

A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

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A COMMENTARY ON

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

BY

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

Translated to the English language by

DR. GEORGE BOTROS

AN INTRODUCTION

If the book of Joshua is the book of the free salvation, in which Joshua received the leadership of the people to bring them forth to enter the promised land; to overcome the pagan nations, to reign, and to divide the land among the tribes; the book of Judges, on the other hand, reveals the condition of the Israeli people in the promised land, having despised the great gift of God, and become slothful to seek the free divine promises. The zeal of the people came to be lukewarm, and the majority tended to partake of the idol-worship and abominations of the pagan nations, that they let live in their midst. But God would not forsake His children, but resorts to chastise them, using those same nations, as a firm tool. And once the people of God return to Him, He saves them and bring forth salvation to them.

We can say that the book of Judges is the book of life of every believer, who tasted the sweetness of the new life in Christ Jesus, being the spiritual land that flows with milk and honey. But, instead of setting forth, in it, from strength to strength, he comes to be spiritually slothful, and despises the multitude of God's gifts, to apostatize to the carnal life, and to the deadly earthly mind; a situation that provokes God to chastise him with afflictions and sufferings, to bring him back to Him, a son, holy in the truth.

FATHER TADROS Y. MALATY

AN INTRODUCTION

JUDGES:

The name of this book in Hebrew is 'Shophtim', a plural of 'Shopht', meaning (judge); even though the word 'judge', probably taken from the Canaanite language (Amos 2: 3), in the Hebrew origin, bears the meaning of being 'a leader', or 'a ruler', and not 'a judge' in the concept we understand. In other words, it was not the mission of the judge as it came in this book, to issue verdicts based upon a written law or an oral tradition, as much as to restore righteousness to the life of the congregation, to defend and to keep the rights of its members, and to save them of any affliction into which they may fall.

Those judges who appeared during the period between the death of Joshua and the beginning of the era of the kings (Saul), had authority, yet not as that of the kings. The reign was divine; namely, God was the hidden King of the people, who works through the high priest to proclaim the divine purposes. The regular issues of each tribe was run by the head of the tribe; but, the great decisions that touch the life of the people as a whole, on the level of all the tribes, or some of them, like entering into war against enemies, and getting rid of their yoke, would be done by the judge who, otherwise, has no right to set laws, nor to put burdens over the people, but only to practice judgment and to issue verdict particularly on pervers to idol-worship; and to lead battles against the enemies.

It was God who usually set the judge; and was sometimes chosen by the people; but, in most cases he did not have the authority on the level of the twelve tribes of Israel, but only on a local level.

The judge was most probably considered as a savior from the tyranny of the pagans, through strife, repentance, and the return to God.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

According to most scholars, he was the prophet Samuel, as it came in the Jewish tradition, and adopted by many fathers of the church. This is confirmed by the inner testimony of the book; which shows that it was written after the royal system was established (19: 1; 21: 15); before the captivation of Jerusalem (1: 21); and adding it to the cities of the Jews in the time of king David (2 Samuel 5: 6-8). By that it would be written in the days of king Saul, or the beginning of those of king David; when the prophet of the time was Samuel.

According to some, it was written by Hezekiah; while, according to others it was gathered together by Ezra the scribe, from what the judges wrote, each in his time. Those who adopt the later view depend on the phrase “up to the time the land was captivated”; to believe that the book was written after the Babylonian captivity. But, according to what came in (Psalm 78: 6, 61; 1 Samuel 4: 11), the captivity here, refers to what happened when the Philistines took the ark of the covenant. Besides, not including any Chaldean words, this confirms that the book was written before the Babylonian captivity.

THE UNITY OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Some critics tend to tear the unity of the book into three part; by referring the main body of the book (Chapters 3 to 16) to someone, other than the author of the introduction (Chapter 1 and 2), and other than the author of the annex (Chapter 17 – 21); and believing that the annex was written in a very late era. But Richard Valpy French, in his study of the linguistics of the book, confirms its unity, through finding many Hebrew words, mutual between the main

body of the book and its annex; between the introduction and the annex, and between the introduction and the main body of the book.

THE GOAL OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

We can say that the period of history of the judges has been one of apostasy, during which the people were too preoccupied with idol-worship, and partaking of the abominations of the nations, to continue the strife to complete the possession of the promised land, Yet, there was, among them, a remnant of believers who worshipped the true God, as testified by the presence of the tabernacle of the meeting in Shiloh (18: 31); the celebration of the annual Feast (21: 19); the presence of a high priest, the care for the ark of the covenant (20: 27, 28), offering sacrifices to God (13: 15, 16, 23, 20-26; 21: 4); practicing of circumcision (14: 3; 15: 18), and offering vows to the Lord (11: 30; 13: 5).

This book came, not to give the history of that era, but to deal with the problem of apostasy, that made the congregation lose its sanctity and unity, to be destroyed and humiliated before the enemies; all of which were by a divine allowance, to bring them back to God, in a collective repentance; and to open up their hearts to God, who would then send help and salvation to them.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF JUDGES

This book deals with a period of time between two and three centuries, following the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan under the leadership of Joshua the son of Nun; starting from the death of Joshua, and ending with the death of Samson; namely a little before the time of the prophet Samuel, and the beginning of the era of kings on his hands (Saul then David).

It is most difficult to reckon the duration of that era through the book itself; on account of that, if we add up the periods judged by the judges, to those of

affliction or servitude to the nations, when there were no judges, we would find it be 410 years; contrary to the actual case which would never reach such a figure. The time of the judges were not successive, but some were contemporary to others, some had their authority on a local level, and not on that of the whole people; besides, there were gaps between some of them, as the judges did not represent a continuous series the way the kings did.

The following general table gives the history of judges (taking into consideration that some of the periods overlapped others):

The reference

The duration in years

3: 8 The servitude to Cushan Rishathaim

8

3: 11 The rule of Othniel

40

3: 14 The servitude to Eglon king of Moab

18

3: 30 The peace in the days of Ehud and Shamgar

80

4: 3 The affliction by Jabin

20

5: 31 The rule of Deborah and Barak

40

6: 1 The servitude to Midian

7

8: 28 The rule of Gideon

40

9: 22 The reign of Abimelech (not a judge)

3

10: 2	The rule of Tola
23	
10: 3	The rule of Jair
22	
10: 8	The affliction by the people of Ammon
18	
12: 7	The judgment of Jephthah
6	
12: 9	The rule of Ibzan
7	
12: 11	The rule of Elon
10	
12: 14	The rule of Abdon
8	
13: 1	The servitude to the Philistines
40	
15: 20	
16: 31	The rule of Samson
30	

410	

There were 14 judges, twelve of them came in this book, to be called “the book of the twelve judges”; excluding Abimelech (Chapter 9) who was not a judge; and considering Deborah and Barak to represent one judge. For according to St. Ambrose and to St. Jerome, Deborah was the judge; and according to St. Ambrose, Barak, her son, was no more than a military leader and not a judge.

CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF JUDGES

If the book of judges represents one of the dark eras of the people of Israel, because of their slothfulness to enjoy the perfection of God's promises, and their perversion to idol-worship, after they settled down in the promised land; yet God did not forsake His people, but kept sending to them saviors and judges to provoke them to the life of repentance, and to save them from the enemy to whom God delivered to chastise them; or rather to whom their sins did, to make them taste its bitter fruit. The persons of those judges came to reveal certain of the features of the True Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, the events bound to them, came to proclaim several aspects of the ministry of the new covenant that touch our spiritual life.

That is the program I intend to follow in interpreting this book, in some kind of simplicity, depending upon how the fathers of the early church viewed the events and the persons of this book.

THE BOOK OF THE JUDGES AND THE SPIRIT OF STRENGTH;

If the book of the Judges proclaims the Person of the Lord Christ through the life and the behavior of the Judges; Being the book of the conquest upon the enemy through those judges, it reveals "The Holy Spirit", as the Spirit of strength, by whom we prevail, in our spiritual strife. What those judges did of glorious and exalted works, by the Spirit of the Lord, rather than by any human work, present to us a possibility in our spiritual life and in our strife against the devil and his evil works, not through our own power, but by the work of the Spirit in us.

In his talk about the Holy Spirit, St. Cyryl of Jerusalem says: [The might of this Spirit is revealed in the book of the Judges; for by Him, Othniel (3: 11) judged;Gideon was strengthened (6: 34);..... Jephthah conquered (11: 29);Deborah led a war;and Samson – during the time he behaved with righteousness – did works that were beyond human ability..

THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF THE JUDGES

This book includes two introductions: In the first (chapter 1), it presents to us the possibility of man, or of the congregation in the promised land (the new life), to unceasingly conquer and reign. And in the second introduction (chapter 2), it presents a summary of the Theologies of this book in a concise way. The book, besides, presents two annexes, in two events that took place in the time of the Judges, that reveal the extent of corruption reached by the people (chapters 17 – 21).

- 1- The condition of the people after Joshua (an introduction to the book)
Chapters 1 - 2
- 2- The era of the Judges
6 - 13
- 3- Two events during the era of the Judges
17 – 21

THE FIRST SECTION

THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE AFTER JOSHUA

The possession of the rest of Canaan (chapter 1)

An introduction to the Theologies of the book (chapter 2)

The first two chapters are considered an introduction to the book of the Judges, which reveal the goal and the Theologies of the book. Even though the book reveals a period of apostasy lived by the greatest majority of the people in the

promised land; Yet, **in the first chapter**, the Holy Spirit showed clearly the possibility of man, to overcome 'Adoni-Bezek' (the devil), and to uproot the Canaanites (his evil works); and that man had no excuse for his apostasy, which was actually caused by his slothfulness with sin, in spite of the new possibilities given to him to enjoy the true promises of God.

The second chapter came to present to us the Theological concept of the whole book; that "apostasy", namely (Perversion from God), and breaking His commandment, are the causes of the bitterness that dwelt upon man. If this book proclaims a series of troubles and afflictions, that dwelt through the nations; yet it is a simplified portrait of the humiliation into which man, himself, gets by his own free will through his perversion from the true God. In this chapter we see the angel of the Lord come up from 'Gilgal', where there was the memory of "rolling away the reproach (the bondage) of Egypt from them" (Joshua 5: 9), for "Gilgal" means (rolling away); setting forth to Bochim meaning (weeping); as though he intended to bring them forth to tears, even in the promised land, as long as they have fallen into evil. This book is an unceasing series of perversion, humiliation, **crying out**, repentance, and then salvation. This is the main line of the whole book, as proclaimed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 1

TAKING OVER THE REST OF CANAAN

If the last book (the Book of Joshua). proclaims our inheritance of the promise land by the True Joshua, the Book of Judges, reveals the commitment to

perpetual strife, as long as we are in the body, until we take over the entire Canaan, namely until we enjoy the perfection of the divine promise. In the present chapter we see man's conquest over 'Adoni-Bezek', -- the symbol of the devil, who would lose his authority, and be crushed under the feet of the believer -- to reign on the heavenly Jerusalem, instead of Satan, fallen down from it.

