

Expansions on the Book of Judges

Introduction

This text follows the approach taken by a similar one, namely, *Expansions on the Book of Joshua*. In many ways Judges carries over from where Joshua ends, the two forming pretty much one unit. As pointed out in the very first verse, this connection is bridged by the tiny conjunctive *v-*, that word playing an important role throughout the book. However, both the books of Joshua and Judges pose a problem. They go into considerable details of little or no concern to the modern reader—place names, allotment of territory and above all, seemingly endless battles—which initially made me shun from undertaking the current project. Besides, I feared these details might not have any relevance for the practice of *lectio divina*. For example, take a quick glance at the first chapter. It's full of unfamiliar place names, not exactly the best way to get started. These details, quite irrelevant to a modern practitioner of *lectio*, led to a hesitation of inserting the chapters which is in accord with the customary practice I had taken with other “expansion” documents. Then in the end I decided to include the chapters from the **RSV** to orient the reader.

A reminder regarding the word “expansion.” I use it with several biblical texts posted on this site as a way honing in on a given verse, episode or series of events and widening them from within. Thus by remaining within the confines of the text itself, elements found there may be broadened out while taking a certain liberty. And that liberty is always put at the service of doing *lectio divina*, no other reason. If this approach doesn't lead to a resting in God, the text is quite useless, simple as that. Obviously information as to historical characters, places and other matters may be found in other sources.

Words singled out for consideration are transliterated along with references to them in order to see how they compare as well as differ with other usages. Preference, of course, is given to reoccurring words within the Book of Judges. If the word isn't found there, verses from other biblical books are presented. Staying within a given verbal form (kal, for example) is the ideal though this isn't always the case. For example, the verb *hazav* (to forsake, abandon) has multiple forms. Instead of giving either previous or next reference under the guise of another form, the same form will be favored as with 2.12 and 10.6. Another example is with regard 2.19 where the next reference to the form of the verb *shuv* (‘turned back’) is found in 7.3 even though it's found elsewhere before this reference. However, if the same form isn't found, then another reference will be given.

The text of the Book of Judges is taken from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** (Oxford, 1973), that is, the **RSV**. Another translation consulted is **The Zondervan NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, 2000).

The biblical text is in Calibri script (red) whereas the notations are in Nyala script (green). The text at hand is divided into three sections for easier viewing and/or printing.

Chapter One

1) After the death of Joshua the people of Israel inquired of the Lord, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" 2) The Lord said, "Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand." 3) And Judah said to Simeon his brother, "Come up with me into the territory allotted to me that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with you into the territory allotted to you." So Simeon went with him. 4) Then Judah went up and the Lord gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they defeated ten thousand of them at Bezek. 5) They came upon Adoni-bezek at Bezek, and fought against him and defeated the Canaanite and the Perizzites. 6) Adoni-bezek fled; but they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. 7) And Adoni-bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and their great toes cut off used to pick up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has requited me." And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there. 8) And the men of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it and smote it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. 9) And afterward the men of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the hill country, in the Negeb and in the lowland. 10) And Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron (now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba); and they defeated Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai. 11) From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. The name of Debir was formerly Kiriath-sepher. 12) And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, I will give him Achsah my daughter as wife." 13) And Othni-el the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. 14) When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field; and she alighted from her ass, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" 15) She said to him, "Give me a present; since you have set me in the land of the Negeb, give me also springs of water." And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. 16) And the descendants of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah which lies in the Negeb near Arad; and they went and settled with the people. 17) And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they defeated the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. 18) Judah also took Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory. 19) And the Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain because they had chariots of iron. 20) And Hebron was given to Caleb as Moses had

said; and he drove out from it the three sons of Anak. 21) But the people of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who dwelt in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have dwelt with the people of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day. 22) The house of Joseph also went up against Bethel; and the Lord was with them. 23) And the house of Joseph sent to spy out Bethel. (Now the name of the city was formerly Luz.) 24) And the spies saw a man coming out of the city, and they said to him, "Pray, show us the way into the city, and we will deal kindly with you." 25) And he showed them the way into the city; and they smote the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go. 26) And the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city and called its name Luz; that is its name to this day. 27) Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and its villages or Taa-nach and its villages or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. 28) When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor but did not utterly drive them out. 29) And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them. 30) Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and became subject to forced labor. 31) Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon or of Ahlab or of Achzib or of Helbah or of Aphik or of Rehob; 32) but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out. 33) Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth-anath but dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor for them. 34) The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the plain; 35) the Amorites persisted in dwelling in Harheres, in Aijalon and in Shalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily upon them, and they became subject to forced labor. 36) And the border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela and upward.

The Book of Judges begins with the conjunctive *v-* or and, a feature noted often with regard not only to the Book of Judges but concerning other books. This smallest of words...actually a single letter...serves to show the close connection of events. It gives the text the feel of a fast read but not fast in the modern sense which is more along the lines of making haste. The conjunctive here remains not translated in the **RSV** but is of special importance because it begins a new book. That means Joshua and Judges may be taken as one unit. As soon as you've finished the last verse of the former you jump seamlessly into the first verse of the latter, no distinction being made though certainly there is one. In other words, it's hard to put your finger on this break between two books but not so much when reading the original Hebrew text.

Once you settle down to read Judges in the spirit of *lectio divina*, the conjunctive takes over and propels you forward, so it's worth pausing a bit at this threshold of a new book where, like Moses on Mount Nebo, you take in all its contents at a single glance. Also you could insert yourself in Joshua's place who shortly before his death at the end of the last book gazed into the future. Israel had conquered Canaan and was beginning the process of reclaiming it as their heritage, a drawn-out affair fraught with endless difficulties and relapses. So all the triumphs and failures of Israel are bound together by the tiny *v-*.

Behind the painful process of reclaiming Canaan and the continuous apostasy by Israel, you wonder if any of the original inhabitants were present. That is to say, during the time of the patriarch Joseph the tribes moved to Egypt to escape famine and flourished there. Perhaps not all Israelites went, some staying behind, somehow clinging to the old ways of worshipping the Lord and fending off attempts at assimilation by the Canaanites. Nothing is said of this, of whether the Israelites entering Canaan had encountered these so-called survivors, but some must have remained. So despite the depressing apostasy depicted throughout Judges, this silent tiny minority continued along at the heart of it all. Without them Israel's ultimate victory over the Philistines and abandonment of Canaanite worship wouldn't have succeeded.

As expected, Judges begins with mention of Joshua's death, the verb "to be" prefaced with the conjunctive *v-* rendering it as *vayehy*, and was. Although Chapter Two has more to say about this leader who was revered second only to Moses, we get an unmistakable sense of loss, that Israel had no other choice but to move on without him. This is intimated clearly by the two words "after" (Joshua's death) and "who" (shall be the new leader). In other words, Israel gets down to the business of inquiring of the Lord about what to do now, the verb being *sha'al* which also means to ask. It is joined with the preposition *b-* which reads literally "in the Lord." "And he caught a young man of Succoth and questioned him" [8.14]. The question at hand is more than rhetorical. It represents what each person was asking himself as well as posing to everyone else. So at such a critical juncture Israel may be viewed as one huge question in need of one huge answer and in need of it right away.

The two examples just cited show that *sha'al* is a direct type of verb, no beating about the bush, and expects a response. How it's done is not stated. Previously the people would have Joshua do the *sha'al*, but here they have to do it collectively without him. They bumbled around at first, but it was a learning experience minus their beloved leader. Chances are the Levites played a key role by the casting of lots as in Jos 18.8, and the place most likely for this is Shiloh mentioned in the same verse. If this approach wasn't taken, then perhaps a sacrifice was in order.

The content of Israel's inquiry is with respect to a new leader who will assume Joshua's mantle in the war against the Canaanites. Reading this verse gives the impression that

while Israel essentially had invaded Canaan, her foothold remains tentative and needs to be strengthened. Actually vs. 1 gives the impression of being way back at the beginning of the Book of Joshua when the people had just come from the Sinai desert to the border of Canaan at the Jordan River. Inserted within the request of vs. 1 is the noun *techilah* rendered as “first” or more specifically “beginning.” As with the proper name for “Lord” just noted, it is prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as “in the beginning.” Also it might be noted that *b-* is prefaced to “it” or Canaan though the **RSV** reads “them.” That is to say, “to fight in it.” Use of the first person singular in the question reveals some hesitation to press forward with what needs to be done, hoping that someone will emerge and take the burden of a new leader off everyone's shoulder.

Vs. 2 begins with an important use of the conjunctive *v-* as and. That is to say, it follows immediately with a response from the Lord as to Israel's *sha'al* or request for a leader to succeed Joshua. When reading the text, you can get the impression that the people are speaking in normal fashion followed by the Lord doing the same. In other words, we have a back-and-forth dialogue intended by the Lord and not to be broken. That, of course, isn't the case. Let's suppose now that the Levites had cast the lots with the entire nation surrounding them. Several castings may have been done until the Levites got it right, but again, nobody knows the details which are sketchy and left to the imagination. The most important thing is that each and every Israelite is involved collectively feeling a divine communication in the hushed silence of what possibly was the newly built or temporary temple at Shiloh.

When Judah was chosen, everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief. But as the text moves on, there seems to be almost a blurring of distinction between Judah as an individual and Judah as a tribe. Actually the text doesn't do anything to clarify the situation, to distinguish the individual from the tribe and visa-versa. However, that is secondary. In the more immediate context, Achan was of this tribe (cf. Jos 7.1), the individual who took valuables from the ruins of Jericho, which caused him to be stoned to death along with his family. We could say that the divine choice of Judah came to alleviate memory of this burden which had weighed heavily upon members of the tribe. What made it worse was that Israel as a nation had entered Canaan, and for Judah to get off on such a wrong foot didn't bode well. Now Judah—the individual person and collective tribe—could redeem itself in the eyes of Israel. Besides, later in history Jerusalem would become the capitol of Israel, being located in Judah's allotted territory.

As with Moses and Joshua, we have no real information about Judah, let alone his death. Should any individual or tribe have feelings of jealousy, that would have to wait until later. Now Judah could turn attention to subduing the rest of Canaan, Israel's position still being quite tenuous. Within the collective conscious of the tribe of Judah are the words of Jacob addressed not only to their patriarch but to the other eleven brothers: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet...and

to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” [Gn 49.10].

Judging by the words of vs. 2 ('I have given the land into his hand'), Judah might think the task ahead would be relatively easy, not unlike the Lord's words to Joshua, “into the land which I am giving to them” [Jos 1.2]. However, Judah recalled these words in light of past events and knew the task wouldn't be as easy as it sounds. In one sense it would, provided the people remain obedient to the Lord, but the just mentioned Achan story and subsequent lapses into idolatry would complicate matters considerably. With this in mind, wisely Judah asks his brother Simeon to accompany him, again, this being the possibility of either a tribe-to-tribe request or from one individual to another. Then again, Judah may have made this request with less than pure intention, having an eye towards getting all the glory from a weaker sibling and/or tribe. As a footnote in the **RSV** says, “the tribe of Simeon plays no significant role in the later history of Israel.” Although Simeon is invited to tag along, he would receive little recompense. Also the other tribes might consider this a magnanimous request on Judah's part, asking the least among them to help in subduing Canaan. However, Judah had other plans. He would come off as the leader among his brethren. To bolster his divine election later on during instances of any inter-tribal strife, Judah would refer to the words of vs. 2, “I have given the land into his hand” and not the hand of anyone else.

Simeon takes the bait in vs. 3, going along with Judah and somewhat proud of having been chosen in this endeavor to finish subduing Canaan. If he succeeded, Simeon's stature would soar in the eyes of his fellow Israelites. Furthermore, he would have Judah as a big brother to protect him from both the other tribes as well as from any remaining Canaanite threat. Judah invites Simeon into the “territory allotted” to him, *goral* being the word which means anything that falls by lot and harkens back to the distribution of Canaan in Chapter Fifteen of the Book of Joshua. It has one other reference in Judges, 20.9: “But this is what we will do to Gibe-ah; we will go up against it by lot.” By having the weaker Simeon partake of this *goral*, Judah allows him to be one with him, knowing that never will he be powerful enough to pose a threat. Thus vs. 3 concludes with the independent sentence, “So Simeon went with him,” that is, for better or for worse, into the larger safety net of his *goral*.

Already attention has been drawn to the conjunctive \wedge and again at the beginning of vs. 4 where it serves to demonstrate a close connection between events, Simeon's collusion with Judah and the resulting initial military successes. The conjunctive reads here as “then,” the consequence being the subjugation of both Canaanites and Perizzites, both mentioned way back in Gn 13.7: “At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land,” that is, peoples with whom the then-named Abram had to contend. Note the words “into their hand” are used which reflect “into his (Judah) hand” of vs. 2. Conquest is, of course, meant but more than waging battles. Another intent is to use the subjected peoples to an end Judah has in mind which by all accounts means slavery in one form or

another. The defeat of both peoples is at Bezek, generally considered as not certain.

The conjunctive *v-* introducing vs. 4 serves to present Judah and his brother Simeon as supported by the Lord as they advanced victoriously first over the Canaanites and Perizzites followed by the defeat of Adoni-bezek (cf. vs. 6) whom they caught and disfigured by cutting off his thumbs and big toes. The same fate befell seventy other kings, impressive sounding at first, but king can refer to the head of a small-ish tribe or clan.

Vs. 7 has Adoni-bezek (Adoni meaning king or ruler of Bezek) saying upon his capture that peoples used to pick up pieces of left-over food from his table. Now the situation is reversed, if you will, which Adon-bezek puts in terms of being requited by the Lord, the Lord obviously referring to the God of Israel. The verb is *shalam*, the root of *shalom*: "I will not keep silent, but I will repay, yes, I will repay into their bosom their iniquities and their fathers' iniquities together" [Is 65.6-7]. This image is reminiscent of Mt 15.27 concerning a Canaanite woman, a non-Jew more or less equivalent with the native population Joshua and then Judah were bent on annihilating. Approaching Jesus after having been rebuffed by him with regard to healing her daughter she says "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." This woman used this story from Judges and decided to apply it to Jesus who naturally took the bait. Jesus knew the story as well, so these words between the two are a kind of verbal sparring match.

