We will not any of us go to his tent, i.e. his habitation, to wit, until we have revenged this injury.

[**Idg 20:9-10**](#)

That they may do according to all the folly that they have wrought; that we may punish them as such a wickedness deserves.

In Israel: this is added as an aggravation, that they should do that in Israel, or among God's peculiar people, which was esteemed abominable even among the heathen.

[**Idg 20:11-12**](#)

The tribe, Heb. *tribes*; either the plural number for the singular; or rather *tribe* is put for *family*, as was noted before, as *families* are elsewhere put for *tribes*. They take a wise and a just course, in sending to all the parts and families of the tribe, to separate the innocent from the guilty, and to give them a fair opportunity of preventing their ruin, by doing nothing but what their duty, honour, and interest obliged them to, even by delivering up those vile malefactors, whom they could not keep without horrid guilt and shame, and bringing the curse of God upon themselves.

[**Idg 20:13**](#)

Put away evil; both the guilt and the punishment, wherein all Israel will be involved, if they do not punish it.

The children of Benjamin would not hearken; partly, from the pride of their hearts, which made them scorn to submit it, their brethren, or to suffer them to meddle in their territory; partly, from the conceit of their own valour and military skill; and partly, from God's just judgment.

[Jdg 20:14-15](#)

Object. This agrees not with the following numbers; for all that were slain of Benjamin were 25,100 men, [Jdg 20:35](#), and there were only 600 that survived, [Jdg 20:47](#), which make only 25,700.

Answer. The other thousand men were either left in some of their cities, where they were slain, [Jdg 20:48](#), or were cut off in the two first battles, wherein it is reasonable to think they had an unbloody victory; and as for these 25,100 men, they were all slain in that day, i.e. the day of the third battle, as is affirmed, [Jdg 20:35](#).

[Jdg 20:16](#)

Left-handed, Heb. *shut up on their right hand*, i.e. using their left hand instead of their right.

Every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss; an hyperbolical expression, signifying that they could do this with great exactness. There are many parallel instances in historians of persons that could throw stones or shoot arrows with great certainty, so as seldom or never to miss; of which see my Latin Synopsis. And this was very considerable, and one ground of the Benjamites' confidence, because in those times they had no guns.

[Jdg 20:17](#)

The men of Israel, to wit, such as were here present, [Jdg 20:2](#), for otherwise it is most probable they had a far greater number of men, being 600,000 before their entrance into Canaan, [Nu 1:2](#).

[Jdg 20:18](#)

The children of Israel, i.e. some sent in the name of all.

To the house of God, to wit, to Shiloh, which was not far from Mizpeh, where they were.

Which of us shall go up first to the battle? this they ask to prevent emulations and contentions; but they do not ask whether they should go against them, or no, for that they knew they ought to do by the will of God already revealed. Nor yet do they seek to God for his help by prayer, and fasting, and sacrifice, as in all reason they ought to have done; but were confident of success, because of their great numbers, and righteous cause.

[Jdg 20:19-21](#)

Quest. Why would God suffer them to have so great a loss in so good a cause?

Answer. Because they had many and great sins reigning amongst themselves, and they should not have come to so great a work of God as this with polluted hands, but should have pulled the beam out of their own eye, before they attempted to take that out of their brother Benjamin's eye; which because they did not, God doth it for them, making them by this loss more clearly to see their own sins, and their need of God's help, without which their great numbers were insignificant; and bringing them through the fire, that they might be purged

from their dross; it being probable that the great God, who governs every stroke in battles, did so order things, that their worst and rotten members should be cut off, which was a great blessing to the whole commonwealth.

[Jdg 20:22](#)

Encouraged themselves, Heb. *strengthened themselves*; partly by supporting themselves with the conscience of the justice of their cause, and the hopes of success; and partly by putting themselves in better order for defending themselves, and annoying their enemies.

In the place where they put themselves in array the first day; hereby showing their freedom from that heathenish superstition, whereby they might have been apt to have rejected that as an unlucky place. Compare [1Ki 20:23](#), [28](#).

[Jdg 20:23](#)

Went up and wept; not so much for their sins as for their defeat and loss, as appears by the sequel.

Against the children of Benjamin my brother; they impute their ill success not to their own sins, as they had great reason to do, but to their taking up arms against their brethren, the lawfulness whereof they now begin to doubt of. But still they persist in their former neglect of seeking God's assistance in the way which he had appointed, as they themselves acknowledge presently, by doing those very things which now they sinfully neglected, [Jdg 20:26](#), and therefore are again justly punished.