1- The fall of Adoni-Bezek	1 - 7
2- Taking possession of Jerusalem and other cities	8 - 21
3- Taking possession of Bethel	22 – 26
4- The slothfulness with the Canaanites	27 – 35

1- THE FALL OF ADONI-BEZEK

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, “Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?”

“And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand” (2)

“So Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory

And Simeon went with him” (3)

As Joshua died after crossing the Jordan, and bringing the people forth into the land of Canaan, the children of Israel were committed to fight against the Canaanites to inherit the land after driving the pagans out.....

“Jesus” the Lord of Glory died on the cross, after making us cross over the water of baptism, and giving us a divine possibility to strive in the promised land; namely through the new life we have in Jesus Christ; to drive the Canaanites out, namely the works of the devil, and to inherit in the Lord..... In other words, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and the crossing over the water of baptism, are not the end of the way, but rather its beginning, to strive canonically by the Holy Spirit, to overcome and to inherit; not for some time, but to set forth from one spiritual strife to another, from one conquest to another; and from one glory to another, through our spiritual strife. As according to St. Gregory of Nyssa: [Whoever receives the washing of renewal is like a new recruit given a place among the warriors; but it remains for him to prove his worthiness of being one].

When the children of Israel asked the Lord: “*Who shall be first to fight against the Canaanites?*”; The Lord’s response was: “*Judah shall go up*”. Then ‘Judah’ asked his brother ‘Simeon’ to come up with him to his allotted territory to fight with him. Who is this ‘Judah’ who initiates the spiritual war, other than our Lord Jesus Christ (He who comes from the tribe of Judah), who leads the procession by Himself, who was seen by St. John the Theologian “*went out conquering and to conquer*” (Revelation 6: 2), to our account.

If ‘Simeon’ meaning (he who listens); refers to the believer who listens to his Lord in obedience; ‘Judah, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, in His strife against the devil our enemy, demands from ‘Simeon’, namely, from the believer, who listens to His commandment, to partake of the spiritual war. The Warrior is, therefore, the Lord Christ, who calls us to hide in Him to strive, to conquer, and to be crowned by Him. As according to St. Augustine: [Jesus, our Leader, chose for Himself, to go into temptation to teach His children how to fight].

If the word ‘Judah’ means (confession) or (faith); our Lord Jesus Christ demands from us, in our fight against the pagan Canaanites, namely the sins which reigned in our heart, to set forth to strive through faith, or through confession by

faith -- 'Judah', but not without 'Simeon' ; namely not without work or listening to the commandment. By setting forth to the first battle against the Canaanites, 'Judah', together with his brother 'Simeon', proclaim the spiritual strife through the living faith, not separate from work; being brothers joined together.In other words, there is no separation between the free grace of God, and the practical strife. And as, according to St. John Chrysostom: [God requests from us a little contribution, to do the whole work by Himself]; and he says as well: {Grace is always ready to welcome those who receive her.Whenever our Lord sees a soul, watches and flares with love, He pours on her His riches with abundance beyond her own request].

"Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek" (4)

"And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites" (5)

"Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes" (6)

"And Adoni-Bezek said, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me. Then they brought

him to Jerusalem, and there he died" (7).

The word 'Adoni' means (master), (owner), or (lord); and the word 'Bezek' means (strikes like lightning); the two words represent two features of 'Satan' who sets himself an 'Adoni', namely, a master, lord, and an owner;; as proclaimed by the Holy Book,: *"The ruler of this world is judged"* (John 16: 11); and, *"Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light"* (2 Corinthians 11: 14). Adoni-Bezek, therefore, refers to Satan who set himself a ruler over those who love the

world; striking them with the lightning of his deception, to bring them under his authority; and who has actually humiliated humanity, represented by the seventy kings whose thumbs and big toes he cut off. But the true “Judah’ came to cut, by the cross, his thumbs and big toes, and to bend his neck in humiliation under the feet of man. The Lord Christ “*saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*” (Luke 10: 18); and said to His disciples: “*Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you*” (Luke 10: 19)..That is ‘Adoni-Bezek’ who fell down from our hearts as though from heaven, and came to be under our feet, unable to hurt us by any means.

Now, what does he mean by cutting the thumbs and big toes?

According to many fathers, “*the finger of God*” is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Saying in the book of Exodus:: “*two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stones, written with the finger of God*” (Exodus 31: 18), refer to the Word of God engraved in us by the Holy Spirit.If, therefore, the finger refers to the spirit, by cutting the thumbs and big toes of the seventy kings, Adon-Bezek, meant to take off their spirit, and to make humanity, that was to reign in the Lord, lose all her strength and life. Cutting off the thumbs of the hands means stopping completely all work to the account of the kingdom of God; and cutting off the big toes of the feet, means stopping the movement, or the setting forth on the royal road. So has the devil humiliated humanity, has taken away from her, her royal work and her heavenly movement, and made her a captive in his palace, to gather **scrapes** fallen from his table in the dust; namely to behave like animals with no honor nor spiritual authority. But God did not let Adoni-Bezek humiliate His creation forever; but, on the cross, “*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it*” (Colossians 2: 15). By cutting off the thumbs and big toes of the devil, God brought him under the feet of His believers, with no authority.

By that, the new place of the devil, came to be, not in the heart to reign, but under the table to be trampled by feet, to lose the ability to move and to work. What he has done, it shall be done to him; the way it was said to the people of Edom: “*Your reprisal shall return upon your own head*” (Obadiah 15). To such a law, all will submit, according to the words of the Lord Himself, saying: “*With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*” (Matthew 7: 2).

Finally the book says: “*Then they brought him (Adoni-Bezek) to Jerusalem, and there he died*” (7). If the word ‘Jerusalem’ means (the vision of peace), peace will never dwell in the heart, nor will be enjoyed by the soul, unless ‘Adoni-Bezek’ first dies, namely unless the authority of the devil comes to an end, to let the soul live in peace with her Creator, with her brethren; and even with her own self; when she enjoys the inner spiritual peace.

Jerusalem, the symbol of the peace of the soul with God, and her enjoyment of life, is, herself, the symbol of the death of the devil, and of the perdition of sin. They brought the enemy from Bezek to Jerusalem; namely brought him, whose deceptions strike like lightning, like an angel of light, to let him die in the city where God dwells by His peace.

‘**Bezek**’, is ‘Kherbet (or the ruins of) Bezkah’, a town in the middle of Palestine, about 13 miles north-east of Shekim.

2- TAKING POSSESSION OF JERUSALM AND OTHER CITIES:

Saying: “*They brought Adoni-Bezek to Jerusalem*”, the author gave a detailed statement of Judah’s war to take over Jerusalem and ‘Kirjath arba’ (Hebron), and ‘Gebir’ all of which I dealt with their spiritual concepts in some detail in my commentary on chapter 15 of the book of Joshua;to which I ask the reader to refer; but I shall only add the following additional remarks:

“Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire” (8)

Concerning ‘Jerusalem’, they fought against its inhabitants and took it over; and brought Adon-Bezek captive into it, there to die. According to some, Judah took over the city, but not the stronghold that remained in the hands of the Jebusites It is said that the Jebusites – the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, returned to their stronghold, Mount Zion, and took away the city from Judah, until Israel took it back in the days of David, the king and prophet (2 Samuel 5: 6, 7).....

Striking the city with the edge of the sword refers to the intensity of the war; but setting the city on fire, does not mean that the city was utterly destroyed by fire, but only a part thereof; the same way we say a garment is burnt , when only a little part of it is. This is proved by the fact that the city remained inhabited by its original Jebusites, together with the children of Judah and Benjamin (Verse 21; Joshua 15: 63)

If, according to St. Augustine, [the earthly Jerusalem is but a shadow of the heavenly Jerusalem], it would become a dwelling place for Judah, if they stroke the Jebusites (their name means those trampled by feet) with the edge of the sword; namely if all what is worthy to trample by feet are destroyed in the heart; and if the city is burnt with the fire of the Holy Spirit, who takes the spiritual coolness away from it, and kindles it with the unquenchable fire of love.

Having enjoyed Jerusalem, kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit, Judah did not cease his spiritual strife, but, .

“And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland” (9)

He went down from the 2593 feet high Jerusalem to fight against the Canaanites (meaning the stir-up). For whoever possess Jerusalem, will have no (vision of peace), nor will endure the inner stir-up in the heart through sin, but will have to fight it, to get the exalted peace in Jesus Christ. The regions to fight in are:

- (1) The mountains; south of Jerusalem, including Bethlehem and Hebron.
- (2) The South; Although it is so translated from Hebrew,, yet it is known as ‘Nogab’ the word in Arabic refers to the cortex of trees after it becomes dry. The region, so called because of its features of dryness and draught; extends, extends 70 miles south of Hebron, until it reaches the barren Maze; bordered eastward by the Sea of Lot; and westwards by the Mediterranean Sea.
- (3) The plain, translated in Hebrew as ‘Hashphalah’; a lowland beneath the hills, extending between the coastal flat land and the series of the mountains of Judah; distinguished by its fertility, dense trees and plantations, contrary to the region of ‘Nogab’. In the era of the Judges. The Philistines used to occupy the coastal flat land; while the Israelites used to dwell on the mountains of Judah; and battles between the two sides happened on the plain (Hashphalah)

The children of Judah fought against the Canaanites in those three regions: the mountain, the ‘Nogob’ (the dryness), and the plain. The children of the True Judah – Jesus Christ – chasing the sin by the Holy Spirit to destroy it, set forth to the high mountain, with no fear of its inhabitants; to the ‘Nogob’, with no confusion; and to the plain, without being seduced by its green plantation and fruits. They strive in all regions: the mountains, the barren land, and the fertile land; regardless of the violence and cruelty of sin; nor drawn by its seductions.