After having captured Adoni-bezek, Judah and Simeon brought him to Jerusalem where he had died. It should be noted, however, that Jerusalem hadn't come into Israelite possession until the time of King David (cf. 2Sam 5.6-7). And so this incident is a foreshadowing of that event known in part by the two men/tribes. Evidently they dropped this local king off as a warning to the city's inhabitants not to mess with the Israelites. Even if Jerusalem remained a Canaanite stronghold up to David's time, already its fate was sealed as intimated by the closing words of vs. 7, "and he died there."

The assault and destruction of Jerusalem in vs. 8 conflicts with its just mentioned capture much later by King David. Most likely this refers to a temporary capture some time after Judah and Simeon had dropped off Adoni-bezek and his subsequent death. Here the "men of Judah" are the ones who captured the city; nothing is said of Simeon who is mentioned one more time in Judges before disappearing from the scene, that is to say, vs. 17. Vs. 8 reads literally as "fought in (*b-*) Jerusalem" after which they burned it...to the ground or otherwise isn't specified. No booty is reported as having been taken, probably still haunted by the memory of Achan after the fall of Jericho which had a profound effect on the Israelites in all subsequent battles where they had captured towns, etc.

The conjunctive *v-* begins vs. 9 as and prefixed to *'achar* or after (i.e., 'and after') to show that Judah and Simeon showed no sign of stopping their continued mission of conquest

initiated by Joshua. Surely they must have thought of him frequently, invoking his spirit for assistance. The next stop? The south of Jerusalem, the hill country, Negeb and lowland about which we have no information. However, that's incidental in light of the fast-paced action intimated by the conjunctive. Judah's intent is to subjugate the entire land of Canaan as quickly as possible.

Vs. 11 has the conjunctive prefaced to the verb *halak* reading “and they went,” that is, against the inhabitants of Debir in the vicinity of Hebron. What follows from this verse through vs. 15 is a virtual repetition of Jos 15.15-19, a description of the territory allotted to the tribe of Judah, and serves to demonstrate their having taken it. As noted above, the distinction between Judah as a person and an individual seems to be blurred, that being secondary.

Vs. 16 speaks of the descendants of Moses' father-in-law called the Kenite who joined with the “people of Judah,” that is, emphasis upon the tribe. Chances are this refers to Jethro, priest of Midian, one of whose daughters (Zipporah) Moses took in marriage (cf. Ex 2.15-22). Apparently these Kenites hooked up with the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness at Mount Horeb and continued with them from there into Canaan. Thus by marriage to Moses the Kenites had a special place and found the land of Canaan a wonderful opportunity to settle after the barrenness of their previous habitation. Furthermore, they would have the added protection of the Israelites in case the Canaanites consider them as traitors. As time went on, the priestly element of the Kenites may have come into conflict with the Levites though there is no information about that. As for the verse at hand, the Kenites went with Judah from the “city of palms” into the wilderness of Judah, possibly inferring Jericho which at this time could have been in the process of reconstruction by the Israelites after its destruction under Joshua. They entered the land of Judah, that is, with the people of Judah (cf. vs. 16) and “settled with the people” which comprised the tribe of Judah in its newly established territory.

The next phase of conquest/settlement indicated by the conjunctive *v-* begins vs. 17 when Judah joins with Simeon who is mentioned in Judges for the last time. Everything goes well through Gaza and Ekron which leads vs. 19 to note that “the Lord was with Judah” although “with” is lacking in the Hebrew text. In other words it reads literally “and the Lord was Judah.” So between this point and the beginning of Judah's military exploits we have a continuation of what the Lord had said to Joshua in vs. 2 (‘I have given the land into his hand’). Judah had been conscious of a divine presence though not as intense or intimate as had been both with Joshua and his predecessor, Moses. Problems of a new kind will rear their heads shortly not so much by subversive military activity on the part of the Canaanites but Israel's enticement by the local gods, something Joshua himself had warned about. Now the stage is set for real struggle to begin which will plague much of Israel's history and in many ways make the Book of Judges rather depressing. This could be intimated by Judah's inability to drive out the “inhabitants of the plain” in vs. 19

because they possessed iron chariots.

Vs. 20 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which serves to move the action right along in non-stop fashion and where Hebron is given to Caleb in accord with the promise made by Moses in Num 14.24: “But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.” Caleb had been one of the spies sent to reconnoiter Canaan and hence one of the first to get a view of the land. Note how Moses singles him out, being possessed of a different spirit or a *ruach* which is '*achereth*...distinct from the other spies who had accompanied him. Such a difference results in having followed the Lord fully.

Up to vs. 20 the bulk of Chapter One deals with the conquests by Judah assisted in part by his brother/tribe, Simeon. Vs. 21 mentions the role of Benjamin who failed to subdue the Jebusites inhabiting Jerusalem. Apparently this city which Judah had destroyed back in vs. 8 was resettled quickly. However, the “people of Benjamin” failed to dislodge them “to this day” [vs. 21], this phrase continuing to be a kind of taunt and a thorn in Israel's side until the advent of King David.

The tribe mentioned next (vs. 22) is Joseph which besieged Bethel, and like Judah in vs. 19, “the Lord was with them.” This incident is preceded by Joseph advancing upon the city and spying it out, *tur* being the verb which also means to search and to select. “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan which I give to the people of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you send a man, everyone a leader among them” [Num 13.2]. The **RSV** has in parentheses, “Now the name of the city was formerly Luz.” This hearkens back to the days of Jacob who had named it Bethel (House of God) which, it seems, the Canaanites hadn't changed all those years. They must have had some ambivalence having a town with an Israelite name, but given the high value placed upon naming a place, were in the end reluctant to change it back to Luz. Now the Canaanites are on the verge of being revisited by Jacob's descendants and must have cursed the fact that they didn't revert to the name Luz. It was here, of course, that Jacob had his famous dream of a ladder between heaven and earth with angels descending and ascending and when the Lord said “the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants” [Gn 28.13]. Little did Jacob know that these descendants weren't immediate his offspring but those who would come several centuries later.

Note that in vs. 22 Joseph is designated by the word “house,” not “people,” as elsewhere or applied to Judah, that designation possibly out of honor for the patriarch who had sheltered his brothers in Egypt and who got the whole process rolling four centuries later with Moses and the Exodus. After having taken position some distance from Bethel, the Josephites decided to wait for one man...just one...to exit the city. After he had gone some distance out of view of any lookouts, the Josephites simply walked up to him. They must have seen a number of people going in and out of Bethel but waited for someone who

looked disposed in their favor, perhaps not unlike Rahab who had welcomed the spies at Jericho. The giveaway may have been by a kind of innocent look on his face, also perhaps lonely and anxious, whom they decided was ripe for their purposes. Still, approaching this man was a gamble.

With so much riding on the future, the spies took a deep breath and approached this individual, careful not to be seen by anyone else in the vicinity. They asked to be shown the way into Bethel...obviously not one of the gates but some little used entrance or secret passageway. The spies were quick to say that they would “deal kindly” with him, *chesed* being the word which generally is considered untranslatable. To show *chesed* has something divine about it and is more encompassing than love or respect while containing them both. It occurs one other occasion in Judges, 8.35: “and they did not show kindness to the family of Jerubbaal in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.” Again, such words are reminiscent of Joshua's spies to Rahab: “Now, then, swear to me by the Lord that as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign” [Jos 2.12].

Here and the next few verses show the importance of the conjunctive *v-*, that is, the close connection between events, the suddenness with which this unidentified Bethelite assisted the spies. *V-* speaks volumes, really, of this man. He didn't hesitate a minutes to cooperate not out of force but from a spirit similar to Rahab: “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you” [Jos 2.9]. In vs. 25 (another conjunctive) this Bethelite simply showed the spies the way into the city, *mebo'* being used as in the previous verse and means more an entering or a coming. In other words, *mebo'* can apply to any sort of entryway. “Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud” [Prov 8.3]. Although the situation at hand could mean that the Bethelite knew a hidden entrance, one gets the impression that he brought them directly into the city. Apparently this didn't rouse suspicion, he having just gone out and was returning with several strangers. It seems the Lord deadened the eyesight of those around this man enabling him to bring in the spies. This, of course, was necessary, for people always had their eyes peeled on who went in and who went out the city gate.

Vs. 25 has two additional conjunctives: “*and* they smote the city with the edge of the sword, *but* they let the man and all his family go” [vs. 25]. Given the magical-mystical power of the Josephites as well as the other Israelite tribes as supported by the Lord, the spies—and we don't have an exact number—managed to put to death everyone within Bethel within a short period of time. After that had been accomplished, as with Rahab, they let go the man who had aided them, along with his family. At the time family or *mishpachah* can imply extended relations, and that can involve a fairly large amount of Bethel's population. Again, the parallel with Rahab: “and brought out Rahab and her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her” [Jos 6.23].

Perhaps the Bethelite and his family had an escort while leaving the ruins of his city, for word got out quickly that he had betrayed his own people. Vs. 26 says that he went directly to the land of the Hittites or Syria and built a city which he called Luz after the original name of Bethel. The same verse states with some irony that Luz “is its name to this day.” Ironical, that is, insofar as the man and his household whom the spies had graciously spared seemed to turn their backs on their rescuers by naming this new place without any reference to the original place of Jacob's dream. At least they could do this safely to the north in Syria, sufficiently distant from Israel's reach which was too occupied in trying to subdue Canaan.

For the rest of Chapter One Judges turns its attention to six other tribes of Israel, each with varying degrees of success in continuing the subjection of Canaan begun by Joshua. Unlike Judah and Joseph, there's no explicit mention of the Lord being with them, suggesting that they started out with good intent but for one reason or another, had faltered in the process.

Vs. 27 starts with the tribe of Manasseh which seemed to go about their conquest half-heartedly perhaps due to a lack of superior leadership as with the tribes of Judah and Joseph. The text says quite plainly, they “did not drive out the inhabitants” (of such-and-such places). *Yarash* is the verb which also means to inherit or possess and is found next in vs. 28: “but did not utterly drive them out.” In other words, Manasseh not only failed to *yarash* (drive out) the peoples but failed to *yarash* (to inherit) the land. The Canaanites capitalized on this failure and thus persisted in dwelling in their respective places, *ya'al* being the verb which also means to begin, endeavor. *Ya'al* is found next in vs. 35: “the Amorites persisted in dwelling in Har-heres.” After all, the Canaanites were defending their homeland and easily could perceive if their enemy had the requisite fortitude and persistence to drive them out.

Vs. 28 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as when in reference to what appears as a later period of time, that is, after the Manassehites had failed to demonstrate not just a resolute attitude but more importantly, one with reliance upon the Lord. Here we have mention of the Israelites which can mean that the other tribes came to the aide of Manasseh at a later unspecified time or when Israel grew strong or *chazaq* which means to tie or bind fast. “And afterward your hand shall be strengthened to go down against the camp” [7.11]. All tribes were struggling to continue the mission begun by Joshua and now handed down to what appears as to the tribes functioning individually, not the earlier more cohesive whole.

Instead of attempting to wipe out the Canaanites on behalf of Manasseh, Israel changed its tactics in light of having been in this new land for a longer period of time. They were hard pressed not just to continue battling the natives but to maintain hard-won territory.

Then someone came up with the brilliant idea to put the Canaanites into forced labor or *mas* which also means tribute, a word found next in vs. 30. *Mas*, of course, is another word for slavery but one with a specific intent where some type of payment is due. Some of the Israelites had reservations about this since it was reminiscent of not long ago when they had been in a similar situation in Egypt. That's why there weren't surprised by the words in vs. 30 as "but did not utterly drive them out." Both sides dug in and would not relent with the Canaanites holding a slight advantage. They knew the Israelites experience of *mas* and that it had the potential of making those subject to it stronger in spirit. As for the words "did not utterly drive them out," we have the verb *yarash* doubled, if you will, or mentioned twice.

Vs. 29 makes brief mention of another tribe (Ephraim) which fared no better than Manasseh. That is to say, they failed in the same *yarash* with regard to Canaanites dwelling in Gezer. The difference, however, seems slight but has long-term implication as to Canaanite influence upon Israel when it comes to matters of worship. Here the Canaanites are presented as having dwelt among Israel, *qerev* suggestive of the middle or center of something. *Qerev* intimates that even at this early stage the Canaanites were succeeding in nullifying the impact of the Israelite invasion. If they could continue with this (so went the reasoning), before long Israel could be driven from the land.

Vss. 30-34 continue this rapidly degrading situation beginning with the tribe of Zebulun which failed to drive out or *yarash* the inhabitants of two cities. Subsequent verses paint the same bleak picture for the tribes of Asher, Naphtali and Dan. Again, the Canaanites remained and dwelt among this tribe. So by now the strategy adopted by the Canaanites is coming into clearer focus. Let the Israelite tribes do their thing but only as individuals, not as a unified nation. Within a short period of time they will be worn down and forced to withdraw. Ideally the Canaanites would like to see the Israelites pushed back into the Sinai desert and then into Egypt where they'd be annihilated totally.

As for the tribe of Dan, vs. 24 mentions that the Amorites resisted them even though the tribe of Joseph had some success. In fact, the Amorites "pressed" Dan, *lachats* meaning to squeeze that tribe. Note only that, they did it uphill, if you will, "back into the hill country." Note that the other reference in Judges for *lachats* is 4.3: "and oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years." And so the Danites were stuck up there looking down on the plain with envy and humiliation. Most likely afterwards the tribes gathered together and compared notes, lamenting the fact that each one took its own initiative minus consultation of the others. Now the stage was set for many years of future conflict and tension between Israel and those who inhabited Canaan.