Go up against him: God answers to their question; but as they did not desire his assistance and success, so he doth not promise it.

[Jdg 20:24-26](#)

Sat there before the Lord, and fasted; being now sensible of their former slightness, and now being truly humbled for their sins, which now they discover to be the true cause of their ill success.

Offered burnt-offerings, to make atonement to God for their own sins.

Peace-offerings; partly to bless God for sparing so many of them, whereas he might justly have cut off all of them when their brethren were slain; and partly to implore his assistance for the future, and to give him thanks for the victory, which now they were confident he would give them.

[Jdg 20:27](#)

Inquired of the Lord, to wit, by Urim and Thummim, [Nu 27:21](#).

Was there in Shiloh, where they were now assembled.

[Jdg 20:28](#)

Phinehas the son of Eleazar: this is added to give us some light about the time of this history, and to show it was not done in the order in which it is here placed, after Samson's death, but long before.

Stood, i.e. ministered, as the word *stand* oft signifies, as [De 10:8](#); [18:7](#); [Pr 22:29](#); [Jer 52:12](#), compared with [2Ki 25:8](#), because standing is the usual posture of servants.

Before it, i.e. before the ark; or, *before his*, i.e. the Lord's face, or presence; which shows that he was the high priest, for none else might appear there.

Or shall I cease? which, if thou requirest, we are willing to do, notwithstanding the provocation they have given us, and our own inclination to revenge.

Tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand: now, when they had sought God after the due order, and truly humbled themselves for their sins, he gives them a full and satisfactory answer to their desires.

[Jdg 20:29](#)

Though they were assured of the success by a particular and absolute promise, yet they do not neglect the use of means; as well knowing that the certainty of God's purposes or promises doth not excuse, but rather require man's diligent use of all fit means for the accomplishment of them.

Round about Gibeah, i.e. on several sides of it, as may be gathered from the following verses.

[Jdg 20:30](#)

The children of Israel, i.e. a considerable part of them, who were ordered to give the first onset, and then to counterfeit flight, to draw the Benjamites forth of their strong hold. See [Jdg 20:32](#).

On the third day, to wit, after the second battle; for the first day after it they spent in perplexing thoughts, and going up to the house of the Lord; the second, in fasting and prayer there; and this third, in the fight. Or this is so called with respect unto the two several foregoing days of battle, and so this was the third day of battle.

[Jdg 20:31](#)

Drawn away from the city, by the dissembled flight of the Israelites.

As at other times; with the same kind, though not with the same degree of success.

Gibeah in the field; so called, to difference it from this Gibeah, which was upon a hill; wherefore they are constantly said to ascend or go up against it, as [Jdg 20:23](#), [30](#). See [Jos 18:24](#), [28](#).

[Jdg 20:32-33](#)

Out of their place; where they had disposed themselves, that they might fall upon the Benjamites, when they were drawn forth to a sufficient distance from their city, and when they were pursuing that party, mentioned [Jdg 20:30](#).

Came forth out of their places, to execute what was agreed upon, even to take Gibeah, and burn it, as they actually did, [Jdg 20:37](#).

[Jdg 20:34](#)

Chosen men out of all Israel; selected out of the main body, which was at Baal-tamar; and these were to march directly to Gibeah on the one side, whilst the liers in wait stormed it on the other side, and whilst the great body of the army laboured to intercept these Benjamites, who, having pursued the Israelites that pretended to flee, now endeavoured to retreat to Gibeah.

They knew not that evil was near them; they were so puffed up with their former successes, that they were insensible of their danger.

[Jdg 20:35](#)

This is the total sum, whereof the particulars are related [Jdg 20:11](#), [45](#); and for the odd hundred not there mentioned, they were killed in other places not there expressed.

[Jdg 20:36-37](#)

Drew themselves along, or, *extended themselves*, i.e. whereas before they lay close and contracted into a narrow compass, now they spread themselves, and marched in rank and file, as armies do. Or, *marched* or *went*, Heb. *drew their feet*. So this verb is oft, used, as [Ge 37:28](#); [Ex 12:21](#); [Jdg 4:6](#); [Job 21:33](#).

[Jdg 20:38-41](#)

The men of Benjamin were amazed, because of their great disappointment, and the present danger wherewith they were surrounded on every side.