As to 'Kirjat Arba' or Hebron (10); we saw how Caleb the son of Jephunah sought his right to possess it; and how he drove away and killed the three sons of Anak (Joshua ???). The name of the city and of the sons of Anak bore symbolic meanings we have already spoken about.

Caleb cared much to possess this city, for being so fortified that it was difficult to take over; hence David made it the capital of his kingdom before he takes over Jerusalem. This city had its sanctity for the Jews; and was called 'El-Khalil', as a memorial of Abraham the 'Khalil' (the friend) of God, where he set his tents; and where he, together with 'Sarah' his wife were buried (Genesis 25: 7-11); became one of the cities of refuge (Joshua 21: 11-13). It is called 'Kerjat Arba'; according to some Jewish scholars; on account of that in it four fathers were buried: Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with their wives (Genesis 23: 19; 25: 9; 49: 30, 31); as well as where four celebrities dwelt: Abraham, Eber, Eshkol, and Memrah. But, according to the Holy Book, its name referred to 'Arba', the greatest, and father of the Anak (Joshua 15: 13).

.¹⁰ Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi" (10).

"From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir was formerly Kirjath Sepher.)" (11)

"Then Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife" (12)

"And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife" (13).

“Now it happened, when she came to him, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?” (14)

“So she said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water” (15)

And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

The word ‘Debir’ of Hebrew origin, means (reads); Calling it ‘Kirjat Sepher’ or (the village of the Holy Book), or ‘Kirjat Sannah’ (Joshua 15: 49); was on account of what the Holy Book includes of statutes; It was most probably a center of knowledge and religion for the Canaanites. According to some, in its place nowadays is the village of ‘Dahria’, 13 miles south-west of Hebron. But most probably in its place is ‘Tel-Abib Nersim’, 13 miles south-west of Hebron, and 3 miles north-west of ‘Shamir’.

We saw that the name ‘Othniel’ means (God’s response); No one could take the ‘Kirjat of the Holy Book’ except he, to whom it is granted by God, or responded to his request; to him who married ‘Achsah’ the daughter of Caleb; namely who is attached to the holy life, and recognizes its secrets, not as a village in which he dwells, but as a bride he marries. As to dismounting from her donkey, and seeking from her father to give her the upper and lower springs as a gift; it refers to the soul that forsakes the cares of the carnal body (the donkey), to seek from her heavenly Father the springs of living waters, namely the fruits of the Spirit on a high heavenly level (the upper springs), and to enjoy the fruits by which we live here on earth (the lower springs)

“Now the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which lies in the South near Arad; and

they went and dwelt among the people” (16)

.”And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah” (17)

.”Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory” (18)

.”So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron” (19)

“And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak” (20)

After that he talks about how the children of the Kenite (in the Septuagint version, the children of Hobab the Kenite; namely the children of the brothers of Moses' wife 'Sephora') attached themselves to the children of Judah; having ascended from the city of palms, namely 'Jericho' that for being accursed and became ruins, her name was not mentioned here; and set forth to the wilderness of Judah; on account of that they, like all nomads did not like to live in cities (Jeremiah 35: 6, 7), south of 'Arad' 17 miles south of Hebron; and lived among the people of that location; namely the Amalekites. That way the wheat mixed with tares!

The two tribes Judah and Simeon took part to strike 'Zephath' and called it 'Hormah', which is most probably 'Beersheba'. The name 'Hormah' bears two meanings: (a holy place) and (ruins); as they utterly destroyed it because of the bitterness they had in the war against Amalek (Numbers 14: 45).

As to the cities 'Gaza', 'Askelon'. And 'Ekron' (18), of the main five cities of the Philistines, they were taken over by the Philistines, but did not stay long there; hence it came in the Septuagint version: "Judah did not take them, namely did not inherit them".

That was at the beginning of the appearance of the 'Iron Era'. Which the Philistines monopolized its industry, to keep the Israelites from it (1 Samuel 13: 19-22). But when David defeated the Philistines, and that was the beginning of using iron as a common trade in Israel

In the midst of those successive conquests, the Holy Book proclaimed the slothfulness of the people, saying:

"But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day" (21)

According to the scholar origin: [The way we hear in the gospel that wheat grow together with the tares, In the same way, in Jerusalem, namely in the church, there are the Jebusites, with their evil life; corrupt in their faith and works. It is impossible to purify the church completely, as long as they are still there on the land].

3- TAKING POSSESSION OF BETHEL:.

If Judah came ahead of all the other tribes; and his lot came the first to go and fight, representing the Lord Christ, who, Himself, came from the tribe of Judah; After Judah the lot came on "the house of Joseph", namely the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. 'Joseph', means (growth), 'Ephraim' means (increasing fruit), and 'Manasseh' means (forgets). If in the first stage, we saw Judah

seeks from his brother Simeon to go together as two committed brothers, a sign of the unity of faith, through listening to the commandment, through work; In this stage, Joseph sets forth, namely “the spiritual growth”, through the work of Ephraim together with Manasseh; namely the enjoyment of the fruit of the Spirit together with forgetting the love of the world.

Judah acquired Jerusalem, namely (The vision of peace); whereas “the house of Joseph” acquired the city of “Bethel”, namely (the house of God). By faith ‘Judah’ we enjoy the exalted divine vision of peace within ourselves; and by the spiritual growth ‘Joseph’, we come to be ourselves “Bethel”, namely a holy dwelling place for God.

The Holy Book has not spoken of any other city beside Jerusalem, more than of ‘Bethel’, which was called by the name of the city of ‘Luz’. Heading to the promised land, Abraham set his tents in the mountains east of Bethel (Genesis 12: 8; 13: 3). And when Jacob fled before the face of his brother Esau, heading to Mesopotamia, he spent the night near the city of ‘Luz’ where he saw a vision of a heavenly ladder, set up on earth, and its top reached to heaven; and he called the city “Bethel” (Genesis 28: 11-19; 31: 13).

Unfortunately, when the kingdom was divided, Jeroboam set two golden calves, one of them in Bethel (1 Kings 12: 28-33); and hence it was called by the prophet Hosea ‘Beth Aven”, namely (house of idols) (Hosea 10: 5, 8). Instead of the ark of the covenant (Judges 20: 27), that blessed and sanctified the city, it became a main center of idol-worship in Israel (Amos 4: 4; 5: 5).

“And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them” (22)

They entered into Bethel through the company of God. For we cannot force our way into Bethel, namely the house of God, except by God Himself, who carries

us in Himself to His house; reveals its secrets to us, and let us enjoy its heavenly life.

The Holy Book tells us about the way 'the house of Joseph' entered into Bethel by saying:

"So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name of the city was formerly "Luz".)" (23)

- (1) 'The house of Joseph' sent men to "Luz" to spy it, the way Joshua did when he sent men to spy Jericho (Joshua 2: 1). If Joseph represents the Lord Christ on many aspects, 'the house of Joseph' represents the church that sends ministers of the Word to testify to the Truth, and to open every heart to the account of the kingdom of God, to turn it into the true Bethel.

If the human soul is the true 'house of Joseph', it would be befitting of her not to cease using all her energies and possibilities as watchmen, whose work is to sanctify the depths with the Holy Spirit to let the heart

appear as 'Bethel', to realize the saying of the Lord Christ: *"The kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17: 21); and the saying of the apostle: *"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in*

you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6: 19)?

- (2) *"The name of the city was formally 'Luz'" (23)*. The name is mentioned here, not without a goal; for 'Luz' (Almond) refers to the Word of God, according to the words of God Himself to Jeremiah (1: 11, 12). And according to the scholar Origen who says that 'Luz' or almond has an outer cover that dries and falls down; and an inner solid cover of the edible fruit of 'Luz'. So is the Word of God or the Holy Book; if it is literally interpreted; man would eat the outer dry and bitter cover; and if he stops at the behavioral interpretation, he would eat the solid inner cover;

whereas if he enters into the deep spiritual interpretation, he would enjoy the fruit of 'Luz' itself, delicious and of benefit.

'The house of Joseph' sent watchmen to recognize 'Luz' and to enter into it to enjoy Bethel. For the soul would not become a house for God unless it sends watchmen to the Word of God 'Luz' to recognize the secrets of the Holy Book, to set forth by the Holy Spirit, the true (watchman), who is able to bring her forth to the depths of its spiritual secrets. So did the prophet David when he set forth by the Holy Spirit to 'Luz', when he said: *"I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great treasure"* (Psalm 119: 152).

(3) *"And when the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you mercy" (24)*

Who is that man who knows the entrance to the city, and led the watchmen to it, but the congregation of the Jews who were entrusted with the Word of God, and received the prophecy; who brought the world forth to the knowledge of the Lord Christ, and revealed to the gentiles 'Bethel' and its true entrances; Yet they, themselves, *"went to the land of the Hittites"* (26), and set for themselves a city of 'Luz' according to their own discretion. In this they were like the workers who helped Noah to build the ark for him and his family, while they, themselves, were not saved.

'The house of Joseph' showed mercy to the man and his family, and let them go (25); but instead of joining them to enter the city, and partake of their inheritance, they set forth to live among the Hittites, to partake of their denial and lack of faith.

What that man did to the 'house of Joseph' is done by many even up to this day; when they lead the others to the knowledge of the Truth, when

they, themselves refrain from entering into it. That was what the apostle Paul feared when he said: *“I discipline my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9: 27). And what St. John Chrysostom feared, when he said: [I shed tears when I see myself sit on a throne above everyone else; and when I am given more honor than everyone else].

5- SLOTHFULNESS WITH THE CANAANITES:

“So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his family go” (25)

“And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz, which is its name to this day” (26).

We said that the word ‘Canaanites’ means (stir-up); Not completely driving them out, and keeping them among them for the sake of receiving tribute from them (28, 29, 30, 33 etc.), refers to the perversion of the heart to the love of money. God gave us the authority to drive out every spiritual confusion and stir-ups; yet, for the sake of tribute, namely the love of money, we do not drive them out, but keep them for our temporal benefit; something that would destroy the soul here, and make her lose her eternity there.

“However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach 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; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong,

that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out” (28).

“Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them”.

“Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute”.

“Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob.³² So the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites,

the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out”.

Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless

the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them”.

“And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley; and the Amorites were determined to dwell in Mount

Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim;^[c] yet when the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under tribute”.