And so Chapter One began with bright hopes after the leadership shown by Joshua in the previous book. Now Judah takes up the mantel assisted in a minor way by Simeon. As noted then, a read of the text doesn't seem to be clear whether these two were

individuals or tribes, possibly switching in between which reflects in part the close identity a person had with his tribe and nation.

Chapter Two

1) Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land which I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you, 2) and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command. What is this you have done? 3) So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you." 4) When the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5) And they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the Lord. 6) When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. 7) And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had seen all the great work which the Lord had done for Israel. 8) And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. 9) And they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. 10) And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel. 11) And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; 12) and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. 13) They forsook the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. 14) So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them; and he sold them into the power of their enemies round about so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. 15) Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them; and they were in sore straits. 16) Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. 17) And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down to them; they soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. 18) Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and

oppressed them. 19) But whenever the judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. 20) So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he said, "Because this people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers and have not obeyed my voice, 21) I will not henceforth drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died 22) that by them I may test Israel whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord as their fathers did or not." 23) So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua.

After a somewhat depressing conclusion to the first chapter, the second one commences on a more upbeat note. It's introduced with the familiar conjunctive *v-* as now along with the appearance of an angel or *mal'ak* found next in vs. 4 and then in 5.23, the latter possibly being the same being in Deborah's song: "Curse Meroz,' says the angel of the Lord." *Mal'ak*, of course, refers primarily to a messenger, one who delivers information. Note the importance of attributing the angel/messenger as "of the Lord," for it could be from another source which is sinister in nature. Given the hints already made of Israel's contact with Canaanite idols, the author of Judges had to make sure that those to whom this heavenly being is sent does not confuse his appearance as being associated with one of these idols.

The angel/messenger has no name, for that is secondary to his mission which implies that as soon as he accomplishes it, he returns to God's presence. He comes first to Gilgal which where Joshua had set up the twelve stones from the Jordan River (cf. Jos 12.20 & 4.19+), deliberately choosing that place to assure Israel of his identity with them through the stones. Apparently no one is at Gilgal to meet the *mal'ak* who went alone to Bochim which is defined in vs. 5, as "Weepers," these being the only two biblical references and sometimes identified with Bethel. Such is the content of the first of two sentences in the opening verse. In sum, there is no certainty as to the location of Bochim, but the verb "went up" or *halah* suggests that the angel/messenger had made an ascent from Gilgal by the Jordan River to an elevated spot which could be Bethel (cf. 1.23, 'up against Bethel'). If so, the angel is returning to a place familiar to him where Jacob had his dream with "the angels of God ascending and descending" [Gn 28.12] on a ladder between heaven and earth. So to get to Gilgal in the first place, the angel/messenger had to descend the same ladder conveniently moved to that locale. He had no need of walking but simply to get back on the ladder which relocated to Bochim or Bethel after which he descended, all in an instant.

The second sentence has the *mal'ak* present with the Israelites. Nothing is said whether several or all the tribes were present, let alone how the Israelites recognized him. He begins with a familiar theme speaking in the first person singular as though he were the

Lord himself: “I brought you up from Egypt” (etc.). Such a direct approach convinced his listeners that he was a genuine representative of the Lord, more his mouthpiece, as these words echoed deep and true within their collective memory. Note that the same verb (*halah*) is used a second time, “brought (you) up,” the first referring to the angel/messenger's ascent from Gilgal to Bochim. If this *mal'ak* had been the representative of a Canaanite deity, never would he utter such words.

The angel continues with his message speaking in the Lord's place that he (the Lord) will never break the covenant made with his people, *parar* being the verb meaning not just to break into pieces but to make void and is the only use in Judges. “Remember and do not break your covenant with us” [Jer 14.21]. Now is a critical time for reassurance from a divine being sent the Lord, in a sense better than if Moses or Joshua had appeared for they were one step removed, as it were, from him. Those listening attentively recalled the many times their recent ancestors failed to keep the covenant while wandering in the Sinai desert. As they continued listening and with their exposure to Canaanite deities, they could see the future as succumbing to them despite their best of intentions.

In vs. 2 the angel/messenger gets to the heart of the matter which was on the minds of everyone, that is, not to associate with the local population. He goes further by saying they must not make a covenant with them, the verb *karath* meaning more to cut with regard to a *beryth*, the latter term just mentioned in vs. 1. Judges has one other reference to *beryth*, vs. 20: “Because this people has transgressed my covenant which I commanded their father and have not obeyed my voice.” If the Israelites were to cut such a covenant, the one made by the Lord—and that harkens back to the one made with Moses in Chapter Twenty-Four—it would be nullified at once. And so the angel/messenger is simply echoing the warning in Ex 23.32-33: “Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.” As for the altar, it is the customary place to seal a covenant which means the offering of a sacrifice. Hence the Israelites are to “break (them) down,” *natats* being the verb as in 8.9: “When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.”

The angel continues to relay his message from the Lord, the first sentence of vs. 2 about covenants being a preface of sorts. Now he gets to the heart of the matter, that Israel hasn't heeded the Lord's command or *qol* which fundamentally means voice. Next he adds a rhetorical question, “What is this you have done?” Of course, the people couldn't answer but stand there in silence completely stunned. Although some collusion with the Canaanites is mentioned in the Book of Joshua, it didn't seem as prevalent as it does now. That means a lot had been going on secretly and not reported to the leaders, etc. So does this mean the Canaanites would close in upon the Israelites and reciprocate with total annihilation this so early in the conquest?

In vs. 3 the angel/messenger says flatly that he (that is, the Lord) will not drive out the Canaanites, *garash* being the verb which also means to plunder or to spoil. "I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians...and drove them out before you and gave you their land" [6.9]. Later generations of Israelites would look back on this with considerable painful memories, for their ancestors had been engaged in a pitched battle lasting centuries, intense here and less there, along with the thorn of idol worship in their side. How true that the Canaanites will become "adversaries" which reads literally sides, *tsad*. The idea seems to be that Israel will be pressed in from all four sides and unable to escape. This can be a fate worse than outright destruction or banishment...more a torturous confinement when the Canaanites can apply pressure anytime they wish, the ultimate taunt. While this is transpiring, their gods will be a "snare" to Israel, *moqesh*. With Israel pressed in from four sides as in box, the Canaanite gods will snare them by the feet, disabling them even from moving around within their confined space. "And all Israel played the harlot after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family" [8.27].

The angel/messenger finishes his stern warning after which he departs though nothing is said about it. Most likely he returned the way he came, that is from Bochim where he finds himself with the Israelites to Gilgal. Plenty of thoughts were running through his mind, of how he will give his report to the Lord. At least he did his duty and is off the hook. Once at Gilgal he ascends the ladder into heaven, relaying his impressions of Israel's future to the Lord with disappointment and trepidation. There in the divine presence he begged the Lord not to send him on another mission though as mentioned in conjunction with vs. 1, he is sent in 5.23 to curse Meroz.

The people's response was typical, though to the eyes of the angel/messenger, shallow. First they raised their voices, an automatic gesture simultaneous with the *mala'k's* communication and having no chance to respond: "when the angel of the Lord spoke" or *ky* prefaced to *davar* (to speak) which can be rendered "as the angel of the Lord spoke." In conjunction with this raising of their voices the people wept or *bakah*. "Let me alone two months that I may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity" [1.37]. The experience was so profound that the Israelites decided to call the place Bochim which is derived from *bakah*. In a gesture to show their sincerity, they offered a sacrifice which hopefully reached the Lord before the angel/messenger returned to Gilgal and ascended back to the Lord's presence and give his report.

Vs. 6 brings Joshua back on the scene which seems at odds with the opening verse of Judges ('after the death of Joshua'), not being mentioned in between then and the verse at hand. One observation that might help is the emphasis upon the tribe/individual person of Judah and Simeon continuing their leader's mission to conquer Canaan, so the precise time of Joshua's death is secondary. In other words, his insertion can be put anywhere that's convenient for telling the story at hand.

Joshua dismisses the people after their so-called mourning period or *bakah*, he knowing that they have to get on with the business of consolidating their gains. He urged them not to be concerned about the angel/messenger giving his report. They can't do anything about it except move on as best they can. Each of the twelve tribes went to their respective places of inheritance to take possession of Canaan, *yarash* being the verb as in the original injunction of Jos 1.11: "For within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess." The *yarash* of vs. 6 suggests that the Israelites hadn't succeeded fully but must apply themselves earnestly in order to secure what they believe is duly theirs.

In a sense, vs. 7 carries over this idea of *yarash* through the service to the Lord rendered by the people, that is, while Joshua remained alive as well as those elders who outlived him. Such leaders were formed under the tutelage of Moses in the Sinai wilderness, even a few going all the way back to the Exodus and before that, oppression under the Egyptian pharaoh. They are characterized by having witnessed the Lord's great work, singular being used which intimates a continuity between all the divine interventions from Egypt through Sinai and now in Canaan. Because the reservoir of experienced leaders has dried up, the people must learn to make due which doesn't imply they lack resources. Yearning for those days is part of why the people faltered in their task which now affected the way they comported themselves. Some time has to pass between the educative years under experienced leaders and future ones who will appear at the right time. However, for now the people are held in abeyance which they hope won't last long.

The introduction of Joshua in Chapter Two hearkens back to his final act of making a covenant in Jos 24.25 onward. While the verse at hand seems to suggest it is at Bochim, we could substitute Shechem where the covenant had been made. Joshua wrote ordinances in a book as well as having set up a large stone in Shechem as a witness. So instead of Joshua being reported here, the great stone could be giving witness as it was supposed to with regard to the people. So we have two Joshuas, as it were: the physical one and the one whose spirit had passed into the great stone as a witness (cf. Jos 24.27). As for the former Joshua, the people buried him within the bounds of his inheritance, *gevu* suggesting almost that it's fenced off and separate from the other territories as well as land in Canaanite control. *Gevu* is mentioned last in 1.36, "border of the Amorites." Compared with the anonymous burial of Moses, the Lord himself having done it (cf. Dt 34.6), that of Joshua is specific and must have become a place of pilgrimage shortly thereafter. Also the grave site needed constant protection, for the Canaanites would love to destroy any remembrance of their arch-enemy.

Just above a distinction was made between the Greatest Generation of Israel (Moses, Aaron and Joshua plus other notables going back to Egypt) and the current one which seems puny and defenseless by comparison. Vs. 10 refers to it as that generation or

literally “all generation.” There's no problem, really, in such a distinction which is to be expected. The clincher is that the latter generation “did not know the Lord,” the familiar and intimate *yadah* being used. “All in Israel who had no experience of any war in Israel” [3.1]. Secondly, this generation had no *yadah* with regard to the Lord's work (*mahaseh*) he had done (*hasah*) for Israel, this proper name being prefaced with the preposition *l*, literally as to Israel. So without this twofold *yadah* the enterprise begun under Joshua's direction was bound to fail without divine intervention. Ignorance or lack of this *yadah* didn't come on all at once but gradually.

Exposure to Canaanite divinities was doing in the Israelites, for they seemed exotically attractive to a nation that had been wandering in the desert for so many years with a divinity they couldn't see. Now suddenly they found themselves in a land with just as many than Egypt, a welcome relief from the starkness of Sinai. Within a short span of time memory of their religious traditions going back to the Exodus and experience at Mount Sinai quickly fell away. Compare this with the extended time of four hundred years in Egypt, the most sophisticated society of the day which abounded with all sorts of divinities. Yet the Israelites stayed true, for there is no record of them having fallen away. Besides, except for persecution of the pharaoh of Moses' time, the people fared extremely well and weren't forced to adopt local religious practices. Indeed, the contrast of some four hundred years in Egypt vis-a-vis a few years in Canaan is quite something.

Vs. 11 is pretty much what you'd expect after the depressing tone of the previous verse made all the more so by use of the conjunctive *v-* (and) which shows the connection between not knowing the Lord, his work and doing evil or *rah*, also referring to anything hurtful. “Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil” [vs. 15]. Such evil is presented as being in the Lord's sight or more literally, “in his eyes.” Within the same verse the singular adjective *rah* is described more fully as serving the Baals, the proper name for many of the male gods of Canaan mentioned next in vs. 13. In the case at hand, the verb *havad* (served) applies infers being indentured, that starting fairly soon after the invasion.

Vs. 12 fleshes out this servitude to the Baals within the context of Israel's history. That is to say, they forsook the Lord, *hazav* suggestive of loosening bonds, roughness of the letter “z” stressing this. The verb occurs in the next verse as well as 10.6: “and they forsook the Lord and did not serve him.” As for vs. 12, the gravity of the situation is brought home by fleshing out the name of the Lord. He simply isn't called thus but “the Lord, the God of their fathers” who was responsible for bringing Israel from Egypt and some forty years later, for depositing them in Canaan. So while this divine guidance had been in play prior to the Exodus and throughout the Sinai years, it seemed to have had no real effect. That is to say, the Israelites “went after” other gods, the common verb *halak* (cf. 1.11) indicating that they just didn't sit idly by being influenced by Canaanite deities but actively took up their worship as well as the cults surrounding them, their own seeming too transcendent

by comparison. No small wonder we don't hear of any Canaanites converting to Israel.

Although vs. 12 speaks of other gods, it doesn't specify the land of Canaan, implying some influence carried over from a prolonged sojourn in Egypt plus forty years in the Sinai wilderness. The words "round about them" suggest that these gods acted in an almost hostile fashion, taking every opportunity to pierce Israel's religious defensive armor, a conflict bound to last for many years if not centuries to come. By no means is this the first time idol worship "provoked (the Lord) to anger," *kahas* meaning to irritate. "For they provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their grave images" [Ps 78.58]. Vs. 13 simply adds to this verse and the one before it that Israel worships the Baals and Ashtaroah, the latter being the female counterparts of the former. In sum, such worship intimates the presence of sexual activity under the guise of religious practices. "And the people of Israel...served the Baals and the Ashtaroah" [10.6].