[Jdg 20:42](#)

The battle, i.e. the men of battle or war; the abstract for the concrete, as *poverty*, [2Ki 24:14](#), *pride*, [Ps 36:11](#), *deceit*, [Pr 12:5](#), *dreams*, [Jer 27:9](#), *election*, [Ro 11:7](#), are put for persons that are *poor*, *proud*, *deceitful*, *dreamers*, *elect*. *Them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them*: so the sense may seem to be this, That the Israelites did not only kill the inhabitants of Gibeah, and all the Benjamites that came into the field against them, six hundred excepted; but in the midst of them, or together with them, they killed also the rest of the Benjamites, who, when they saw their army was wholly destroyed, made haste to flee out of their several cities or towns, that so they might escape the sword, which was coming towards them. But the words may be rendered thus: *And them who were of the other cities*, to wit, of Benjamin, i.e. who abode in their own cities and did not go up to Gibeah, *they*

destroyed in the midst of them, i.e. in their several cities; or, *in the midst of it*, i.e. of every city; for so it is said, [Jdg 20:48](#), where it is said that *they smote the men of every city*. But this I submit to the learned.

[Jdg 20:43](#)

With ease; without great difficulty. Now that God gave them his presence and assistance, they easily did that which before they found too hard for them. Or, unto Menuchah; or, as far as Menuchah; a place so called. See [1Ch 2:52](#); [Jer 51:59](#).

[Jdg 20:44-45](#)

They gleaned, i.e. they cut off the remainders in the pursuit, and spared none; a metaphor from those who gather grapes or corn so clearly and fitly, that they leave no relics for those who come after them.

[Jdg 20:46](#)

Twenty and five thousand, besides the odd hundred expressed [Jdg 20:35](#); but here only the great number is expressed, the less being omitted, as inconsiderable; which way of numbering is frequent in Scripture, as [Jdg 11:26](#); [2Sa 5:5](#), and in other authors, and in vulgar use; as when they are called the seventy interpreters, who in truth and exactness were seventy-two. Here are also a thousand more omitted, because here he speaks only of them who fell in that third day of battle. [See Comment on Jdg 20:15](#).

[Jdg 20:47](#)

In a cave within that rock, where they fortified themselves and fetched in provision as they had opportunity; which they could easily do, when the heat of the battle was over, and the Israelites were not solicitous to pursue them farther.

[Jdg 20:48](#)

Having destroyed those that came to Gibeah, and into the field, now they follow them home to their several habitations.

The men of every city; comprehensively taken, so as to include women and children. If this seem harsh and bloody, either it may be ascribed to military fury; or rather, it may be justified; partly, from that high guilt brought upon the whole tribe, in which it is no wonder if their infants suffered, which was not unusual in such cases, as [Nu 31:17](#); [1Sa 15:3](#); [Jos 7:15](#); partly, from that command of God in a parallel case, [De 13:15](#); and partly, from that solemn oath by which they had anathematized or devoted to death all that came not up to Mizpeh, [Jdg 21:5](#), which none of the Benjamites did; for which cause also they destroyed all the men, women, and children of Jabesh-gilead, [Jdg 21:10](#).

Chapter 21

The people bewail the desolation of Benjamin, [Jdg 21:1-7](#). The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, for not coming up to this battle, are all destroyed, excepting four hundred damsels, whom the Israelites bestow for wives on the remaining Benjamites, [Jdg 21:8-15](#). They advise the rest to

seize on the dancing maidens at the feast in Shiloh; and to carry away as many as they had need of [Jdg 21:16-21](#). The answer wherewith they should pacify their relations, [Jdg 21:22](#).

[Jdg 21:1](#)

The men of Israel had sworn; in the beginning of this war, after the whole tribe had espoused the quarrel of the men of Gibeah, [Jdg 21:13-14](#). They do not (as some suppose) here swear the utter extirpation of the tribe, which fell out beyond their expectation, [Jdg 21:3, 6](#), but only not to give their daughters to those men who should survive; justly esteeming them for their barbarous villany to be as bad as the worst of heathens, with whom they were forbidden to marry. In this case the Benjamites might have married among themselves, if any of their men and women were left alive.

[Jdg 21:2](#)

The people came to the house of God; partly to mourn for the common loss, and partly to ask counsel from God about the repairing of it.