“Now the boundary of the Amorites was from the Ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela, and upward” (27 – 36)

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CHAPTER 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEOLOGIES OF THE BOOK

Although the backbone of the whole book bears the tune of humiliation and affliction; yet the Holy inspiration opened the book by the spirit of conquest over Adoni-Bezek and the Canaanites, to provoke in us the spirit of the joyful hope. But now, as the people were slothful in their obedience to the Lord, the angel of the Lord moved to 'Buchim' to bring them forth to weep by the spirit of repentance; so that, once they become greatly afflicted, God would send to them someone to save them through the spirit of repentance.

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1- The angel of the Lord in 'Bochim' | 1 - 5 |
| 2- The death of Joshua | 6 – 10 |
| 3- The people worship the Baal, and set judges | 11 – 23 |

1- THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN BUCHIM:

"Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will

never break My covenant with you" (1)

“And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?” (2)

“Therefore I also said, ‘I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (3)

” So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept” (4)

“Then they called the name of that place Bochim and they sacrificed there to the LORD” (5)

These verses present to us an accurate summary of the Theologies of the whole book, and a clear line of its goal. In them we notice:

(1) The angel of the Lord mentioned here, according to most scholars, most probably refers to a divine apparition of the Word of God. For it was the living Word of God who led the people to ‘Gilgal’; and it was Him who brought them up to ‘Bochim’, being, both the Grantor and the Receiver of repentance.

(2).Coming up from Gilgal to Bochim bears a deep Theological concept. For Gilgal, as we have seen in our study of the book of Joshua, was where the first camp of the people was set, after they crossed the Jordan and

entered into Canaan. The name ‘Gilgal’, meaning “*roll away*” or “a circle”; came to proclaim that the old reproach of bondage has been rolled away

from the people of God (Joshua 5: 9). For the reproach of bondage would not be rolled away from us except by our entrance into the “circle of eternity”. Gilgal was the military center of Joshua; and in it the people were circumcised (Joshua 5: 9); and appeared as a holy location in the days of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 7: 6); and there was most probably a temple there. And it became a center of military campaigns for king Saul against Amalek, etc..... In other words, ‘Gilgal’, refers to the inner sanctuary of the heart, in which our Lord Jesus Christ carries out the spiritual work; In which the heavenly life (the second spiritual circumcision) is transfigured; In which a thanksgiving sacrifice is offered to God;and through it we wrestle against the devil (Amalek) . This sanctuary is deserted by the angel of the Lord, proclaiming our disobedience and breaking the covenant with God; and He brings us forth to ‘Bochim’; turning our hearts to remorse and weeping; so that if we return to God in our depths, we offer a spiritual sacrifice to the Lord.

(3) The angel of the Lord summarized our sins in His proclamation that He would not break the covenant with us forever. Yet we, on our side, disregarded the divine covenant, to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the

land, namely with sins. Being a jealous God, He intends for us to be in unity with Him on a matrimonial level; Any union with others (sins) is counted as adultery; because of which our matrimonial unity with Him is

dissolved.

(4) God strongly sanctifies human freedom. Once we make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land (sins); He gives us our heart’s desire, and will not drive them out before us; to become thorns in our side (7)

God turns our actions into a chance to chastise us. He will never commit us to repent; but once the bitter fruits of our sins afflict us, and we, by our own whole free will lift up our hearts to Him, we shall find the

eternal arms open before us.

Anyway, by going up from Gilgal to Bochim, and talking to them, the angel of the Lord proclaims the treatment ahead of showing the bitterness of the illness. So God deals with us; He opens before us the doors of hope ahead of time; so that when we fall, and remember His mercies, we would set forth by the Holy Spirit to Bochim to offer thanksgiving sacrifices of repentance to the Lord, in the worthiness of the precious blood.

Now, having presented the treatment, He started to reveal the illness; He talked about the era of Joshua and the elders who accompanied him; all of whom having seen the amazing works of God, did not pervert from faith; although "*another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel*" (10)

2- DEATH OF JOSHUA

Joshua heard the words of the angel of the Lord in Bochim, and saw how the people lift up their voices and wept, because they knew what will dwell upon them or upon the generations to come, as a fruit of their slothfulness with the pagan nations.after sacrificing there to the Lord (5);

:Joshua dismissed the people, and the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land" (6)

What a marvelous living portrait of the true church; gathering together with Joshua to practice collective penitence in Bochim, and to offer a sacrifice to the Lord by a collective one spirit; but every one of its members has his own portion of inheritance. Namely the church life is a collective life of one body; yet each of its members has his own work and fellowship. In other words, the collective life does not mean disregarding the personal work, or the secret personal relationship that binds the soul to God; And the personal work, as well, does not disregard the collective life. But are integrated together and inseparable.I know the Lord my God as my own Head “*My beloved is mine, and I am His*” (Song 2: 16); With Him I encounter in secret on a personal level; but, being a member of the holy congregation, He is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1: 22), in which I am a member.

“So 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 works of the LORD which He had done for Israel” (7)

When the true Joshua – the Lord Jesus Christ – is the Leader of the church, who spiritually moves her, the people worship God in the heat of the Spirit; so they will do when the church is received by elders, namely shepherds who had seen all the great works of the Lord, and got in touch with His cross. Whereas if the church is received by shepherds who have no fellowship with the true Joshua, the people will pervert from the true worship of God.

“Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was one hundred and ten years old” (8)

“And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash” (9)]

Caring to proclaim the death of Joshua and his burial within the border of his inheritance, reveals to the people the faith in the resurrection of the body; something that the Jews could not completely perceive at the time.

He was buried in a barren region chosen by him after distributing the land among the tribes; for he sought what is best for the others rather than what is for his own. He was buried in a barren land to enjoy the new land, namely the eternal life, with the abundance of heavenly riches.

He was buried in ‘Timnah Heres’, or ‘Timnah Serah’, as it came in (Joshua 24: 30); the city was known by both names: the first means (portion of the sun); and the second means (a double portion). According to the Rabinites, it was called by the first name, because the sun stood still in Joshua’s days (Joshua 10); and that is why the sun was portrayed on his grave. Anyway, Joshua was buried in this town to have the Sun of Righteousness – the Lord Jesus Christ -- as his portion. Namely he died with the hope to enjoy Him; and with enjoying Jesus, he would count himself as having a double portion

That town was in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash; namely the mountain of the earthquake; that would refer to the earthquake which will happen on the day of the resurrection of the true Joshua.Joshua died anticipating to have “the Sun of Righteousness”, Himself, as his “double portion”, by whom he would enjoy the quake of the old life, to enjoy His life resurrected from the dead. .

3- THE PEOPLE WORSHIP THE BAAL AND SET JUDGES:

Now, as the death of Joshua was proclaimed with the hope for the resurrection;
and,

“When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD, nor the work which He had done for Israel” (10).

In few verses, revealing the essence of the events of the book of the Judges, and the dealings of God with the people; the rest of the chapter says:

“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of

Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger” (11 - 12)

The new generation forgot the great works of the Lord, the God of their fathers; and their hearts retreated to idol-worship, for the sake of what it bears of the easy way of abominations and carnal pleasures

“They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths; And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel” (!3, 14)

What does it mean that “they provoked the Lord to anger”, and “the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel”?..... God has no reactions like ours; and in his love He embraces us like His bride; as His beloved children, to dwell in His bosom;

and pours His love on us with no limits. Provoking Him to anger rather refers to our slothfulness to receive His love, and our despise of His friendship. His anger refers to our fall under His divine justice, to reap the fruits of our sins..... God appears as angry, on account of that they have forsaken Him, the Source of their life; and set forth to vain worships; and denied themselves by themselves of the divine mercy.

“So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand

before their enemies: Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they

were greatly distressed” (15).

“Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them” (16).

“And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of 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 oppressed them and harassed them” (18)

.¹⁹ And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them.

They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way” (19)

“Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice” (20)

“I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died” (21)

“so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not” (22)

“Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua” (23).

This is the story of the whole book of the judges, or rather the life story of many of us. We soon forget God’s dealings with us to walk according to our own desires. And once we suffer the fruit of our evil, we cry out to God. And when He responds and deliver us, we revert, forget God, and disregard His covenant. *“We do not cease from our own doings nor from our stubborn ways” (19)*

The worship of Baal was offered to the Canaanite god ‘Baal’ (Pleural Baalim), meaning (master, lord, or husband). For them he was the god of fertility; the lord of plantations, and who cares for animals. He was the god of the sun; whereas his wife ‘Ashtoreth’ was the goddess of the moon, for whom women used to bake cakes (Jeremiah 7: 18), with the portrait of the moon on them. The worshippers counted Baal as their father, and Ashtoreth as their mother; to whom they used to offer their children sacrifices and burnt offerings. They made for them bronze

hollow statutes, under which they ignite fire, and when their arms and hands become red hot they put their little ones on them amid the thunderous sound of drums that drown the screams of the little victims while burning. The Baal had many priests who used to deceive worshippers by their magic; and many priestesses who used to offer themselves for adultery and abominations, as a part and rite of the worship (Hosea 4: 14). Worshipping the Baal, at that time, became so wide spread in East, that every country had her own Baal, like Baal of Peor and Beelzebub



CHAPTER 3

OTHNIEL THE SON OF KENAZ

After the introduction in chapters 1 and 2, he started by the main body of the book, proclaiming the repeated perversion of the people; followed by their fall under affliction, and how God kept on sending to them judges to deliver them.

1- The perversion of the people	1 - 7
2- Serving Cushan-Rishathaim	8
3- Othniel set a judge	9 - 11
4- Ehud set a judge	12 - 30
5- Shamgar set a judge	31

1- THE PERVERSION OF THE PEOPLE:

“ Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, that is, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan (this was only so that the generations

of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it)” (1, 2)

The main body of the book starts by a list of the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them, so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war. Here we notice that the nations whom the Israelites were slothful to drive away, God allowed for them to stay in their midst to use them as a tool so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war; not by the general military concept of training; but to teach them how they have conquest through the godly life and trust in God; and to watch His dealing with them for their own good.God turns even our weaknesses to good,

Commenting on this verse, Father Daniel says: [God left those nations, not to take peace away from His people, nor to cause them harm, but because He knows that it would be for their own good. For once they suffer affliction from those nations, they would come to feel their need for God; to seek His help; to forsake their slothfulness, not to lose the virtue of endurance and work; and to strive for virtue].