Vs. 14 continues this depressing theme which continues for one more verse. You get the impression that the entire nation of Israel had bought into Canaanite deities hook, line and sinker, but obviously a core element remained true to worship the Lord. Nothing is said about them; perhaps they experienced prejudice and in some instances, persecution from their own brethren. They even may have formed alliances and took over cities or areas in which to live unmolested while the rest of the nation went to pot. Things would really go downhill if the Levites or priests had defected. Yet the incident of the Levite in Micah's employment suggests something like this, for he seemed to mingle world of local divinities with that of the Lord (cf. Chapter Seventeen). Hopefully they had been true to their original calling as recorded in Ex 32.26+ when they backed Moses and slew many of their compatriots who had worshiped the golden calf.

As for the verse at hand, the Lord's anger was kindled which consists of the noun *'aph* and the verb *charah*. The former applies to the nose and the latter to doing anything earnestly, so the idea is that the Lord is breathing forth anger in the form of fire and snorting heavily not unlike a mythical dragon. *Charah* is found next in 2.20: "So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Both instances have the preposition *b-* prefaced to Israel reading literally and more vividly "in Israel."

Two things result from this anger, plundering and selling *shasas* and *makar*, the first implying a weakness Israel has experienced shortly after Joshua's death. Two other references are respectively 1Sam 17.53 and 3.8: "And the Israelites came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp." "Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim." The thoroughness of the first is suggested by plunderers being derived from the verb; the same applies to the second in that the enemies are round about or *savyv*. "When I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then blow the trumpets also on every side of the camp" [7.18]. Obviously the Canaanites took great delight in their payback for Israel's

invasion of their land. Not just that, but quickly they learned how the Lord ordered the people to wipe them out without showing any mercy.

Surely their own gods weren't as ruthless, but things have changed. It's now a question of survival. So in the face of the twofold *shasas* and *makar*, Israel couldn't withstand the pressure, *hamad* being the verb meaning to stand. "And all his attendants went out from his presence (*hamad*)" [3.19]. Because the Israelites had settled various parts of Canaan in accord with the allotment doled out by Joshua, one gets the impression that this was done rather thinly. It enabled their enemies to encircle them, thereby isolating tribe from tribe so as not to present a unified front as they had when crossing the Jordan River. Once that had been established, it was only a matter of starving out the Israelites by squeezing in upon them. Then the Israelites' attraction to their own gods turned out to be an unexpected boon, for they hadn't thought it would be so effective in pacifying them.

So here in vs. 15 we have the twelve tribes of Israel surrounded, isolated and experiencing being plundered as well as sold into slavery, some perhaps to foreigners just as eager to get their hand on them as the Canaanites to prevent them from spreading further afield. On occasion the Israelites attempted to break out of their confines but were pursued by "the hand of the Lord" which was against them "for evil," *rah* being the noun prefaced with the preposition *l*, literally as "to evil" (cf. vs. 11). This letter...word...shows the divine power at work resisting the *yatsa'* or breaking forth from their confined areas, working on the side of the Canaanites which must have puzzled the Israelites who were blind to their own apostasy. All the while the Israelites couldn't help but echo the words of their more recent fore-bearers after having crossed the Red Sea, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full. For you have brought us out into this wilderness (now this so-called promised land) to kill this whole assembly with hunger" [Ex 16.3].

Actually the resistance shouldn't come as a surprise, for the Lord has warned Israel beforehand, *davar* being the verb (cf. vs. 4) which means to speak in the sense of giving expression. Once such warning is Jos 23.7: "that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them." If that hadn't sunk into the collective memory of Israel, nothing would do to rectify the situation, hence the consequences in the verses at hand.

Vs. 15 concludes this woeful affliction by the Lord with the words "they were in sore straits," the verb *yatsar* implying narrowness and thus not unlike *savyv* or round about in vs. 14. This situation couldn't last forever: either Canaan would destroy every last Israelite or the Lord would intervene in some dramatic fashion.

Vs. 16 shows a welcomed transition from the harsh condemnation of previous verses beginning with the conjunctive *v-* as then. The Lord decides to take matters into his own hands as he had done earlier on many occasions, that is, he appoints judges, the verb *shaphat* (found in the next two verses). A footnote in the **RSV** calls them “military heroes who, for their services, were entrusted with the powers of government.” We don't have the identity of these *shaphtym* who must have shown leadership and courage while the stranglehold by the Canaanites around each tribe was tightening gradually. *Yashah* (the verbal root for the proper name Jesus) is the verb for saved here with respect to the Canaanite's power which in Hebrew is hand, a hand belonging more precisely to the plunderers. “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian” [6.14].

Despite heroic efforts by these judges, vs. 17 says that the people failed to listen to them. Indeed, they were grateful for their leadership but saw what had been gained as time and room to adopt more local forms of idol worship. So as time goes on, it becomes increasingly clear how powerful is the hold of Canaanite deities upon the Israelites. One could say their influence was stronger than those who plundered and sold them as noted in vs. 14. This makes the appearance of the judges all the more remarkable who had influence over some of their people though we hear nothing about this, an undercurrent paralleling the disobedience depicted in the narrative. The Israelite preference to Canaanite deities is so strong that they prostituted themselves, that is, they played the harlot, *zanah* being the verb as in 8.27: “and all Israel played the harlot after it (ephod) there, and it became a snare to Gideon and to his family.” In the context of this verse, the verb *shachat* (cf. vs. 12 but not mentioned there) as bowed down is equivalent to *zanah*.

In vs. 17 the word *maher* or soon (cf. vs. 23) can also mean quickly, signifying action stemming from *zanah* and *shachat* just noted. It applies to the way or *derek* (cf. 2.19) of the current generation's fathers under which we could include Moses and Aaron as well as Joshua. These notables had similar concerns, of people straying from worship of the Lord, but always managed to bring them back. However, the context in which they operated was more controllable compared with the scattered type of settlement once Israel was within the land of Canaan.

The commandments or *mitsvah* mentioned here are equivalent to *derek* or more precisely, guidelines to keep one on it. Obeying (*shamah* is the common verb meaning to listen) thus is equivalent to walking (*halak*, cf. vs. 12) with the latter coming first. And so being in motion and being passive are one and the same necessity for carrying out the original intent to settle Canaan, the land of Israel's forefathers. The only other reference to *mitsvah* in Judges is 3.4: “They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by Moses.”

The verb *qum* in vs. 18 is used for the second time, the first being vs. 16 and means to

rise as pertaining to judges or military leaders the Lord sets in place, given the fairly desperate situation into which Israel had devolved. Thus *qum* suggests the proximity of divine aide and that it comes...arises...not from without Israel but from within as leaven makes dough rise. *Qum* is used in the verse at hand in a more intimate way, that is, for a while the people of Israel “go flat line” which means either they succumb to Canaanite pressure to adopt native deities or maintain the status quo. Then after some time when things get especially tough the Lord himself is “with the judges” or engages in a *qum* with them though that verb isn’t applied specifically but implied. Once this twofold *qum* happens, the judge “saves” (*yashah*, cf. vs. 16) the people. This doesn’t happen once and for all but for “all the days of the judge” or the entire time he is alive or more accurately, functioning as judge after which another crisis arises with the *qum* process repeating itself over again. Perhaps this continuous alternation has something to do later in history when the people demanded a king instead of a judge, the latter form of government having sprung from the original one.

So once the Lord had raised up a given judge, he was moved to pity or *nacham*, a verb which also means to lament, to take vengeance. “And the people of Israel had compassion for Benjamin, their brother” [21.6]. More specifically, this divine *nacham* comes into play by reason of Israel’s groanings or *ne’aqah* which occurs three other times in the Bible, one of which is Ex 2.24: “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant (etc.)” Chances are the Lord wouldn’t have had this change of heart if it weren’t for the intermediary presence of the judge who absorbed some of the people’s rebellion and presented it to the Lord together with an offering by one of the Levitical priests. The object of divine *nacham* consists of both the affliction and oppression from without, the source not named specifically but most certainly the Canaanites. Two verbs are used here, *lachats* (cf. 1.34) and *dachaq* meaning respectively to squeeze and to thrust or to push. The latter has one other biblical reference, Jl 2.8: “they do not jostle one another, each marches in his path.”

Although the Lord was responsible for having created the office of judges, things were pretty much normal for the Israelites as long as these men remained alive. That is to say, they forsook both the Baals and Ashtaroth and returned to worshipping the Lord. But how did the Lord actually establish judges, and how did the people recognize their authority? The text doesn’t say, just that it came about. Perhaps during one critical incident as when the people suddenly found themselves drawn to idol worship one individual stood up and intervened. The people recognized him as inspired, and so the story grew and formed a pattern, if you will, encouraging others to act accordingly. However, this system had its flaws not because the Lord himself was flawed but because this attraction to local deities was unbelievably strong, like nothing ever encountered, even during four hundred years in Egypt as noted earlier. There Israel was a guest and later became slaves, so the pressure to adopt local deities wasn’t as strong as it is now in Canaan.

Many Israelites had accepted this new system of judges who acted as a break on their tendency to idolatry. They realized this but were afraid to admit openly that all would be well as long as a given judge remained in office. The judges must have been in contact with each other thereby forming an interconnected web where information was shared. Still, when one particular judge died, the people slipped into idolatry with a speed that boggles the mind. Thus vs. 19 breaks this apostasy into six phases, if you will, outlined as follows:

1) Turned back or *shuv* as in 7.3: “Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.”

2) Behaved worse or *shachat* which also means to destroy, aptly applied to the situation at hand and in reference to their fathers who had acted similarly. A reference paralleling the one at hand is Ex 31.9 where the Lord calls Israel a stiff-necked people for having worshiped the golden calf. Another verse with *shachat* is 6.5: “So they wasted the land as they came in.”

3) Going after other gods, the common verb being *halak* (cf. vs. 12) which in a sense doesn’t do justice to the ardent pursuit of these gods.

4) Serving these gods, the verb being *havad* (cf. vs. 11) which also means to be a slave and is prefaced with the preposition *l-* (to), literally as “to be a slave to them.”

5) Bowing down or *shachah* as in vs. 12 but not noted there.

6) Israel failed to drop their ways or *naphal*, the common verb to fall. “All the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword” [4.16]. The suddenness of *naphal* or more precisely, its failure, pertains to Israel’s practices or ways which are stubborn, The former (*mahala*) is derived from a verbal root meaning to bind, set or enter. “Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their deeds” [Ps 28.4]. The latter is the adjective *qasheh* meaning to be hard suggestive that the ways of idolatry on which the people had trodden had become so hard packed that were hard as stone. “And the hand of the people of Israel bore harder and harder on Jabin the king of Canaan.”

The conjunctive *v-* of vs. 20 translates as so, a depressing way to begin a new verse because it deals with what is becoming rapidly not just a temporary relapse but a permanent condition, that is, of Israel succumbing to idolatry once and for all. This, of course, goes against the reason why the Lord had brought them into Canaan, to worship him and not be like any run-of-the-mill nation on earth. Once again the Lord’s anger (*aph* or heavy breathing almost with fire from the nostrils, cf. vs. 14) is roused against Israel after which he speaks. In other words, the people first feel the brunt of this anger, the details of which aren’t given but obviously through being oppressed by the Canaanites. After this has gone on for some time, one of their judges hears the Lord speaking and communicates it to the people. Even if not disposed, they have their backs pressed up against the wall, so they might as well listen to this man who seems to be in the tradition of Joshua and Moses before him.

In vs. 20 the Lord brings up the essence of Israel's inclination toward idolatry, namely, their transgression (*havar* means to cross over) of the original covenant and failure to hearken to his voice, the two essentially being the same. His warning spills over into the next verse (21) by bringing up Joshua who had done a good job at subduing the Canaanites, *yarash* being the verb (cf. vs. 7; also Jos 23.5) which also means to take possession. Still, there were some Canaanites who survived the initial onslaught and set about taking revenge upon Israel by seducing them with their own gods.

As vs. 22 reveals, the Lord's allowance of Israel to succumb to local deities is intended as a test or *nasah*. "Now these are the nations which the Lord left, to test Israel by them" [3.1]. If only the nation could see through this, things would change for the better literally overnight, for the Lord's only intent is for his people to reclaim Canaan as the promised land. He wishes them to take care or *shamar* as to walking in the Lord's way (*derek*, cf. vs. 17). "All that I command her let her observe" [13.14]. Note that while the Lord is referring to Israel's fathers, he speaks of this *shamar* in the same vein, that is, "as their fathers did or did not." In other words, nothing has changed which if Israel were to examine her history more closely, would take heart of divine assistance despite her backsliding.

As a result, Chapter Two concludes with the Lord leaving those nations (*goy*; cf. previous verse) in place, this word seeming to refer to a fairly substantial group of various peoples whereas it seems to apply to the much smaller unit of tribes. The Lord decided not to hand over such *goy* into Joshua's power ('hand' is the literal translation) but left them for his successors to deal with.

Chapter Three

1) Now these are the nations which the Lord left to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had no experience of any war in Canaan; 2) it was only that the generations of the people of Israel might know war that he might teach war to such at least as had not known it before. 3) These are the nations: the five Lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who dwelt on Mount Lebanon from Mount Baal-hermon as far as the entrance of Hamath. 4) They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by Moses. 5) So the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebites; 6) and they took their daughters to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they served their gods. 7) And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord their God and serving the Baals and the Asheroth. 8) Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of

Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. 9) But when the people of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel who delivered them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10) The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel; he went out to war, and the Lord gave Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. 11) So the land had rest forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz, died. 12) And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab, against Israel because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 13) He gathered to himself the Ammonites and the Amalekites and went and defeated Israel; and they took possession of the city of palms. 14) And the people of Israel served Eglon, the king of Moab, eighteen years. 15) But when the people of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud, the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The people of Israel sent tribute by him to Eglon the king of Moab. 16) And Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length; and he girded it on his right thigh under his clothes. 17) And he presented the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. 18) And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people that carried the tribute. 19) But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal, and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." And he commanded, "Silence." And all his attendants went out from his presence. 20) And Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." And he arose from his seat. 21) And Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly; 22) and the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly; and the dirt came out. 23) Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and closed the doors of the roof chamber upon him and locked them. 24) When he had gone, the servants came; and when they saw that the doors of the roof chamber were locked, they thought, "He is only relieving himself in the closet of the cool chamber." 25) And they waited till they were utterly at a loss; but when he still did not open the doors of the roof chamber, they took the key and opened them; and there lay their Lord dead on the floor. 26) Ehud escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the sculptured stones and escaped to Seirah. 27) When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, having him at their head. 28) And he said to them, "Follow after me; for the Lord has given your enemies the Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan against the Moabites and allowed not a man to pass over. 29) And they killed at that time about ten thousand of the Moabites, all strong, able-bodied men; not a man escaped. 30) So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years. 31) After him was Shamgar the son of

Anath, who killed six hundred of the Philistines with an ox-goad; and he too delivered Israel.