[Jdg 21:3](#)

Why hast thou given them up to such wickedness, and us to such rage, that the whole tribe should be in a manner lost? Hence it appears that they did not swear to root them all out, as is further manifest from the different matter and words of this oath, [Jdg 21:1](#), which only denied them their daughters in marriage; and that concerning the people of other tribes who joined not with them in this business, which was, that they should *be put to death*, [Jdg 21:5](#). And their sparing of those six hundred men in the rock Rimmon, [Jdg 21:13-14](#), plainly shows that they were not obliged by any oath or vow to extirpate them.

[Jdg 21:4](#)

Built there an altar; not for a monument of the victory, as some say, but for sacrifices, as the next words show.

Quest. What need was there of this, when the ordinary altar was there, to which also they seem to be restrained, [De 16:2](#)?

Answ. They are not there restrained to one altar, but to one place of worship, as is expressed; and therefore there might be in that place more altars than one, when the multitude of sacrifices so required, which was the case [1Ki 8:61](#); and probably at this time, when all the tribes being met, they had many sacrifices to offer, some in common for all, and some peculiar to every tribe. Nay, other altars might be, and oftentimes were, erected in other places, by David, direction or dispensation; as [Jdg 6:21, 26](#); [1Sa 7:9](#); [11:15](#); [16:2, 5](#).

[Jdg 21:5](#)

A great oath. i.e. a solemn oath, joined with some terrible execration against the offenders herein.

He shall surely be put to death; because by refusing to execute the vengeance due to such malefactors, they were justly presumed guilty of the crime, and therefore liable to the same

punishment, as was the case of that city that would not deliver up an idolater dwelling among them to justice.

[Jdg 21:6](#)

Children of Israel repented them; not for the war, which was just, and necessary, and good; but for their immoderate severity in the execution of it, and for thee dreadful consequences of it.

[Jdg 21:7-8](#)

A city in Gilead, and in the tribe of Manasseh; of which see [1Sa 11:1](#), [3](#), [9](#), &c.; [1Sa 31:11](#), &c.

[Jdg 21:9-10](#)

Who in such public and scandalous crimes were, for the greater terror of such transgressors, and prevention of the like sins, oft involved in the same punishment with the men, as [De 13:15](#); [Jos 7:24](#), &c.

[Jdg 21:11](#)

But not the virgins, as appears from the next verses. It is questionable whether they were not obliged to destroy these also by virtue of their oath, and of God's express command concerning devoted persons, such as these certainly were, that they should *surely be put to death*. [Lev 27:29](#), which was also particularly enjoined and practised in such cases, as [De 13:1-18](#); [Jos 7:1-26](#), &c. But the natural and necessary duty of preserving a tribe from total ruin, might seem to render the case difficult and doubtful, and incline their opinions, as well as their affections, to the more favourable side. And it may be, the Lord, whom they were here consulting with upon all their occasions, gave them a dispensation thus to do, though that be not expressed; which is the case of many other things which were done, though not recorded; as this very oath was omitted in its proper place, and had not been recorded if this extraordinary occasion had not been offered.

[Jdg 21:12](#)

Young virgins; not married, yet marriageable. It is probable there were other and younger virgins; but whether they were slain or spared Scripture determines not, and the learned do not agree. But these could not serve the present and urgent occasion, and therefore he takes notice only of these four hundred which were of riper age.

[Jdg 21:13-15](#)

The people repented them for Benjamin; were yet more grieved upon this unhappy disappointment, for they supposed here would have been wives sufficient for them. The Lord had made a breach; the Benjamites were the only authors of the sin, but God was the chief author of the punishment, and the Israelites were but his executioners.

[Jdg 21:16](#)

For them that remain; for the two hundred who are yet unprovided of wives.

[Jdg 21:17](#)

The inheritance promised by Jacob and Moses, and given by Joshua to the tribe of Benjamin, doth all of it belong to those few which remain of that tribe, and cannot be possessed by any other tribe; and therefore we are obliged to procure wives for them all, that they may make up this breach, and be capable of possessing and managing all their land, that this tribe and their inheritance may not be confounded with or swallowed up by any of the rest. Heb. *the inheritance* (to wit, belonging to the whole tribe of Benjamin) is or belongs *to them that be escaped of Benjamin*.

[Jdg 21:18](#)

i.e. To this generation of Benjamites who have made themselves guilty of this foul wickedness; but this oath did not extend to their posterity. And some think it had another exception, to wit, unless the surviving Benjamites could not otherwise be supplied with wives.