He gives a list of those nations as follows;

- (1) The five princes of the Philistines; the rulers of the five main cities: Gath, Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron. At that time, the Philistines were great people of valor, living in fortified cities, and monopolized the industry of the iron tools and weapons (1 Samuel 13: 19-21). After the death of Joshua, Judah took Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron (1: 18); And Shamgar killed 600 men of the Philistines with an ox goad (3: 31); But the Philistines took those cities back, and the Hebrews fell into their hands (10: 6, 7). There came to be animosity between the children of Israel and the Philistines.
- (2) He gathered together the Canaanites; the Sidonians; the Hevites, inhabitant of Mount Lebanon; the Hittites; the Emmorites; the Perizites; the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem or 'Jebus'.

“namely, five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath” (3)

“And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses” (4).

“The children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites” (5)

The sign of their perversion was that:

“ they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods”.(6)

That was the double sign: to bind themselves to the unbelievers through matrimony, and the worship of foreign gods. It is noticed how he started by the matrimonial relationship with the unbelievers before idol-worship; on account of that the former is the cause, and the later is the natural fruit of the covetous man who marries outside the circle of faith. Hence the apostle Paul warns us, saying: *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness/ And what communion has light with darkness. And what accord has Christ with Belial. Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?!”* (2 Corinthians 6: 14, 15)

2- SERVING CUSHAN-RISHATHAIM:

Having been bound to the Gentiles through matrimonial relationships, they fell into their worship of the Baalim and the pillars of their gods. Hence God sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia, whom the children of Israel served eight years.

Cushan, a Semite name meaning (belongs to Cush); and **Rishathaim**, means (of two evils). If therefore, the people committed a double evil: by marrying Gentile wives, and idol-worship, God delivered them into the hands of a king (of two evils), to be chastised by him for eight years; *“With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you”* (Matthew 7: 2)

3- OTHNIEL SET A JUDGE:

*“So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.[a]
8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against*

Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years” (7 - 8)

“When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother” (9)

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the Lord delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand

prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim’ (10)

“ So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died” (11)

Choosing Othniel a Judge was not haphazard; God intended for the first judge to proclaim that the secret of conquest and salvation, lies in God Himself; for the word ‘Othniel means (the response of God) or (the power of God). The salvation will not be realized by human power, but is a response from God who listens to the cries of His children, and works in them by His divine power.

That Othniel took Kiriath Sepher (of village of the book), and married Achsah, daughter of Caleb his brother (Joshua 15: 15-19; Judges 1: 13-15). By taking Kirjath Sepher, Othniel represents the spiritual man who recognized the secrets of the Word of God in a spiritual way, and in a godly life, was qualified for the ministry of the Lord; and could prevail over Cushan-Rishathaim, namely could overcome the double evil that enslaved humanity; and the land would have rest for forty years. In other words, the enjoyment of the Word of God is the way to overcome evil, and to destroy its authority and bondage; and it is as well, the way to the true rest, through taking away the reproach and contempt. Concerning this the Psalmist says: "*Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Your testimonies*" (Psalm 119: 22)

The Holy Book confirms that the secret of the strength of Othniel was that "*The Spirit of the Lord was upon him*" (10), and not because of his own strength.

In the first judge, therefore, God proclaimed His power and His response to the prayers of His people through the judge's name 'Othniel'; revealed that he was 'the man of the Book' through: taking over Kirjath Sepher; and confirmed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, leading and guiding him.How much the church in every era needs someone like Othniel, to come, called by God, to bear His power and Spirit, to **xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx**.

"So the land had rest for forty years" (11). If the land refers to the body; and the figure 40 refers to the blessed temporal life; If we bear within us a soul that walks like that Judge by the Spirit of the Lord, and enjoy the Word of God, our body will have rest in the Lord, and will be sanctified in His eyes all the days of our life.Let Othniel, therefore, be a leader in us, to have rest, and to be filled with an exalted peace.

3- EHUD SET A JUDGE:

“And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord” (12)

.”Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. 14 So the children of Israel served Eglon king

of Moab eighteen years” (13).

The first time God sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram for eight years; but now, having returned to their evil ways, God delivered them to Eglon king of Moab for eighteen years for more chastisementFor repeated falling into evil, God, as a Physician presents to us a stronger medication, even if it is more bitter.

‘**Eglon**’, means (a fat calf) or (like a calf); as a reference to his strength and wild nature; beside the fact that he was a very fat man.(17).. “**The Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel**” (12); does not mean that He put cruelty in his heart, but that He lifted up His divine hand that kept his wild nature against Israel in check, that he was strengthened to go to war against them with the help of the Ammonites, his neighbors (the land of Moab east of the southern region of the Sea of Lot; and the land of the Ammonites to the east of them. He also joined forces with the Amalekites, wild nomad tribes that bore animosity against Israel, as revealed during their advance through the wilderness (Exodus 17: 8; Numbers 13: 29; 14; 25). The three joined forces, struck Israel with the sword, and took over Jericho (the Palm city) (3).

If “*the righteous shall flourish like a palm tree*” (Psalm 92: 12); the church, (the city of pal), in case she forsakes her God, and perverts to the world, and walks according to its life and thoughts, God allows for chastening her by Moab, Ammon, and Amalek; for some time, until she returns to Him. By what I say about the church, I mean the church on the level of the heart (the believer), on the level of the house (the family), or on that

of the congregation of believers, etc..... The enemy cannot approach (the city of palms) , as long as he has no place in it; but if it bears the features of the pagan nations, and bows by servitude before them; God will deliver her to them until she cries out, sanctifies herself in Him, and takes away the foreign gods from herself. In other words, Eglon and his allies would not be able to enter into your life and have authority over your heart and mind, as long as they have no place in you. But in case you receive their thoughts, practiced their worships, or walked according to their ways, the doors of your heart would open before them to enter and reign instead of the Lord.

“But when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man” (14, 15)

According to some, the word ‘Ehud’ is short of the word ‘Abihud’ meaning (father of glory or majesty); while according to others ‘Ehud’ means (united). So, if the first judge was called (God’s response or power), being the fruit of crying out to the Mighty God, and seeking His help, Here we find a judge whose name means (father of glory or majesty), as though he is a fruit of our heavenly Father who, being jealous on His glory and majesty in us, sends to us salvation, or we enjoy salvation through our unity with God in His Son Jesus, the true Savior.

“Ehud was a left-handed man”; using his left hand with the same efficiency he uses his right one. According to the Historian Josephus, Ehud’s whole strength was in his left hand. In the debates of St. John Cassian, father Tadros, presenting to us a spiritual concept of the use of the left hand, says: [The perfect man, in the Holy Book, likened to a left-handed man; uses his left hand as we use our right hand. We can gain such a power, by using the pleasurable things (those of the right hand); in a sound way; and by using the painful things (of the left hand) in a sound way, as a weapon of righteousness ; according to the apostle who says: [the inner man has two sides; namely two hands. A saint cannot work without using his left hand, to reveal the

perfection of virtue; he can turn each of his hands to a (right hand).] I can also claim that the righteous Joseph was left-handed; for he was very beloved by his parents; loved his brothers, well received by God, chaste in his afflictions, and even in prison he was a believer in God, showed compassion toward his fellow prisoners; and forgave those who did him wrong. Those righteous men (Job, Joseph, etc.) could truly be called left-handed , for they could use both hands as a right hand, saying: *“By the armor of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor; by evil report and good report*” (2 Corinthians 6L 7, 8).

.....Solomon in his Song of songs, on the tongue of the bride, says: *“His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me”* (Song 2: 6).. While both hands are of benefit; yet she puts the left hand under the head, for she had to submit the afflictions under the watch of the heart, to become of benefit, in chastening us for some time, for the sake of our salvation; and to grant us perfection in perseverance; Whereas by the right hand she would get the blessed embrace by her groom.

.....In this way, each of us would be counted as left-handed; when we are not affected by prosperity or need! Namely the prosperity would not seduce us to dangerous slothfulness; and the need would not draw us to despair and murmur; but in everything we would give thanks to God].

“ By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his

clothes on his right thigh. So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.). And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away

the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.....

So Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, "I have a message from God for you." So he arose from his seat. Then Ehud

reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not

draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

"When he had gone out, Eglon's servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, "He is probably attending to his needs in

the cool chamber. So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened them. And there

was their master, fallen dead on the floor" (15-25).

"But Ehud had escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the stone images and escaped to Seira. And it happened, when he arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the mountains

of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mountains; and he led them. Then he said to them, "Follow me, for the Lord has delivered your enemies the

Moabites into your hand." So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over. And at that time they killed about ten

thousand men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years” (26- 30).

That episode bears a magnificent symbolic portrait of the work of the true Savior Jesus Christ through the cross; In it we see:

(1) The name of the savior or the judge ‘Ehud’, as we said, means (Father of glory or majesty); and it also means (united). In Jesus Christ the True Savior, the Father was glorified, according to the saying of the Lord in the evening of His passion: *“Father, Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You..... I have glorified You on earth”* (John 17: 1, 4). Now, how did the Son glorify the Father?. According to St. Augustine, [Having been glorified through His resurrection by the Father, the Son glorified the Father by preaching His resurrection]. And he says:: [That was realized by the gospel of Christ; namely, the Father came to be known to the Gentiles through the Son]; [The Son glorified the Father, namely, He made Him known to every body He granted to Him].

Through the cross, therefore, the Son died in the flesh; to be glorified by the Father by His resurrection; And the Son glorified the Father through preaching the resurrection, and drawing the hearts of the Gentiles to the experience of the knowledge of the Father.

As to the second meaning of the word ‘Ehud’, namely (united), This name applies to the Lord Christ in a unique way; as *“He is One with His Father”*. And He came to the cross to make us, as well, united together in Him. for in His farewell prayer He said: *“Holy Father , keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as we are; That they all may be one , as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You”* (John 17: 11, 21).

(2) Bearing his double-edged dagger fastened under his clothes on his right thigh, to kill Eglon by it;..... Ehad was as though the Lord Christ, to whom it was said: "*Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One; with Your glory and Your majesty*" (Psalm 45: 3). And according to St. Augustine: [By 'His sword' he means 'His word'; for by it He scattered His enemies; and by it, ; as we hear the Lord say in the gospel: "*I did not come to bring peace on earth, but a sword; I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*" (Matthew 10: 34). For if a young man intends to dedicate his life to the ministry of God, and is opposed by his father, they become divided against one another; one promises the earthly inheritance, while the other seeks the heavenly one;. So had the Lord Christ, by His sword, namely by His Word, came incarnate to talk to us face to face.