This new chapter brings up a situation we'll run into on occasion, that is, it contains a whole bunch of unfamiliar, exotic sounding names which don't seem to have much relevance to the purpose of this document. And that purpose is, of course, is to use the Book of Judges as a means of doing *lectio divina*. It appears we're off to a bad start, but instead of giving into discouragement, we'll proceed with expanding the text.

The familiar conjunctive *v-* begins Chapter Three as now and shows a continuity of the depressing tone of the previous chapter or more precisely, what turns out to be a back-and-forth struggle between Israel's judges and her adherence to Canaanite divinities. These divinely appointed leaders rescued the people time and again although that word isn't used explicitly but is based upon 2.16, "Then the Lord raised up judges." Vs. 1 mentions nations or *goy*, the last verse of the last chapter, giving the idea of continuity of purpose on the Lord's part. Again, such *goy* aren't necessarily nations in the conventional sense but the small units of tribes which inhabited the land of Canaan. In both verses the verb *nuach* (left) is used which commonly means to rest. "And the spirit rested upon them" [Num 11.26].

In the verse at hand, the *goyim* or nations are intended to test Israel, *nasah* being used as in 2.22. So Israel is in a paradoxical situation: squeezed in by Canaanite *goyim* yet at the same time freely giving themselves to worship of their gods. Therein consists the context for the divine testing. Vs. 1 differs in tone from the conclusion of Chapter Two in that it speaks of those Israelites who hadn't experienced war, the verb *yadah* (cf. 2.10) being used which suggests intimate knowledge. Clearly this is a later generation which grew up in relative safety or perhaps had buckled under the allure of idol worship and thus got along fairly well with the Canaanites. And so they grew soft and went merrily along their own way with what seems near forgetfulness of the Lord.

Vss. 1 and 2 pretty much form one sentence dealing with the necessity of continuing Israel's struggle to subdue Canaan completely and not to be content with settlements here and there. The plural generations is used with respect to Israel and knowing (*yadah* again) war which infers a long, drawn-out process which we know from history. Here the Lord continues his intervention through the judges, of teaching war to his people, the verb *lamad* applicable as well to chastisement and discipline which certainly fits this context. Actually *lamad* has broad application and frequently is applied to study of Torah, but this is the only reference to it in Judges. "And though I have taught them persistently they have not listened to receive instruction" [Jer 32.33]. So first the judges sought counsel from the Levites and visited such sites recently made hallow as Gilgal and Shechem before coming to a decision as to properly *lamad* the people in the ways of war.

The **RSV** begins vs. 3 with “These are the nations” which is lacking in the Hebrew. All in all we have four nations including the Philistines mentioned for the first time in Judges. Israel had been cautioned about them back in Ex 13.17 (‘When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, “Lest the people repent when they see war, and return to Egypt”’) and mentioned last in Jos 31.3 with reference to five lords as is the case at hand. At this juncture the Philistines are one among many adversaries despite the paucity of prior references but in ensuing generations would become Israel’s chief adversary. In fact they will prove to be a constant thorn in that nation’s side right up and through King David. “All Canaanites” remains unspecified, a kind of catch-all for inhabitants of the land.

Vs. 4 specifies mention of the Philistines, all Canaanites, Sidonians and Hivites with regard to the testing noted in vs. 1, *nasah* being found again. The purpose is more specified, namely, to know (*yadah* as in vs. 2) if Israel would obey the Lord’s commandments, *shamah* (cf. 2.17) being the verb which means to listen. Here the verb commanded is the root for the noun commandment, *tsavah-mitsvah* (cf. 2.17) and fundamentally means to constitute or to set up. The text has both in reference to Israel’s fathers with special mention of Moses, hearkening back to the covenant made at Mount Sinai. With regard to the accounts from that point within the books of Exodus, Joshua and now Judges we encounter with depressing clarity and repetition Israel’s failure to *shamah* or to listen. *Shamah* is intimately connected with our recollective faculty...our memory...and requires a conscious effort not to let it wither away but to maintain its active presence. If done properly—the Lord seems to know how difficult this is, else he wouldn’t have stayed with Israel through all this—there would be no success in struggling against the inhabitants of Canaan. The listening originally inserted into the collective memory of Israel would remain active and preclude any disobedience in the literal sense of not listening. As recounted several times this early in Judges, the Siren Song coming from Canaanite deities proved too strong and overcame the capacity of remaining faithful to *shamah* except for a minority of faithful Israelites among whom are the judges.

Vs. 5 translates the conjunctive *v-* as so which serves to introduce (or better, re-introduce) the depressing, corruptible influence of Canaanite divinities upon Israel. It does so not to intimate a kind of conspiracy mentality but as something to which the Israelites were attracted voluntarily...perhaps not even that but drawn immediately without reflection upon what they were doing.

Note the use of *qerev* prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as in the midst of (cf. 1.29 for the same) six tribes in which the Israelites found themselves. The notion of dwelling (*yashav*) infers that it is voluntary, not coerced, which fits in well with the overall pattern of behavior we’ve been witnessing. It spills over naturally to intermarriage, the theme of vs. 6 which is rendered literally as “they took to them daughters,” the preposition *l-* or to

suggestive not just of clinging to Canaanite wives but even more so, to their gods and hence idols. This was reciprocated by the Israelites giving their sons to Canaanite women, tightening the bond with local divinities which naturally would lead to a closer relationship with local divinities. This verse begins with a conjunctive and ratifies it by saying, “and they served their gods,” *havad* implying as it does being slaves to these gods depicted similarly in 2.19.

Vs. 7 continues the depressing theme of Israel falling for Canaanite gods through inter-marriage beginning typically with the conjunctive *v-* as and which serves to reenforce an already existing sad state of affairs. You get the impression that once a strong leader as Joshua had passed off the scene, Israel simply went wild, allowing pent up frustration which lusted after idol worship. In other words, forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert had taken its toll. The evil (*rah*) here mirrors that depicted in 2.11-12 where Israel serves the Baals and forsakes the Lord, the Ashtaroth being mentioned in vs. 13. Despite the dispiriting nature of this account, vs. 7 gets to the heart of the matter by reference to the verb *shakath* which means forget. Interestingly, it’s the only occurrence in Judges; you’d think it would occur more frequently given the way Moses and Joshua pounded into the people’s collective memory the need to be faithful to the Lord. “Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God” [Dt 8.11].

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 8 translates as therefore to show the immediate consequence of Israel selling herself through inter-marriage to Canaanite deities. Once again the Lord’s anger or *’aph* (cf. 2.20) flares up after which he strikes a bargain with one of Israel’s enemies. That person’s name is a mouthful, Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, who was only too willing to strike a bargain. Perhaps intermediaries dealing with him were judges who went rogue in conjunction with some Levites. Regardless, the servitude (*havad* again; cf. vs. 6 in relation to local deities) lasted a brief eight years. Nothing is said of how the nation had comported itself except that in vs. 8 it forced the Israelites to cry out to the Lord, the conjunctive *v-* translated here as but when. *Zahaq* is the verb, the drawn-out letter “z” being expressive of their pain which can be intimated just by its pronunciation. “And the people of Israel cried for help to the Lord” [6.6].

As soon as the Lord’s anger was kindled against Israel as mentioned in the last verse, he relents in vs. 9 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as but when to show this speed of his change of heart. Chances are the eight years, short as they sound, were terribly harsh. As soon as the *zahaq* or crying out reached the Lord’s ears, his response was to send a judge though this isn’t explicitly mentioned (cf. the verb ‘he judged’ in vs. 10). Instead, he sends a deliverer which is the participle form of *yashah* (to save) found last in 2.18, a similar situation involving a judge. This participle is used with the same verb as delivered. Compared with earlier judges, the one in vs. 9 is identified as Othniel who in many ways carries forward the mission begun by Joshua and is carried over to a

series of illustrious judges later in Israel's history as well as beyond. We find Othniel mentioned in 1.11 as responding immediately to a request by his brother Caleb to attack a Canaanite city. So Othniel must have stood out among his peers as an obvious choice for the position of judge.

Vs. 9 has the Lord raising up Othniel, *qum* being used (cf. 2.18) followed by a second confirmation with little or no time gap. Instead of a verb for "came upon" we have the preposition *hal* accompanied by the verb which reads literally "and was on him." *Ruach* is the noun for spirit, this being the first time it appears in Judges. "But the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon" [6.34]. The most notable New Testament example of this *hal*-ness, of course, is the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributed and resting on (*epi*; i.e., *hal*) each one of them" [Acts 2.3]. As soon as the divine *ruach* descended upon Othniel, he commenced to "judge" or *shaphat* (cf. 2.16) Israel. Note that the entire nation is involved. Obviously Othniel couldn't do this alone but heeded Jethro's advice to Moses which must have developed into a tradition: "Choose able men from all the people such as fear God...and place such men over the people as rulers of thousands," etc. [Ex 18.21]. Along with this judging aided by chosen men, Othniel warred against Chushan-rishathaim, the obscurity of his name intimating that he and his people are doomed to be destroyed. More precisely, the Lord gave this king into Othniel's hand which is mentioned again as having prevailed over his adversary, *hazaz* meaning to make strong or secure. "And the hand of Midian prevailed over Israel" [6.2]. Given the way Joshua had treated kings whom he conquered, Othniel must have put this one to death as well, making a public display.

Othniel turned out to be quite successful who, as noted, is the first judge mentioned by name. He achieved what no one had been able to do since Israel entered Canaan, not even Joshua. That is to say, Othniel brought rest (*shaqat*) to the land ('*erets*). This noun as used here intimates what had recently been Canaan. Despite the nagging problem of native gods, the Israelites could call it home, the exile of four hundred years having come to an end. Obviously that's a long time for things to change and, change they did. But at least Israel can in truth call Canaan '*erets*, the modern equivalent being home. As for the verb *shaqat*, it implies rest as well as being secure. "And the land had rest for eighty years" [vs. 30]. Given the constant reference to Canaanite divinities, *shaqat* can apply to the constant pressure on the Israelites to adopt them. Thus forty years represents one generation, hopefully long enough for Israel to secure itself firmly in the worship of the Lord without outside interference. That, of course, would depend on a supply of good educators.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 12 shows the close connection with the previous verse which has an upbeat tone about it. However, the fairly long interval of one generation went by without anything noticeable having been achieved. The impression we get is that Israel languished...remained stationary...and failed to take advantage of the leadership

provided by Othniel. Fortunately for him, he did not live to see his efforts squandered. In the verse at hand the verb *yasaph* is used for “again (did),” it meaning to increase or to advance. And that advancing we know thus far (actually it’s a regression) is pretty much the story since Judges began. The next reference to *yasaph* is 4.1 with the same unrelenting theme: “And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died.”

What’s particularly galling is that Israel did evil (*rah*, cf. 2.11 and vs. 7) in the Lord’s sight as these two identical references show. This is another way of saying she was forgetful of the Lord and almost seems compelled by a force outside her to repeat it when the next crisis comes along. The severity of the current situation is emphasized by stating in the same verse that the people had committed this *rah* a second time. All in all, a familiar pattern is emerging in Judges which traces its roots as far back as Adam’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden. So while the forty years of *shaqat* (cf. vs. 11) were moving along, in actuality the situation at hand was degrading, albeit imperceptibly. Then out of the clear blue comes a jolt, this time from the king of Moab named Eglon. Yet unknown to Israel at the time, the Lord is at work as he had been before. That is, the Lord “strengthened” Eglon against the Israelites, *chazaq* being the verb (cf. 1.28). The force of this verb is intensified by use of the preposition *hal* reading literally as “upon Israel.”

Vs. 13 has the verb *yasaph* as in vs. 12, here as gathered referring to Eglon assembling forces against Israel. It is as though the *yasaph* of that nation with regard to evil is countered by the *yasaph* of Eglon, that is, his gross bulk, the two conspiring to bring about Israel’s downfall. And so this king of the Moabites gathers two tribes “to himself” meaning that he is their leader in a new effort to destroy the Israelites. After having defeated Israel, King Eglon and his allies take the city of palms which refers to Jericho. That city, of course, had been defeated straightaway by Joshua and since then rebuilt and inhabited by Israel. The famous walls which had crumbled weren’t rebuilt to their former glory but in their stead a more make-shift defense had been constructed making the capture easier to accomplish. Instead of wiping out the Israelites, Eglon decided to put them into servitude for a period of eighteen years, the nature of which isn’t described but must have given cause for them to wonder why they had come to Canaan on a futile venture lead or better, misguided by Joshua. It was as though they had exchanged the servitude of Egypt for another land. However, some of the Israelites must have reminded their fellows of the Lord being at work through the person of an alien king. In that way they would have hope for the future, a hope resting in part upon a new generation that wouldn’t fall into the same trap as their fathers.