[Jdg 21:19](#)

Yearly; on the three solemn feasts, in which they used some honest and holy recreations; among which dancing was one, [Ex 15:20](#); [1Sa 18:6](#); [2Sa 6:14](#); and probably it was the feast of tabernacles, which they did celebrate with more than ordinary joy, [De 16:13-15](#).

Which is on the north side of Beth-el, Heb. *which is on the north of Beth-el*. Which doth not relate to *Shiloh*, which was so known a place, that it was frivolous to describe it by such circumstances, even by places much less known than itself; but to the *feast*, which as to that part or exercise of the feast here especially concerned and mentioned, to wit, the dancing of the virgins, was not celebrated in Shiloh, but in a neighboring place more convenient for that purpose.

[Jdg 21:20-21](#)

The daughters of Shiloh; by whom he may possibly understand not those only who were born or settled inhabitants there, (as many conceive,) but all those who were come thither upon this occasion, and for a time sojourned there; for although only the males were obliged to go up to the three solemn feasts, yet it is apparent that the women had liberty to go, and those who were most devout did usually go, and others, upon special reasons or occasions: see [1Sa 1:7, 21](#); [2:1](#); [Lu 2:22-23, 41-43](#). And it may be justly presumed, especially concerning those women that lived at no great distance from the place of public worship, that they came thither in great numbers. Moreover, the daughters of Shiloh, strictly so called, are not only they that lived in that town or city, but in the country belonging to it, which off comes under the name of the city to which it belongs. And these may be here particularly named, because though others might come, yet they were under great obligations to come, because of their nearness to the place.

The vineyards were near to their dancing-place.

Catch ye every man his wife; take them away by force or violence; which they might the better do, because mixed dances were not used by the people of God in their solemnities, but the women danced by themselves, and therefore were more liable to this rape.

[Jdg 21:22](#)

Be favourable unto them; pass by their offence, if not for their sakes, whom necessity forced to this course; yet for our sakes, and indeed for your own sakes; for both you and we have done them a great injury in prosecuting them with so much fury, as to endanger the utter extinction of the whole tribe; and therefore this is the least we can do by way of reparation.

*In the war; either, first, In the war with Jabesh-gilead, wherein they should have taken care to reserve a sufficient number, which they might have done, by sparing either so many of the married women as were necessary, who, their former husbands being slain, might have been married to those Benjamites; or as many of the younger virgins, who, within a little time, might have been married to them, whom many suppose that they slew. Or, secondly, In the war with the Benjamites, in which they acknowledge their cruelty in destroying the women with such fury, as not to leave a competent number for the men which were left. See [Jdg 20:48](#). *Ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty.**

Quest. Whether this did really discharge them from their oath?

Ans. First, It seems to excuse those parents of these virgins who were not acquainted with the plot, and did neither directly nor indirectly give their daughters to them, but they were taken away by force, without their knowledge and consent. If it be said those parents might and should have retaken their daughters from them; it may be replied, that they could not do so before they were corrupted, and the rulers of Israel would not assist them with their power to recover them. And it is a maxim, That many things which ought not to be done, when once they are done, should not be undone. And for those parents who were conscious of the design, it is probable they kept their daughters at home to avoid this. Secondly, Either the oath was made with an exception of the case of the total extirpation of a tribe, or it was a rash oath to do what was out of their power, or what they could not lawfully do, to wit, utterly to destroy a tribe out of Israel, which therefore they here speak of with horror, [Jdg 21:3, 6](#); and if so, as they sinned in making it, so they were not obliged to keep it; it being an acknowledged truth, that rash and sinful oaths are better broken than kept. Thirdly. Yet they cannot be wholly excused from sin in this matter; for as it was folly to take such an oath as it is expressed, so the manner of freeing themselves from their own snare is fraudulent and injurious to the parents, in disposing of their children without their consent.

[Jdg 21:23-25](#)

*According to their number, i.e. each man his wife, as is said, [Jdg 21:22](#). By which we may see they had no very favourable opinion of *polygamy*, because they did not allow it in this case, when it might seem most necessary for the reparation of a lost tribe.*

Returned into their inheritance; which being very near the place, they could speedily do before the parents could obtain redress.

Repaired the cities, and dwelt in them; not at that instant, which could not be; but by degrees, increasing their buildings as their number increased.