The book of Judges describes Ehad's dagger as being double-edged;And according to the apostle Paul, "*The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword*" (Hebrew 4: 12). By the first edge , it works in the heart of the preacher; and by the second, he works in those of the listeners. The Word of God works in both the shepherds and the flock, as a sword that cuts off, and isolates evil, to present the heart pure to God.

(3) Ehad took a tribute to Eglon carried by a number of men, as though he is the Lord Christ who, when He accepted the cross, the devil assumed it as a joyful tribute to him, by which he would get rid of the Lord.A man of Cyrene, Simon by name (Matthew 27: 32), carried the cross with the Lord, as though he carried the tribute together with Him.And when Ehad killed Eglon, he was alone; as did the Lord Christ who "*has trodden the winepress alone; and from the people no one was with Him*" (Isaiah 63: 3)

(4) Eglon was cooling himself off in his upper room; And the Lord Christ encountered the devil through the cross.And when the later assumed that he has cooled himself off from the intense heat of the fire of the

preaching and exalted work of Jesus; when he thought that he finally had rest, he was actually killed.

(5) Ehud killed Eglon when he arose from his royal seat, and fell dead on the ground;as though he was the devil after he lost his authority (Colossians 2: 15), and fell like lightning from heaven (Luke 10: 18)

(6) Ehud shut the doors of the upper room and locked them, so that no one could open them, other than his servants.Having taken away from the devil by the cross his authority, He made him like dead, to whom no

one would come, other than whoever intends to be his servant.The return of man to the kingdom of the devil will only be realized by man's free will; for the devil has no authority to commits him to submission,

according to what St. John Chrysostom confirmed in many of his essays.

(7) After Ehud killed Eglon, the people killed ten thousand mighty man of valor of the Moabites..... If the devil has been completely destroyed on the hand of the Lord Christ on the cross, it is the work of the church,

the people of Christ, not to leave any of the works of the devil in our hearts. The Lord Christ conquered to our account and saved humanity; so that His believers would never cease to spiritually strive against sin.—

the works of the devil, until the end.

5- SHAMGAR SET A JUDGE:

“After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel” (31)

That does not mean that Ehud died; for according to some, Shamgar fought in the days of Ehud, even though on a local level.

Having probably not found a better weapon, Shamgar used an ox goad – a stick with a sharp iron tip used in shepherding the oxen. Anyway, that shows us that God works with the few, as well as with the plenty. He will use us

for the spiritual work, even if we lack the necessary talents and energies; and only have an ox goad as a weapon.

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CHAPTER 4

DEBORAH THE PRPHETESS AND BARAK

In every era, the Lord shows how women can have a positive role; so that they would not lead a negative life, but carry out an important role among the congregation. As a matter of fact, Deborah the prophetess and the judge was superior to many male judges.

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| 1- Israel falls into evil | 1 - 3 |
| 2- Deborah provokes Barak to act | 4 - 9 |
| 3- Jael kills Sisera. | 10 – 24 |

1- ISRAEL FALLS INTO EVIL:

“When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So 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 Hagoyim. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for

twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel” (1 – 3)

The word ‘Hazor’ means (a fold of beasts), or (fenced). It was a kind of stronghold close to the lake ‘Merom’, known nowadays as the lake ‘Hula’ (Joshua 11: 1-5); a ruin, known nowadays as ‘Tel-el-Kadah’.

'Jabin' was most probably a title of the Canaanite kings, like 'Pharaoh' to the kings of Egypt.Sisera, the commander of his army, his name, according to St. Augustine, means (the loss of joy).

As Israel repeated their evil, God sold them to be chastised by 'Sisera', namely by the loss of joy, which is the harshest way of chastisement; for by it, man loses the company of the Lord, the Grantor of joy, to come to have an inner anxiety and a depression of heart; that would never go away except through the return of the heart to God, to approach Him as His sanctuary, or as a heaven to carry him by the spirit of joy and exultation.

'Jabin', king of Canaan, whose name means (Chaos) or (lack of peace), reigned in Hazor, his capital, as though in a (stronghold), and sent Sisera to destroy every joy in the hearts..

Sisera dwelt in 'Harosheth Hagoyim', namely (a place of the Gentiles) (2); a location in northern Palestine, so called because of the diverse races of its inhabitants, mixed together to form an independent nation. There, Sisera, namely (the loss of joy) dwelt, among such a mixture of Gentiles; Namely, man would lose his spiritual joy when his heart turns into a dwelling place for a diversity of pagan nations; namely for abominations and sins.

2- DEBORAH PROVOKES BARAK TO ACT:

“ Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the

mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment” (4, 5)

God worked by the left-handed Ehud; and by Shamgar who had nothing in his hand by which to fight except an ox goad. Now, He works by a woman, or, according to St. Ambrose, by a widow; to tell all, men and women, married, widows and virgins, that everyone has his spiritual role in the life of the holy congregation.

According to St. Ambrose: [Deborah showed that a widow is not in need of help from man, as long as she is not handicapped by her sex, and takes upon herself the commitments of a man..... As a matter of fact, Deborah did far beyond what she promised to do. When the Jews found no one to judge and to defend them by manly righteousness and strength; and found that war kindled around them on all sides, they chose Deborah, a widow, to judge thousands of men in the time of peace, and to defend them against the enemy in the time of war. That was the first time the children of Israel had a female judge, whose work as a judge made history, to exhort women not to refrain from brave work with the excuse of their natural weakness. A widow judged the people; a widow led armies; a widow appointed leaders; a widow chose war and had conquests..... It is not sex that creates power but courage]; And St. Augustine ends his talk about Deborah the judge, by saying: [O women,; you have no excuse because of your nature; O widows, you have no excuse of having lost the help of your late husband; For every man has enough protection within himself, if his soul does not lack courage].

If we see, in the judges diverse portraits of the Person of the Lord Christ, and His salvation work; Deborah, on the other hand, bears a living portrait of the church of Christ, on many aspects, among which are:

(1) Name-wise, she was called 'Deborah', namely (a bee). It was said about the church, likened to a bee: "*Your lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk under your tongue*" (Song 4: 11); and, "*The bee is small among the flying creatures, but what it produces is the best of sweet things*" (Sirach 11: 3); And according to St. Gregory of Nyssa: [The bee is beloved and appreciated by all. In spite of its weakness, yet it bears a high wisdom, and perpetually seeks the life of perfection It is befitting of us, therefore, like the bee, to fly among the gardens of the inspired teachings, to gather from them what we would fill ourselves with the honey of wisdom, and of the diverse teachings, to form in us what is like a storehouse like un-perishable cells of wax. We are committed to have, like the bee, both sweet honey, and a harmless sting; to be preoccupied, like it, to turn the labor of this life into eternal blessings; and to present the fruit of its strife for the sake of the well being of kings and peoples. So will be the soul that draws the Groom, and admired by the angels; who consummate her weakness by the strength of the honored wisdom].

(2) The name of Deborah's man was 'Lapidoth', meaning (shining lamp or flame). The Groom of the church, is He who said about Himself: "*I am the Light of the world*" (John 8: 12; 9: 5); who shines in His church to make her, as well, the light of the world (Matthew 5: 14);According to St. John Chrysostom, on the tongue of the Lord Christ: [I truly turned on the light; but for it to endure will only be realized through your strifeI assure you that no calamity would be able to hinder your splendor, if you persist on walking the righteous life; to be the cause of changing the whole world. You should, therefore lead the kind of life, befitting of His grace; so that when you preach anywhere, this light would shine on your face].

(3) Deborah used to sit under ‘the palm tree of Deborah’ between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim” (5). What is this palm tree, called by her name, under which she sat for all to come for judgment, but the tree of the cross, about which the church says: *“I sat down in His shade with great delight; and His fruit was sweet to my taste”* (Song 2: 3). Deborah used to sit under the tree of the cross between ‘Ramah’, namely (heights) and ‘Bethel’, namely (the house of God), in the mountains of Ephraim, namely (the mountain of the increasing fruits). It is as though, sitting under the cross, granted her an increasing fruition;Sitting on the heights (Ramah), she came to be above the worries and seductions of the world;Sitting at Bethel, namely (in the house of God), she perpetually enjoyed His company.How much we are in need of being, like Deborah, to work unceasingly within the circle of the cross; with our hearts soaring up to heaven, to set forth to the eternal house of God, to enjoy the increasing fruition of the Spirit.

Describing the condition of Deborah as a judge, before she sets forth to war, St. Ambrose says: [In the time of peace, we find nothing wrong in that woman; when most of the male judges were the cause of serious sins committed by the people].

(4) Deborah refers to the church who provokes her children to the spiritual strife against the devil and his evil works, namely the abominations and sins. Deborah sought from Barak the son of Aminoam from Kadesh Nephtali, to attack Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men from the tribe of Nephtali, and the children of Zebulun, to fight against Sisera the commander of Jabin’s army.

According to St. Ambrose, Barak was Deborah's son; while according to the Jewish Rabbis, Barak was, himself, Lapidoth her husband; on account of that the word Lapidoth means (moves like lightning, which is very near to that of the word 'Barak', by which he was called because of his great energy and swift movement in war.

According to St. Ambrose, Deborah was successful in her work as a judge, through her success in her family life; for she raised her son Barak to be the leader of the army, despite the risks that he could face. He says: [That woman, before anything else, showed that the needs of the family do not depend upon the public resources; but the later rather are set through the proper management of the familial life. She presented her son to be the leader of the army;a widow trained a wrestler;..... taught him as a mother,commanded him as a judge;by her courage, she trained him;and as a prophetess presented him to conquer]. And also says: [How great is the will of such a widow, whose emotion as a mother, did not keep her son away from risks, but, on the contrary, provoked him to go ahead and fight to conquer. By which the decision was in the hand of a woman].

. "Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount

Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots

and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand'? (6, 7)

If Barak – whatever his relationship to Deborah might be -- refers to the life enlightened in the Lord, moving swiftly like lightning; it is befitting of the believer in his spiritual strife to be like Barak. The ten thousand men under his command, refer to the man who keeps the law (the figure 10) in a heavenly spiritual way (X 1000), namely in a divine way; for one day **for** the Lord is like a thousand. Being all men; it is befitting of the believer not to have within himself the softness of women, nor the helplessness of children.; but the maturity and seriousness of men. Those men came from ‘Naphtali’, meaning (Wide open); and from ‘Zebulun’ meaning (a dwelling place); Namely they have the wide open heart as a dwelling place for God Himself.