In vs. 15 the people of Israel cried to the Lord, *zahaq* being a repeat of what transpired in vs. 9 with a similar experience of servitude. As had been the case with Othniel who ushered in forty years of rest, the Lord raises up Ehud who is described as being left-handed. That implies Ehud was somehow defective but nevertheless promoted to being a

judge. More precisely, Ehud is a deliverer, the participle form of *yashah* (to save) as with Othniel. As part of his duties, he had the unenviable task of bringing tribute or *minchah* (cf. vs. 17) to Eglon, the nature of which isn't specified but must have been designed to keep Israel quite powerless.

During these travels to Moab Ehud must have pondered how to relieve Israel from that king's oppressive yoke. The number of times he brought tribute isn't specified, but each trip gave him ample time to assess the situation and familiarize himself with the best way he could approach and then slay King Eglon. A risky venture, to be sure, but what other choice was there? So before one trip, Ehud prepared a sword small enough to conceal under his clothes (a cubit in length or approximately eighteen inches), double-edged for maximum effect. Since Ehud was well respected among his fellow Israelites and the Moabites, after a while he wasn't frisked by King Eglon's guards. Then during one trip after having familiarized himself with where he was accustomed to deposit the tribute—and this could include livestock and produce—Ehud presented it to the king. Such a king as Eglon was more a tribal chieftain, not like pharaoh of Egypt or the like, so he lived modestly by comparison. Still, he had his bodyguards and was no one to mess with.

Vs. 17 has the verb *qarav* for presented (cf. vs. 18) with regard to the tribute Ehud brought to King Eglon himself which fundamentally means to draw near. Here Eglon is described both succinctly and disgustingly as being very fat or *bary'*, an adjective often applicable to an animal as in Gen 41.2: "seven cows, sleek and fat." Such a description serves to heighten the difference between the Israelites and her enemies. Then in the next verse (18) Ehud dismisses those who accompanied him so as to be left alone with what appears to be the caricature of a ruler and oppressor of his people. Just the mention of men as part of Ehud's group indicates that the tribute demanded by King Eglon was substantial, again possibly including livestock.

It seems that vs. 19 jumps back in time a little, for Ehud is found as being at the sculptured stones near Gilgal, this phrase being *pesylym* and applicable to images of idols. "They moved him to jealousy with their graven images" [Ps 78.58]. Given the place name of Gilgal, such *pesylym* refer to the twelve stones Joshua removed from the Jordan River (cf. 4.20) shortly after Israel had entered Canaan. By now this site had become a place of pilgrimage for the Israelites and had to be guarded at all times against threats from the local inhabitants to destroy it.

Within this same verse (19) Ehud is addressing King Eglon that is, he has a secret message for him, *seter* also being applicable to a veil or covering and can intimate that robe in vs. 16 under which he had concealed a double-edged sword. "In the secret places of the stairs" [Sg 2.14]. *Seter* is used with the noun *davar* which means word in the sense of expression...a "secret expression," if you will. This roused the grossly overweight king's attention, so he bade those attendants with him to be silent, *hasah* being the verb. "Let

all the earth keep silence” [Hab 2.20]. As soon as the king’s flunkies heard this order, they not only kept silence but left the room in a hurry. Hopefully Ehud had some inside information such as the weakness of the Israelites, even their willingness to depart Canaan. For this reason the king had treated Ehud carefully ever since he began coming to Eglon. If he divulged such information, chances are high it would be quite accurate.

As soon as the two were left alone, Eglon beckoned Ehud upstairs to a chamber on the roof in order to catch cool breezes. We think of a roof in such a climate as where the heat rises, but this one must have had thick walls and plenty of windows to catch the slightest breeze. So while the king was waddling up the stairs with all his bulk, Ehud was not far behind all the while thinking about the best moment to strike. Looking at the Eglon from behind was positively disgusting. Besides, Ehud wondered where through all that blubber to make the thrust with his sword. First, however, he wanted to get Eglon’s full attention to maximize the opportunity and did this by saying he had a message or *davar* from God, the text reading literally word-God. The king didn’t want to miss hearing from the God of Israel who was in competition with local Canaanite deities, so naturally he jumped at the chance. Hopefully the Lord would see the light and come over to the Baals and Ashtaroah where he belongs.

Vs. 20 continues with Eglon getting up from his seat, no mean feat for someone so overweight. For Ehud, it was no or never, so he didn’t hesitate during this moment of vulnerability to plunge the two-sword into the king’s stomach. Vs. 22 describes vividly and almost repulsively that this sword got lost in Eglon’s rolls of fat pushing out dung, *parshdon* being the only use of this word in the Bible. Immediately afterward Ehud exited this rooftop chamber, locking the door behind him. A bit later the king’s servants came to inquire, having knocked on the door but got no answer. The first thought was he was in the bathroom, no unusual given Eglon’s bulk and most likely medical problems. At this point the servants were utterly at a loss or *bush* which basically means to be ashamed. “But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, ‘Send’” [2Kg 2.17]. This response was what Ehud was waiting for. Once the servants finally forced their way in but with a key (cf. 25), Ehud having placed it in its usual spot so as not to rouse suspicion, they found their master dead on the floor covered with entrails and excrement. Some of these servants might have been glad, Eglon’s huge size indicative of his equally huge ego and cruelty.

The confusion of the slaves finding their slain master offered the ideal circumstance for Ehud to make good his escape. He retraced his steps by to the twelve stones at Gilgal to Seirah, this being the only proper name in the Bible and seems to refer to some woody area, perfect to hide immediately after having assassinated King Eglon. From there Ehud gathered the Israelites with him “at their head” which is rendered literally as “before them.” Ehud wasted no time in rallying his people, sending messengers before him to assemble troops which made their way to the safety of the hill country of Ephraim.

“Follow me” was his first command, *radaph* being the verb meaning also to pursue or put to flight. “Barak pursued after the chariots” [4.16]. Ehud uses terminology which now has become familiar to the Israelites, namely, that the Lord has given their enemy into their hands. Although having heard it before, surely some thoughts of guilt at not having remained faithful to the Lord passed through the minds of everyone.

This renewed military activity couldn't help but rouse the attention of Israel's neighbors, some of whom had been subservient to the Moabites for some years now. The people made their way to the fords of the Jordan and seized them in order to prevent anyone from coming to help their enemy. With this crucial area in Israelite control, they could make their move against the Moabites and slew some ten thousand of them, one adjective describing their warriors as “strong” or *shamen* which means fat...a play of words relative to their grossly obese king whom Ehud had slain recently? If his warrior were like him, Israel would have little problem obtaining victory. “Its pyre made deep and wise with fire and wood in abundance” [Is 30.33]. Vs. 29 which describes this slaughter ends by saying that of the ten thousand Moabites not a single person had escaped.

As a result of Ehud's bold move against the king of Moab, that land was subdued for an unprecedented eight years...subdued but not destroyed, *kanah* being the verb which means to bend the knee. “So Midian was subdued before the people of Israel, and they lifted up their heads no more” [8.28]. Here Chapter Three comes to an end, almost, that is. By way of conclusion, however, another judge is inserted, Shamgar, who slew some six hundred Philistines with an ox goad all by himself, not unlike the suture Sampson. He passes off the scene quickly but not before having “saved” Israel, *yashah* being used once more as in vs. 15. With this quick insertion one gets the idea that the author of Judges, while appreciative of divine intervention, knew that a relapse by Israel was inevitable. It was as though he wished to prepare the reader for what to come which unfortunately is a repeat in many ways of earlier instances of apostasy.

Chapter Four

1) And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord after Ehud died. 2) And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera who dwelt in Harosheth-ha-goiim. 3) Then the people of Israel cried to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron and oppressed the people of Israel cruelly for twenty years. 4) Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5) She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6) She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abino-am from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of

Israel, commands you, `Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. 7) And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" 8) Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9) And she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10) And Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand men went up at his heels; and Deborah went up with him. 11) Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Za-ananim, which is near Kedesh. 12) When Sisera was told that Barak, the son of Abino-am, had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13) Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the men who were with him, from Harosheth-ha-goim to the river Kishon. 14) And Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the Lord go out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15) And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army before Barak at the edge of the sword; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16) And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-ha-goim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left. 17) But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18) And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my Lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19) And he said to her, "Pray, give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20) And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, `Is any one here?' say, No." 21) But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple till it went down into the ground, as he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died. 22) And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went in to her tent; and there lay Sisera dead with the tent peg in his temple. 23) So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the people of Israel. 24) And the hand of the people of Israel bore harder and harder on Jabin the king of Canaan until they destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

Chapter Three concluded with a brief mention of Shamgar who delivered Israel which comes on the heels of Ehud having slain the grossly overweight Eglon, king of Moab. In light of this, you'd think Israel would wake up and have some sense, but this

unfortunately isn't the case as we begin a new chapter. The conjunctive *v-* as and starts off where these two heroes left off, namely, the all too familiar slide of Israel back into doing what was evil or *rah* (2.11), the verb *yasaph* being used with it meaning to increase, thereby connoting not just being evil but persistence in it. Such is the sense of the English "again."

Although the Lord is watching, the people certainly don't have their eyes upon him but they have become blind both morally and spiritually. Also the notion of *rah* here suggests more than evil in the conventional sense but going after the idols of Canaan, an abhorrence to the Lord. The Israelites didn't sit down and plan this out systematically. Instead, right from the beginning Canaanite idols (and this implies the exotic nature of worship as in temples, etc.) exerted a pull virtually impossible to resist for a nation that had spent forty years wandering in the desert. Most likely those not so inclined suffered persecution, especially if they decided to speak up against such behavior.

Interestingly in vs. 2 the Canaanites for a second time (cf. 3.8) didn't rise up to slay the Israelites in their midst after the horrible treatment they had suffered in the Book of Joshua. Instead, they found them quite diligent and useful as slaves just as pharaoh had in Egypt. Therefore why not put these people to use? The Canaanites argued with some truth that they had weakened the Israelites to such a point by exposing them to their deities that they can do anything they want with them. They didn't hit upon this all at once but when they saw how effective it had been, set their hearts upon evangelization, as it were. However, the Canaanites had to be on look-out for any potential judge as Ehud who might rouse the people.

The next oppressor Israel encounters is Jabin along with his army commander, Sisera, both being mentioned later in Ps 83.9-10 when Israel prevails over them: "Do to them as you had done to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon who were destroyed at Endor, who became dung for the ground." As for Jabin, he is mentioned in Jos 11.1 but seems to be another person because apparently Joshua had slain him though this isn't mentioned specifically except having burned Hazor (cf. Jos 11.10). Then again, the proper name Jabin can be a royal reference and associated with Hazor. Regardless which is correct, the idea is that the Canaanites continue to pose a menace to the Israelites. Mention of Jabin the commander is more ominous because he was privy to the king and wielded military power. Thus the two united will provide formidable opposition. If Israel hadn't done "what was evil in the sight of the Lord" [vs. 1], no problem, but unfortunately this isn't the case.

Vs. 3 begins with a conjunctive rendered as "then" which shows the close connection between Israel's distress and having been sold into slavery by reason of their evil or *rah*. *Tsahaq* is the verb for "cried" which also connotes a calling together or summoning. "The Sidonians, Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you, and you cried to me, and I delivered

you out of their hand” [10.12]. The reason? Under the command of his commander Sisera, King Jabin had almost a thousand chariots made of iron which sounds a lot for a small town but may be representatives of an alliance Jabin had forged with surrounding tribes. Indeed, just the idea that the most powerful weapon of the time being employed, let alone made of iron, was enough to terrify anyone. This unstoppable force was even more terrifying for the Israelites who had allowed themselves to be weakened to such an extent that the chariots of iron would simply trample them to dust. And to think that Jabin had oppressed Israel for twenty years (*lachats*, cf. 2.18) which implies that every time Israel got rambunctious, Jabin would order Sisera to roll out his chariots and crush any opposition. Literally. *Lachats* is used with the English adverb cruelly which in Hebrew is the noun *chezqah* meaning force or violence and has five other biblical references, one being found in 8.1: “And they upbraided him violently.” Put this word together with *barzel* (‘iron’) and you have the ancient world’s most formidable military force.

Vs. 4 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as now which heralds relief from this crushing oppression, iron chariots and all. On one occasion when the trampling of Sisera’s chariots got so bad, attention turns to the prophetess (*nevy’ah*) Deborah, she being the only one, man or woman, who happens to be a judge at the same time. As for her name, it means a bee as in Is 7.18: “the bee which is in the land of Assyria.” *Nevy’ah* occurs five other times in the Bible and refers to four other women: Miriam (Ex 15.20), Huldah (2Kg 22.14), Noadiah (Neh 6.14) and Anna (Lk 2.26).

Nothing is said of Deborah’s background except mention of her husband’s name and must have been an outstanding woman to assume the dual role of judge and prophetess. Deborah may be considered second in line after Miriam in the sense that she ties in with Moses, she being his sister. So the witness of Miriam bridged those years from the Red Sea crossing to the early struggles in Canaan, not terribly long ago from the present situation but within range of Israel’s collective memory. In fact, some women may have established a loose association to keep Miriam’s memory alive and pass it on through the wanderings in Sinai and invasion of Canaan. Vs. 4 has the words “at that time” which seem more or less casual but significant in that it refers to the twenty years when Jabin’s iron chariots were running rampant in the land. While these assaults were being made, Deborah grew up, assumed her dual role and practiced it as best she could. Already she had established a reputation of being a *nevy’ah*, the means by which she achieved it not specified which makes Deborah all the more appealing and mysterious.

It was common for male judges to perform their duty in city gates where people passed in and out whereas in vs. 5 we find Deborah doing it “under the palm of Deborah.” Of course, the political circumstances are far from normal. The biblical location could refer not so much to her but to the meaning of her name, bee. *Tamar* is the noun for such a tree known for producing sweet dates. Thus we can have an association between this *tamar* and Deborah as a bee which relates to the sweetness (as of honey) from a palm

tree. Being such an outstanding woman, the Israelites flocked to her, more so when King Jabin set loose his iron chariots. He didn't dare go after her both out of contempt and fear that if he did, even his iron chariots wouldn't stand against the Israelites' wrath. Furthermore, Deborah performed her duties in the relative safety of Ephraim's hill country. King Jabin knew about this, of course, but was powerless to stop her because his mobile weapons of terror were unable to negotiate that rough terrain.