If the believer sets forth like Barak and his men, namely like lightning, with the spiritual keeping of the commandment as a way to lives and to experience; with the maturity of the spirit, and has the wide-open hearts, as a dwelling place for God and all humanity; God, then, will draw Sisera from ‘Kishon’, meaning (convoluted or bent), to deliver him into his hand; namely He will **submit** the distorted convoluted movements of the enemy, under his feet.

The River of ‘Kishon’, watering the ‘Ben Amer’ pastures; receives its water from Mount Tabor, the hills of Nazareth, Mount Hermon Minor, and Gilboa; then runs through the ‘Ben Amer’ pastures in a winding way heads towards North-west, to enter into the plains of ‘**Akko**’ and close to Jaifa, on the North; most of its course dries up in summer; and on its bank, the prophet Elijah killed the priests of Baal (1 kings 18: 40).

3- JAEL KILLS SISERA:

“And Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!”. So she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory

for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh” (8 – 9)

“And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command,[a] and Deborah went up with him” (10)

By the spirit of prophecy, Deborah said to Barak: “*The Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman*” (9). Barak assumed that she means herself; yet she most probably meant Jael, the wife of ‘Heber the Kenite, who killed Sisera by a tent peg in her tent.

According to St. Ambrose, Barak who led the battle, is a symbol of the Jews, who came out fighting with the teachings of the prophets about the salvation; Yet, it was not Barak who was the conqueror, but a Gentile woman called Jael; a symbol of the church, whose members came from the Gentiles. St. Ambrose says: [Propheying about the battle, Deborah secretly proclaimed about the church setting forth from among the Gentiles, and had conquest against Sisera, namely against the opponent hosts; For our sake she (the church) fought against the teachings of the prophets (Barak)The Jewish people did not get the conquest on the enemy, whom they should have fought through the virtue of faith; Yet “By their mistake, salvation came to the Gentiles; By their foolishness we came to have the conquest”. He also says: [Jael destroyed Sisera, whom the well-trained Jews should have donet under the leadership of their lightning-like leader; For reading in the sayings of the prophets and their works, most probably granted a heavenly lightning-like help on the fathers Conquest started by the Jewish fathers, and ended up to the church].

The Holy Book narrates the episode of the conquest by Jael (The church of the Gentiles) over Sisera, in the following way:

(1) At the onset, we heard nothing about a role played by Jael (the Gentiles); but it was Barak, (representing the Jewish fathers), in whom the prophecies of the old covenant shone like lightning, who set forth, accompanied by

Deborah (the spirit of prophecy)Together with Nephtali and Zebulun (Namely the wide-open heart as a dwelling place for God); from 'Kadesh', meaning (holiness). That onset represents the strife of men of the old

covenant through the spirit of prophecy, to set forth to war through the holy godly life.

"Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim,

which is beside Kedesh" (11)

(2) The book introduced this verse to prepare the mind to recognize 'Jael' wife of 'Heber the Kenite'. 'Heber' means (alliance); For, although he separated himself from the family referred to Cain, namely from the Kenite;

yet he did not enjoy the inheritance in the promised land, despite his faith in the God of Israel. He pitched his tents near the terebinth tree of Zaanaim, to be on the border between the Canaanites and Israel. Being a

Gentile, he allied himself with the Canaanites, and as proselyte, he had friendship with the children of Israel.

"Heber", here, probably represents some of the Gentiles, who, according to the natural law, recognized the Lord; yet they did not separate themselves from the Canaanites, for they walked in their abominations; until the

time came for 'Jael' , namely the church of the Gentiles, to kill the devil 'Sisera', and reject his abominations, and idol-worship.

“ Then Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?” (14)

(3) Here, by saying to Barak; “Up!”, Deborah revealed to ‘Barak’ that the secret of the conquest is the enjoyment of the resurrection, together with the Lord risen from the dead, who destroyed the devil and his hosts.

How much we need to listen to the voice of the church (Deborah), to enjoy the resurrection, so that ‘Sisera’ would have no authority on us, for the Lord, risen from the dead, “goes out before us”, as the Firstfruit of those

departed, to deliver ‘Sisera’ into our hand.

(4) On Mount Tabor, Barak was secure in his stronghold; as though he was together with the disciples who watched the Lord transfigure, and said on the tongue of the apostle Peter: *“Lord, it is good for us to be here”*

.(Matthew 17: 3) Then they were commanded by the Lord to come down to carry the cross together with Him; that, by His resurrection, He would proclaim His conquest upon ‘Sisera’, and grants His disciples conquest with

Him.

“And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot” (15)

(5) Coming down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men, Yet ‘Barak’ having no chariots; was no match for the army of Sisera, estimated by the Historian Josephus to be 300,000 men, ten thousand horsemen, and 3000

chariots, 900 of which were iron chariots. But God, as usual, does not save by the mighty human possibilities , but, going out before His people, routed the enemy, who, when they saw the Israelites coming down suddenly

upon them, they fell into disturbance; their chariots knocked one another; and they had to forsake them and flee on foot; specially, as reported by Josephus, very heavy rain and dense hail came down, which increased

their confusion. Chasing them, the Israelites sang together with the psalmist, saying: *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God”* (Psalm 20: 7).

“Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left” (16).

Perceiving that the enemy was very close, and being a more obvious target, Sisera alighted from his chariot which was already damaged; on account of that it was easier for him to find a refuge on foot, than to have it

riding a chariot.

So Barak and his men defeated Sisera and his men, not by the multitude of numbers nor of possibilities, but in the name of the Lord of hosts. According to St. Ambrose: [The church overcomes the hosts of the enemy, not by the weapons of this world, but by spiritual weapons , *“mighty in God for pulling down strongholds; and casting down arguments”* (2 Corinthians 10: 4, 5).

“However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear.” And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him

with a blanket” (17, 18).

The word ‘Jael’ means (a kind of mountain goat). It is as we already said, represents the church of the Gentiles, which was before, living on the mountains and in the wilderness. And she and her husband had peace with ‘Sisera’, namely with (the devil). Sisera set forth to her tent and not to that of her husband, with the perception that nobody could enter the tent of a woman, when she denies the presence of anyone in her hospitality.. He was amazed by seeing her coming out to welcome him with very soft words. Although Jael so did by deception, which was contrary to the tradition of hospitality; but, most probably, she so did through a secret proclamation; representing the church that came out of her old tent, or old man, to kill the devil out of her life, and to turn her tent into a grave for the enemy, and a sanctuary for the Lord. In other words, if the tent refers to the body that, by its evil desires, gave hospitality to the devil, Through the divine grace, man proclaims his denial of the devil and all his works; to sanctify the body, by killing the evil desires, and by bearing the Spirit of the Lord in it.

Then he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. And he said to her, “Stand

at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there any man here?’ you shall say, ‘No.’” (19, 20)

He asked her for a little water to drink, to seem like seeking nothing more; for her great hospitality and giving him a refuge is enough for him. She gave him milk from a jug, most probably of leather in which milk is put to ferment, with the intention to make him go into a deep sleep after so much exhaustion; to have the time to put her plan into action. What is this milk other than the teachings of faith that water the soul of the believer and make her drunk by the love of God; even though, for the devil and his followers it would be deadly. Sisera's thirst was quenched by a jug of milk; namely was defeated by wisdom; for what is healthy for us to drink, came to weaken and kill the enemy..... The weapons of the church are 'faith' and "prayers", by which she defeat the enemy.

In the old, Satan crawled into the tent of Eve through the serpent, and deceived her by the apple, to kill her, together with her husband, and her descendants forever. Now, Eve (Jael) went out to meet him (Satan), pretending to give him hospitality, to kill him and save everyone from his evil; so that he would have no more place in her tent, in her man's, or in her descendants after them.

"Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died" (21)

Let Sisera die by the hand of a woman, by a wooden tent peg she took in her hand, drove into his temple, and it went down into the ground (21)..... In other words let the evil desires, stirred-up in us by the devil die by the hand of the church, the bride of Christ, who carries the cross (the wooden peg).Let Jael softly and swiftly strike the devil in his head; namely while he is fast asleep, before he wakes up, brings them into the depths, and reign..... Let Jael

strike him with the cross in his temple, namely reject and crucify his thoughts, to purify our depths to the account of the Lord..

“And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, “Come, I will show you the man whom you seek.” And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera,

dead with the peg in his temple” (22).

“So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel; And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king

of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan” (23, 24).

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CHAPTER 5

DEBORAH'S SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD

According to the majority of scholars, Deborah's song of praise; also called "the song of conquest", was written by Deborah, herself, in a magnificent poetic form, and with eloquence that surpasses that of contemporary to her. It is the oldest part of the book of the Judges. According to the scholar Origen, it is the song of him who strives like a bee, and sings it during his spiritual strife, when he sees how God shakes the rough mountains before us, granting us the conquest to let us reign forever.

This song includes 31 verses, divided into three parts, each of nine verses (3 – 11; 13 -21; 22 – 30).....The first two verses are an introduction of the whole song; verse 12, is an introduction of the second division; and verse 31 the end of the song.

1- An introduction to Deborah's song of praise	1 - 2
2- God is the Leader of His people	3 - 11
3- An introduction to the second part of Deborah's song of praise	
12	
4- The battle of Deborah and Barak	13 -
21	
5- The defeat of Sisera	
22- 30	
6- The end of Deborah's song of praise	31

1- AN INTRODUCTION TO DEBORAH'S SONG OF PRAISE:

“Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:; ‘When leaders lead in Israel, When the people willingly offer themselves; Bless the Lord’” (1, 2)

In the time of affliction, man cries out seeking salvation; but in the time of joy, he rarely go back to God with thanksgiving for the sake of His works with him. Ten lepers lifted up their voices, and said, “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*” (Luke 17: 13). And when He healed them , only one of them – a Samaritan -- returned, and with a loud voice glorified God. Jesus said: “*Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? Were there not any found to give glory to God, except this foreigner?*”

When God saved His people from Sisera and Jabin, on the hand of Deborah and Barak, Deborah, together with Barak, set forth singing praise to God. She might had written that song by a divine guidance, led the women to sing it; and gave it to Barak to do the same with men. The same thing was done after crossing over the Red Sea, when Moses Set forth to sing praise to God (Exodus 15: 1).....Then followed by the Miriams who proclaimed the resurrection of the Lord to the disciples, and had the first portion in the enjoyment of the joy of the resurrection of the Lord from the dead.