One day while Deborah was performing her duties, she both sent and summoned Barak (*shalak* and *qara*). First comes the actual sending—most likely swift-footed messengers—followed immediately by their call. Actually they had to negotiate those iron chariots and Canaanite troops under Sisera's command, no easy feat. As for Barak, we have no information about him, but he must have enjoyed a trusted relationship with Deborah. Barak is mentioned later in Heb 11.32 as among the heroes of faith: "And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets."

The essence of the sending and summoning consists of a command not from Deborah but from the Lord, she having confidence that Barak would recognize it as such once the message reached him. Deborah had in mind Mount Tabor as a place to confront King Jabin's forces, having mustered some ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. Obviously Barak had to do this with considerable stealth because Canaanite spies were everywhere. The verb *mashak* is used for gather which means more to draw out, and drawing out can connote a gradual process (*mashak* is found in the next verse). Perhaps Barak carried out this divine order over an extended period of time so as not to arouse suspicion, scattering his troops at various heights on Tabor and keeping them concealed from any prying eyes below. Yet he had to act quickly before Israel was crushed totally.

So while Barak was in the process of *mashak* concerning his troops, in vs. 7 Deborah informed him that she would *mashak* Sisera to meet him. Apparently Barak didn't question Deborah's judgment and followed her exact orders. The same applied to the men from Naphtali and Zebulun, they having had experience of Deborah functioning as judge and thus trusting her discernment at this critical juncture. Deborah didn't disclose her tactic of *mashak*, just that she would do it. Even when communicating this to Barak, she may not have had the details down, just a general plan, trusting in the Lord to reveal what to do when the time came. However, judging by the personal *mashak*, it might have an element of seduction with regard to General Sisera, Deborah being a woman. The place where this was to take place was a river not far from Mount Tabor called Kishon. Once Deborah had completed her own *mashak*, the Canaanite army, along with those iron chariots, would be vulnerable to attack from the Israelite troops rushing down the slopes of Tabor. The unity of purpose between Deborah and Barak is revealed by the latter's readiness to go with her if she wants as well as not to should she decide

otherwise (cf. vs. 8).

In vs. 9 Deborah tells Barak that she will accompany him yet in the same breath cautions him that he won't be claiming victory over Sisera's troops. She puts this in terms of a road or *derek* (cf. 2.17) which often is used analogously. That is to say, Barak is the best possible man for the job, but for him the *derek* won't end in glory or *tip'arah*, a noun which connotes beauty as well as brightness. "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty" [Ex 28.2]. Instead of Barak receiving such glory, Deborah has decided otherwise...not that she desires it but that the Lord himself will sell Sisera into her hands which she puts more pertinently as "into the hands a woman." *Makar* is the verb (cf. 3.8) and suggests a bargain about to be struck between the Lord and Deborah...a woman...with regard to one of the most feared military commanders of the day. In other words, a certain casualness is added to the disdain of this verse which Barak understands completely.

Once Deborah uttered these words she went with Barak to Kedesh where he summoned the two tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Vs. 10 puts this quite nicely as some ten thousand troops accompanying him at his heels, *regel* more precisely referring to feet. The idea is that these two lesser tribes among the twelve of Israel were walking as one with Barak. The verse ends with Deborah going with Barak, that is, she was there in line with him and those whom he had summoned. Even though Barak was in the lead, he knew that Deborah held real command over the situation.

Vs. 11 offers a potential derailment of this perfectly tuned military expedition making its way to Kedesh, that is, by the craftiness of Heber. He is a break-away from the Kenite tribe which had allied itself with Moses (cf. Num 10.29 & 1.16) through his father-in-law Hobab and now is allied with King Jabin. The reasons aren't given for the alliance, but Heber is mentioned to set the stage for Sisera's undoing by Deborah.

Vs. 12 shifts attention abruptly back to the military campaign getting under way. It does so by beginning with the words concerning Sisera "was told" which intimate that the Moabite commander had plenty of spies keeping track of the ten thousand men being led by both Deborah and Barak. They must have been surprised at Deborah taking the lead even though they had been acquainted with her impressive work as a judge over the Israelites. And so Barak's encampment upon the slopes of Tabor provided an occasion for Sisera to send out his nine hundred chariots made of iron, again their mention being enough to terrify the countryside which is like sending out the same number of modern day tanks. The verb at hand for this calling out is *zahaq* (cf. 3.25) which means more a crying out or exclaiming which unleashes these formidable weapons on the plain in order to surround Mount Tabor. *Zahaq* also applies to all the men or infantry with Sisera who followed the iron chariots in full confidence that they would be well protected.

While vs. 12 states clearly that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor without mentioning Deborah, vs. 14 has her speaking with him. Perhaps Barak disguised Deborah, not wanting Sisera to know that she was with him deliberately in order to cause confusion. Now with those nine hundred iron chariots and infantry besieging Mount Tabor—the chariots must have wheeled around the mountain base at full speed for the added effect of creating terror—Deborah sees it as a moment of opportunity, not doom. In vs. 14 she cries out to Barak “up” or *qum* (cf. 3.9), this command echoing the unity of purpose among all present as signified by “at his heels” commented upon regarding vs. 10.

Deborah exclaims immediately in the same verse that this is the day or *yom* in which the Lord himself has given Sisera into Barak’s hands. Past tense is used, neither the present nor future, which means victory has been achieved. All that Barak has to do is go through the motions, if you will. Such is the reason why Deborah had chosen him over anyone else. Another man would have doubted this. In the same breath Deborah throws out a rhetorical question, “Does not the Lord go out before you?” So with this Barak makes his attack, swarming down from the slopes of Tabor upon both the iron chariots and soldiers, using their position of height and forward rush to advantage. Sisera, being an experienced military commander, knew this would happen but was unprepared for the ferocity of attack which caught him off guard.

Hamam is the verb for routed in vs. 15 meaning to put in motion or to impel, an aptly sounding word for the situation at hand. It is found in Ex 14.24 in a similar situation which later must have reminded Deborah and Barak of a parallel with that momentous occasion: “And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily.” In the verse at hand, Sisera immediately gets off his chariot and take to flight on foot. Even his war machine made of iron now was rendered useless. Quickly he figured on an escape amid the confusion. So while Sisera did make good his escape, Barak pursued the iron chariots and slew every last member of the attacking army. “Not a man was left” are the concluding words of vs. 16.

Not so much by choice but by necessity Sisera fled to Jael, Heber’s wife. Apparently he did this alone, not wanting any of his subordinates with him to draw unnecessary attention. While Barak could have either captured or slain Sisera, he showed admirable restraint by recalling Deborah’s words in vs. 9 about she being the one responsible not so much for the demise of Sisera but of King Jabin himself. Note that it says specifically “tent” which implies a temporary dwelling as it does in vs. 11 when Heber is introduced for the first time. It seemed a wise decision because peace or *shalom* existed between King Jabin and the Kenites. The next reference to *shalom* is 6.23: “But the Lord said to him, ‘Peace be to you (Gideon); do not fear, you shall not die.’”

Sisera thought he had found refuge, albeit temporary, so took it upon himself to enter the tent belonging to Heber. Chances are he didn't know exactly where it was but was informed by members of the Kenite tribe. Despite that *shalom* between King Jabin of Moab and the house of Heber (note 'house' can apply to the clan, not the Kenites as a whole), Jael or the wife of Heber wasn't disposed receive him but put on an act to lure him to his death. We have no clear idea as to why she did this; perhaps she was an Israelite sympathetic to Deborah and Barak. Because Heber wasn't home Sisera thought he would be better off and make his way home after resting, thus avoiding undue explanation. Jael recognized Sisera straightaway and bade him with the words turn aside or *sur* mentioned twice, this verb being found in 2.17 but not noted there: "they soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked."

Being a man on the run and with a bounty on his head, Sisera immediately crawled under a rug without any urging from Jael. This is exactly what she had wanted, thereby making her plan to slay him that much easier. Although Jael was about to confer a great benefit upon Israel, it went against the strict code of the desert, namely, of giving hospitality to a visitor, especially someone in distress as Sisera. Obviously when he appeared before Jael's tent, this disgraced commander presented a sorry sight which is why she exclaimed "have no fear." However, Jael said this with tongue-in-cheek at the unexpected opportunity presented to her. Sisera's cowardice is revealed by hiding under a rug within the tent, possibly knowing that some of the Israelites were in hot pursuit. In the meanwhile Jael could hardly believe what dropped into her lap, a golden opportunity for revenge. There again, we don't know exactly why she as wife of Heber, an ally of King Jabin, did this. Anyway, she was grateful that her husband was away to take matters into her own hands.

Sisera was so afraid that he asked Jael to stand guard at the tent's entrance to shoo away anyone who might approach. She complied with his demand, fearful that if she didn't he might take revenge because the two were alone. As soon as Sisera laid down under the rug feeling more or less secure for the time being, Jael wasted no time on carrying out what she intended to do. She went over to the rug and did so softly or *la't*, a noun prefaced with the preposition *b-* or in, the only occurrence in the Bible. The fundamental meaning of this word is to wrap around or to muffle. Although the inside of the tent had rugs scattered throughout it, Jael was extra careful to approach the hiding place of Sisera. The distance from the tense entrance to the rug under which this once proud commander lay hidden was short but must have seemed a terribly long distance for Jael to traverse.

A portable dwelling such as a tent had plenty of pegs laying around, so Jael grabbed one along with a hammer and drove it right through the head of Sisera in a single blow. Note that the text says she "is the wife of Heber," an ally of the king of Moab. Since the two men were close, mention of his name serves to make the situation even more dramatic.

And to top it off, the concluding words of vs. 22 say with some humor “so he died.” As soon as Jael slew Sisera, she rushed out of the tent to inform Barak who was engaged in pursuing Sisera and completely unaware of what just happened. Perhaps he had sensed Sisera was en route to Heber or was just plain lucky to have encountered Jael. Anyway, Jael brought Barak inside her tent to show him Sisera with the tent peg through his head. But before this, Barak looked about to see the corpse but found none. He couldn’t believe his eyes when Jael uncovered the body laying under the rug. Despite his surprise and delight, Barak was afraid that Heber might come back without warning and kill them along with any troops in his company.

The next to last verse of this chapter attributes this victory to God beginning with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as so. Throughout all that happened both Deborah and Barak never lost sight of divine intervention and for this reason they stand out as the most important heroes of Israel since the death of Joshua. Vs. 23 puts this victory by the Lord in terms of having subdued Jabin, the king of Canaan, the verb being *kanah* noted last in 3.30 fundamentally meaning to bend the knee. This idea of kneeling is brought home by the words “before the people of Israel.” As a result of this new found confidence, the Israelites fought “harder and harder” against Jabin, literally as “went the hand of the sons of Israel went and harder,” the common verb being *halak* meaning to go. So the idea is that the collective hand of Israel weighed down more upon the Canaanites and continued until they destroyed their king, Jabin. Note that they simply didn’t just slay him but wiped him out which is the significance of the verb *karath* meaning to cut is found in 2.2 with respect to cutting a covenant.

Chapter Five

1) Then sang Deborah and Barak, the son of Abino-am, on that day: 2) "That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the Lord! 3) "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing, I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel. 4) "Lord, when went forth from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water. 5) The mountains quaked before the Lord, yon Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel. 6) "In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, caravans ceased and travelers kept to the byways. 7) The peasantry ceased in Israel, they ceased until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. 8) When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel? 9) My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the Lord. 10) "Tell of it, you who ride on tawny asses, you who sit on rich carpets and you who walk by the way. 11) To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the triumphs of the Lord, the triumphs of his peasantry in

Israel. "Then down to the gates marched the people of the Lord. 12) "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abino-am. 13) Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the Lord marched down for him against the mighty. 14) From Ephraim they set out thither into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders and from Zebulun those who bear the marshal's staff; 15) the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed forth at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 16) Why did you tarry among the sheep folds, to hear the piping for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. 17) Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he abide with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, settling down by his landings. 18) Zebulun is a people that jeopardized their lives to the death; Naphtali too, on the heights of the field. 19) "The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan, at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver. 20) From heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sisera. The torrent Kishon swept them away, the onrushing torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might! 22) "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds." 23) "Curse Meroz," says the angel of the Lord, "curse bitterly its inhabitants because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. 24) "Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. 25) He asked water and she gave him milk, she brought him curds in a Lordly bowl. 26) She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. 27) He sank, he fell, he lay still at her feet; at her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell dead. 28) "Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sisera gazed through the lattice: `Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoof beats of his chariots?' 29) Her wisest ladies make answer, nay, she gives answer to herself, 30) `Are they not finding and dividing the spoil?—A maiden or two for every man; spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera, spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered, two pieces of dyed work embroidered for my neck as spoil?' 31) "So perish all thine enemies, O Lord! But thy friends be like the sun as he rises in his might." And the land had rest for forty years.

Chapter Five is an interlude of sorts from the depressing story of Israel's involvement with Canaan. It celebrates what seems to be a definitive victory instead of those earlier ones which unfortunately had been followed by a quick relapse into worship of local deities. Although the future holds plenty of disappointments and tragedies, this song will be worthy of remembrance as well as the future promise of divine assistance when the nation of Israel is dissolved and its people scattered throughout the earth. A footnote to

the RSV reads “The Hebrew text is, unfortunately, so corrupt in some places as to be almost unintelligible.” With this in mind, parts of the chapter will be passed over or not delved into.

This song or *shyr* implies musical instruments which aren’t listed by presupposed. The verb *shyr* in vs. 1 (same spelling as the noun) occurs one other time in Judges, vs. 3. Chances are other victories had been celebrated on the pattern here in Chapter Five though we have no record of them. *Shyr* is prefaced with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” and shows the close connection between what Deborah and Barak had accomplished and its celebration. The connection the victory and its celebration seems to have little or no time gap. By so singing about their mutual victory, the two are not so much intent upon its celebration but insertion into Israel’s collective memory so as to prevent future relapses into intermarriage and idolatry. Mention of “on that day” is bound up with the immediacy of the conjunctive and victory, a day to be perpetuated henceforth onward.

Vs. 2 begins the actual *shyr* which naturally centers upon Deborah and Barak and as just noted, is accompanied with some musical instruments. It begins with mention of themselves not as two victors engaged in boasting—their humility before the Lord and respect for each other is evident throughout the previous chapter—but as two leaders or the infinitive of *parah* which means to loose, make bare. Another reference is Ex 5.4: “Why do you take the people away from their work?” Both Deborah and Barak are quick to situate this *parah* within the context of the Israelites who “offered (themselves) willingly,” that is, following after Canaanite gods. The verb is *nadav* meaning to give spontaneously and often applies to the making of a vow. “My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people” [vs. 5]. Right after this they add bless (*barak*) with regard to the Lord for having rescued them from it. “Most blessed of women be Jael” [vs. 24].

Vs. 3 shifts attention from Deborah and Barak to both the kings and princes or rulers of Canaan, the latter being *razan*, a poetic word with five other biblical references, one being Ps 2.2 which includes kings: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed.” Both are not invited but instead are commanded to give ear or *shamah* (cf. 3.4), something they failed to do after the death of Joshua. Despite a defeat here and there, these kings managed to prevail until the current ruler came along, Jabin who proved himself the most formidable of them all to date.

So these kings and princes—presumably those left in the land after the death of Jabin and the more dramatic one of Sisera—are forced to *shamah* the song about to be sung. The text reads literally “I will sing” or *shyr*. While this first person singular seems applicable to Deborah, it can include Barak, the two singing as one which reflects their recent

cooperation as one person in the recent victory. So this one person comprised of Deborah and Barak will both sing and make melody, the latter being *zamar* which fundamentally means to cut off. The notion seems to be that *zamar* involves dividing according to rhythmical numbers or the like. "I will give thanks to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High" [Ps 7.17]. The object here is the Lord...not just this but the Lord defined as of Israel. This is a common title, to be sure, but one with greater significance after the defeat of the most powerful king of Canaan along with his formidable commander.

In vs. 3 Deborah (and Barak) turn attention to the Lord himself to whom from the very beginning they had attributed their success. They refer to two places in Israel's early history, namely, Seir and Edom the former being located in the latter. A reference concerning Seir is Dt 33.2 as it ties in with Mount Sinai: "the Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran, he came from the ten thousands of holy ones with flaming fire at his right hand." The context of this verse is not unlike the current song, that is to say, it is the blessing of Moses shortly before his death to each of the twelve sons of Jacob. The myriad of holy ones intimates the presence of angels with the Lord, the heavenly host which assisted Deborah and Barak in their recent victory, though at the time they may have not known it. The Deuteronomy quote has two references to light, dawned and shone forth, the former more associated with Seir, *zarak* (cf. 9.33) and *yaphah*. The former connotes rising and the latter, brightness which may be attributed to the Lord (and his heavenly host) as he went forth and marched or *halak* (cf. 4.23) and *tsahad*. The latter suggests going slowly or mounting up. "When you did march through the wilderness" [Ps 68.7].

When the Lord came in what seems a battle formation accompanied by his angels, that is, from both Seir and the region of Edom (*sadeh* essentially meaning a field; cf. 1.14 but not noted there) or southeast of where Deborah and Barak had their victory, his presence had cosmic repercussions. The three elements of earth, heavens and clouds reacted with fear: trembled, dropped and dropped water: *rahash*, *nataph* (used twice). All are found in Ps 68.8 which, judging by vs. 7 of this psalm in the paragraph above, parallels the theme at hand: the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain at the presence of God, the God of Israel." Sisera's nine hundred iron chariots were considered as nothing compared with this divine host.

Vs. 5 continues with the physical response just described, this time mountains having quaked before the Lord, *nazal* meaning to flow or run. "He sends forth his word and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow" [Ps 147.18]. Not just are mountains included but Sinai itself, the place where the Lord gave the divine Law or Torah to Israel through Moses. Actually Deborah and Barak address (Mount) Sinai itself. So these dramatic events—trembling, dropping and quaking—made the earth itself become flat as a plain on which to receive the Lord coming to deliver Israel. Later it would be

fulfilled with John the Baptist quoting from Isaiah about Jesus: “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low” [Lk 3.5].

Vs. 6 hearkens back to more recent events, that is, Shamgar and Jael: the former had killed six hundred Philistines (cf. 3.31) and the latter, Sisera (cf. 4.21). While both had accomplished great things for Israel, it was a time of chaos since caravans and travelers had ceased. Reference may be not only to any commerce and travel between the Israelites and Canaanites but to those coming from outside this region who considered the area too dangerous. The same applies to peasantry in vs. 7 or *perazon* which the NIV translates as village life, the only use of this noun in the Bible. There are two related terms, *perazoth* and *perazy*, three reference each, referring to un-walled settlements. In the verse at hand, *chadal* or ceased means to forsake in the sense of to abandon. Note that this abandonment of villages and farms applies to “in Israel” while in actuality it’s Canaan. Such a claim to Israel’s tenuous hold in a land they invaded recently suggests that in essence that nation possessed it provided the people remain faithful to the Lord. Fortunately this fluid, dangerous situation marked by suspension of commerce and abandonment of the countryside didn’t continue for long (that is, since Shamgar and more recently, Jael) or until Deborah came on the scene. Deborah did so not as a judge nor as a victor (both obviously true) but more precisely “as a mother in Israel,” exactly what her people needed. Since she and Barak were singing the song at hand, possibly at this point Barak stepped in and uttered this verse.

Vs. 8 gets to the heart of the matter or what lies behind the recent struggle and victory over King Jabin and his commander, Sisera. That is to say, “new gods were chosen” or more accurately, “they chose new gods”...active, not passive, showing that the Israelites made a conscious choice to adopt these gods instead of the Lord. Such a choice caused war; reference to city gates can apply to those fortified areas while Israel had been at war intermittently with the Canaanites. This cross-over point between what was inside the city (symbolic of worship of the Lord) and outside (symbolic of Canaanites divinities) can represent the ongoing struggle described to date. Vs. 8 has a second sentence, more or less rhetorical, intended to shame some forty thousand warriors in Israel by asking if they had stepped in to resolve the conflict which apparently they had not. Most likely this number is exaggerated but with the intent to show that many Israelites went over to apostasy and the exasperation felt by those who didn’t.

In vs. 7 we have some who might be Barak calling Deborah a mother of Israel echoed here in vs. 9 which reads literally, “my heart (*lev*; cf. vs. 15) to the commanders” or *cheqeq* which has one other reference, Is 10.1: “Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression.” And so the ideal behind *cheqeq* is a decree which may not be unlike Deborah’s role of a judge. We don’t have any names nor the number of such men who had perished in the recent conflict, but they had offered (themselves) willingly, *nadav* being noted last in vs. 2 with reference to the

people. The verse at hand concludes with a brief exclamation of “Bless (*barak*) the Lord” which is not unlike the proper name Barak.

Vs. 10 appears addressed to those who are wealthy as well as nobles whom Deborah bids to tell or *syach* which implies celebrating her victory in song as well as meditating upon it. “I will meditate on all your work and muse o your mighty deeds” [Ps 77.12]. In other words, such well-off people in Israel aren’t to take advantage of the recent victory gained at the expense of their fellows. Reference to walking by the way can refer to their ability to move about in safety and comfort within the chaotic circumstances described in vss. 6-7.

Vs. 11 deals with musicians whose task is not unlike the current one of Deborah and Barak, that is, to perpetuate the memory of their victory in order to encourage future generations of Israelites in times of crisis. Watering places, the only occurrence of this noun, is revealing in that at such places (i.e., wells or springs) women gather primarily to draw water and just as important, to gossip. From there word about neighbors and events travels quickly. The story of Abraham’s anonymous servant searching for a wife for Isaac illustrates this: “And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water” [Gen 24.12]. At such meeting places women engage in the favorite pastime of *tanah* or repeating which also means to rehearse or celebrate and has one other such reference, 11.40: “that the daughters of Israel went year by year to lament to daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.” In the verse at hand, this *tanah* obviously pertains to the recent victory which, it is hoped, will be lasting.

Vs. 11 has a separate sentence where the people went down to the city gates, another favorite spot where people gathered to gossip and to share information. Those leaving the city rushed off to pass on the news about Deborah and Barak while a bit later on news filtered into the city as to how the Canaanites handled their defeat.

Vs. 12 resembles something like a chorus responding to the song by Deborah and Barak sung thus far with the exclamation “Awake, awake” or *hur* which connotes watchfulness. “I will sing and make melody! Awake, my soul” [Ps 57.9]! They invite Deborah to sing, *shyr* being used as it is in vs. 1. Perhaps the verses up to now have been by the chorus, something not made clear, with Deborah being asked to get up before the people and sing in her own words, words which no other person could imitate. The same applies to Barak, but the chorus bids him to take away his captives, that is, leading them into slavery preceded by a victory parade where prisoners and spoils of war were displayed. Whether or not the two victors actually joined in is secondary. The sheer joy and relief at victory is the essence of this extended song.

Vs. 13 continues with the victory parade led by Barak, now with the nobles or *’adyr* (cf.

vs. 13) or more specifically, a remnant of them, *saryd* meaning a survivor or someone who had escaped. "Israel smote them until there was left none that survived or escaped" [Jos 8.22]. Also in this verse the text reads literally that the "people of the Lord marched down for me against the mighty," "me" referring to Barak. This opens a way for the verses through vs. 17 for (presumably) Barak to speak of those tribes of Israel who both helped and who did not. The tribes which followed Barak are Ephraim, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali. On the other hand, those rebuked are Gad or here as Gilead, Dan and Asher. The others (Judah, Judah and Levi) aren't specified. Concerning Reuben in vss. 15 and 16, there were great searchings of heart, *cheqeq* having one other reference as decrees, Is 10.1: "Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression."

Vs. 19 shifts gears away from how Israel's tribes comported themselves at a time of crisis to celebration of the victory at hand, even enlisting the stars in vs. 20 against Sisera, the military commander of King Jabin. This could be a way of saying that the Lord's hosts engaged in the battle where the future occupancy of Canaan was at stake. Then vs. 21 speaks of the rushing torrent of Kishon mentioned in 4.7: "Then I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand." In the same verse we have a second sentence, an exhortation of sorts: "March on, my soul, with might!" The verb is *darak*, the root for *derek* (road, way) and simply applies to moving along on. However, it is to be done with *hoz* (might). "But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the people of the city fled to it" [9.51]. As for soul or *nepshesh* (cf. vs. 18 as lives), it could apply to Barak concerning potential future battles. Finally in vs. 22 we have galloping horses which can be the heavenly hosts represented by the stars in vs. 20 which route Sisera's famed iron chariots.

Vs. 23 has one member of this heavenly host chiming in (angel of the Lord) who urges Barak to curse the town of Meroz, the last instance of angelic intervention being 2.4 when he says that the Canaanites will remain adversaries. As for Meroz, apparently it was inhabited by Israelites who refused to assist Deborah and Barak. Either they had close ties with the locals and didn't wish to jeopardize them or were intimidated if they showed any signs of dissent.

Vss. 24-31 or through the end of Chapter Five the praises of Jael are sung who single-handedly slew Sisera. While Deborah and Barak were responsible for the defeat of King Jabin and his commander, Jael was the heroine who finished him off, thereby precluding any future trouble for Israel, especially by those nine hundred iron chariots. Rightly Jael is called most blessed which is rendered literally by two uses of the verb *barak* (cf. vs. 2), one at the beginning and the other at the end. However, the superlative form (most) is lacking. Vs. 24 identifies Jael as belonging to a group of women who are tent dwellers which intimates that she and her type are nomads. The information garnered from this

point on aren't recounted in the previous chapter but could be attributed to Jael herself who was urged to give her story in as many details as possible.

Chances are that while this song is being performed Jael herself was present and could even be the person recounting her part of the victory. The new details are that Sisera had asked for water and Jael brought curds and that she used a workman's mallet to drive the tent peg into his temple. What's striking in this account is the way Sisera is celebrated as being dead in vs. 27. Two verbs are used twice for emphasis: *karah* which means to bend or bow with the added sense of submission before Jael, even in death, and *naphal* (cf. 2.19) or to fall. Another reference to the former is in 11.35: "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low." This happens literally *byn* or literally between the feet of Jael which has the added dimension of Sisera perhaps having attempted sexual relations with her.

The next three verses have a somewhat different twist in that they concern the mother of Sisera who got wind of her son's death at the hands not just of a woman but the wife of a nomad. She is presented as in a mode of expectation by a window lattice, most likely a lordly type of residence, quite different from the humble tent of Jael. The only comfort she has comes from here attendant ladies when make up the story that Sisera is dividing the spoil from his defeat of Deborah and Barak. His mother could see through this, of course, but went along just in case her son might show up. So while Sisera was Israel's most grievous threat, the song does show some maternal sympathy.

Vs. 31 concludes the lengthy song of the two victors with an exclamation of petty much like damnation for the Lord's enemies specifies the Canaanites. On the other hand, they wish his friends (*'ahav* is the verbal root which means to love) to be like the sun rising in its might or *gevorah* which often applies to the courage shown by a warrior. "For as the man is, so is his strength" [8.21].

Almost by way of footnote Chapter Five concludes with the fact that the victory by Deborah and Barak brought peace for some forty years which is in accord with similar statements found in 3.11 and 30. The verb for this peace or better, rest, is *shaqat* last found in 3.11 in the same context. While certainly welcome, it's indicative that the situation between Israel and Canaan has reached a prolonged stalemate and that some future crisis will arise requiring a new hero.