What did they say? “***When leaders lead in Israel***”; namely they sang praise to God who worked in those who were given the position of leadership in the war, risking their life for the sake of their brethren. Deborah and Barak, while singing praise to God, who granted the conquest, did nor disregard the strife and labor of anyone.

“When the people willingly offer themselves”. For although the leaders were given their responsibilities, the people willingly strived with joy. The spiritual conquest is a fruit of the work of God in the leaders, as well as in the

people. I wish in the successful works, while we refer all the favor to God, we do not disregard the role played by the leaders and the people.

By saying, "**Bless the Lord**", Deborah sought from the leaders, who were faithful in their positions, and the people who willingly strived, not to let the conquest distract them from singing praise of thanksgiving to God for His rich grace; but to consider the words of the apostle Paul, who says: "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Corinthians 3: 5)

2- GOD IS THE LEADER OF HIS PEOPLE:

The song of praise starts by saying:

"Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!; I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel" (3)

As there were no kings of Israel at that time, the call here is addressed to the kings of the pagan nations, who were allied with Jabin, king of Canaan, asking them to meditate in the works of the living God; to forsake their false gods, and fear the true God.

Saying: "***I, even I sing to the Lord***", It is as though Deborah says: [I, Deborah, the weak woman, opens my mouth to praise God my Savior. If you are kings and elites, I, a weak woman, call you to reconsider yourselves, and think about God's works with men. Repeating the word "I" twice, probably refers to the church that sang praise to the Lord in the Old covenant through the law; and play music for Him in the new covenant through the grace. Although it is one church, yet she has members of the old, as well as of the new covenants.

According to St. Augustine, the figure 2 refers to "love"; that makes the two one. The repetition of the word "I" refers to the feature of the true Deborah, namely of

the church, capable of singing and praising; The feature of “love”, without which, God would never receive her worship or her praise; according to the words of the apostle, saying: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal”* (1 Corinthians 13: 1)

“Lord, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens poured, the clouds also poured water” (4)

“The mountains gushed before the Lord, This Sinai, before the Lord God of Israel” (5).

Here Deborah goes back to remember the dealings of God with her fathers, when they were nomads, when no one but God supported them against Seir and Edom.(Numbers 20: 22; 21: 4). God who, in the old saved their fathers, is the same God who accompanies them in their strife against Sisera and Jabin king of the Canaanites.

By saying: *“when you went out;when you marched”*, Deborah proclaims that the secret of the conquest is that God does not stand isolated from man, but, in His love for us, continually moves for our sake. By His love He goes out from ‘Seir’ (meaning hair, the name of Esau who was hairy); and marched from the field of Edom (meaning blood or earth, which were also Esau’s names). It is as though, by love, He comes down to us, dwells among us, to take us out of ‘Seir’, namely of the carnal thoughts; and brings us up above Edom, namely above the blood and the earth. By Jesus Christ we come out and go up; and do not live any more on the bloody, earthly carnal level; but partake of His new life to live in the heavenly places. As according to St. John Chrysostom: [It is as though man has been taken up to heaven itself, to stand close to the throne of glory].

In her song, Deborah confirms that it is God who works in us. Carrying Him in us, we, symbolically come out of 'Seir', and come up from Edom. The fruits of which are:

(1) **"The earth trembled"**, (4). Here he refers to the fear that dwelt upon the nations, when they heard about the works of God with Israel. As according to the prophet Moses: *"The people will hear and be afraid*

. Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed: The mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them. all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away" (Exodus 15: 14,

15; and see Joshua 2: 9-11).

"The earth", as well, refers to the body. When God works in us, the body trembles, namely, fearing God, it will no more walk in its evil desires, but submits to the Spirit of the Lord; according to the prophet Habakkuk:

saying: *"You divided the earth with rivers"* (Habakkuk 3: 9). If our earth, namely our bodies are barren, the Lord opens up in them, by His cross, fountains of His Holy Spirit, rivers of living water..

(2) **"The heaven poured, the clouds also poured water"** (4). If the pagan nations, like the earth, trembled before God; His children, like heavens will drip dew, and like clouds will pour rain that turn the wilderness into a

paradise. By the Holy God, our inner life – like heavens – bear the dew of the Holy Spirit, and His heavenly rain.

What we say about the pagan nations and the children of God, we also say concerning the body and the Spirit. If the body, like earth, trembles before God, and no more seeks its evil desires; the Spirit, like heaven,

by the Lord, pours the joyful rain.

(3) ***“The mountains gushed before the Lord”*** (5); The prophet Isaiah say:
“When You did awesome things for which we did not look; You came down, the mountains shook at Your presence” (Isaiah 64: 3).

In our study of the book of Ezekiel, we saw God sets out of the souls of His saints, holy mountains where He dwells, soaring higher than the earthly affairs. So does the devil, he sets out of the souls of his followers , defiled

mountains, featured by pride, and disobedience of the divine commandment. Such mountains will gush before the face of the Lord, their haughtiness will fall down, and be crushed before Him.

After parading the works of God with the early fathers in the wilderness, she came back, to describe the conditions in her days, and the need for the work of God: saying:

“In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted, and the travelers walked along the byways” (6)

“ Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel” (7).

It so seems that the affliction dwelt upon Israel in the end days of the last judge Shamgar (3: 31), whom we do not know if he and Deborah were contemporaries. As to ‘Jael’ here, she was, according to some, the wife of Heber the Kenite who killed Sisera; who was well known for her great jealousy on the salvation of Israel, though working in secret in fear of Sisera, before she killed him; While according to others, she was another Jael who had her role in the days of Shamgar. Anyway, Deborah here, presents to us a bitter portrait of the afflictions caused by the Canaanites, who closed shut the main highways, that the Jews, in

their travel, had to walk along dangerously twisted byways. The fields were deserted with no farmers, who fled to the cities to take refuge; and the fertile land turned barren without fruition. It is a portrait of the work of the devil who: closes the divine ways before humanity, through cutting hope, brings her forth to evil twisted ways away from her goal; and turns her inner field into barrenness, and her paradise into wilderness. Humanity remained like this until the spiritual church (Deborah) came and proclaimed her motherhood in the Lord "*I arose a mother in Israel*" (7). It was therefore, not possible to get rid of the bitterness of the Canaanites, except by receiving Deborah as a mother; namely by receiving the motherhood of the spiritual church. According to St. John Chrysostem: [You should not separate yourself from the church; for, being faith and life, nothing is stronger than her. The church is your hope, salvation, and refuge; higher than heavens, and wider than the world; She will never get old, but will always be in perfect vitality].

"They chose new gods; then there was war in the gates; not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel"
(8).

The destruction from the Canaanites was not only on the outside; but was, as well, corruption of the inside; for the Jews chose new gods; as according to the prophet Moses: "*They sacrificed to demons, not to God; to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals*" (Deuteronomy 32: 17). God, therefore, forsook them until war came in the gates; and the place where the judges and rulers used to sit for judgment, turned into a pool of blood. Before such a situation, what could Israel do, even if they have an army of forty thousand men, who carried no shield of the spirit nor the spear of faith? For the Canaanites denied them the material weapons; and they denied themselves the spiritual weapons by their perversion to idol-worship.

Being in such miserable condition: affliction from outside, and corruption inside; the Lord did not forsake them, but sent to them judges who offered themselves willingly to save the whole people. Seeking from the people to bless the Lord for sending them, Deborah says:

“My heart is with the rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly with the people. Bless the Lord!” (9).

She also seeks from the elites of the people to praise the Lord who sent judges, she says:

“Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, who sit in judges’ attire, and who walk along the road” (10)

If the poor people who walk on foot, praise God; it is befitting, as well, of the Elites who ride on select rare breed of donkeys; and the judge who sit in their attire on precious carpets; to praise Him.

Then Deborah ends her praise by saying:

“Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places, there they shall recount the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts for His villagers in Israel; then the people of the Lord shall go down to the gates” (11)

The Hebrew origin of this verse came vague, with much controversy to interpret it. According to some, the archers are the arrow throwers, while according to majority they are those who divide the spoil, who, after taking their portion, they go to the watering places to quench their thirst, while singing praise to God, who granted them, beside the conquest, such abundance of spoil to bring back home.

3- AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PART OF DEBORAH'S SONG OF PRAISE:

Having praised God, and having sought from all the ranks of people to praise Him, for saving them from the enemy, taking away their corruption, and giving them conquest, instead of the humiliation, and an abundance of spoil instead of poverty; Deborah opens the second division of her praise, by saying:

*“Awake, awake, Deborah! awake, awake, sing a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!” (12)*

If the second part of Deborah's song of praise, proclaims the salvation work of God, through Deborah and Barak, being a symbol, and a preparation for the salvation to be presented by the Lord Christ, through the church of the new covenant; that is why it starts its introduction by calling the church, four times, to wake up. If humanity in the world was going through the sleep of death because of sin; the Lord Christ came to proclaim the resurrection of the church, He gathers together from four corners of the world: from the north, the south, the east, and the west; to wake up the pagan peoples and nations from their sleep; by Him who is risen from the dead, capable to wake them up.

If Barak led the battle, led his captives away, and brought forth an abundance of spoil from the enemy, to offer to the people, to fill their life with joy, instead of the years of humiliation they have lived; The Lord, having conquered on the cross, He liberated humanity, captivated in the bondage of the devil; and brought them forth into His liberty on the heavenly level; according to the words of the psalmist: *“You have ascended on high; You have led captivity captive”* (Psalm 68: 18); on which, St. Jerome comments, saying: [Ascending high up to heaven, You saved us, we, who are captivated by the devil]. And, commenting on *“You have led*

captivity captive”, St. Augustine says: [He so did, for He overcame death that captivated those on whom it reigned; . . .Or he calls them, ‘captives’ of the devil, those who, being saved from sin which they served, they became children and ministers of righteousness]. In other words, we, who were before in captivity, under the yoke of sin, are now free, and, in Jesus Christ, we came to be children of the Father, captivated by His joyful land, and the spoils of His exalted love; and brought forth with joy into the service of righteousness; after having tasted the bitterness of the captivity of evil.

4- THE BATTLE OF DEBORAH AND BARAK:

The second part of this song of praise describes to us the battle of Deborah and Barak, and their conquest in the Lord.

. *“Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles; The Lord came down for me against the mighty” (13)*

The ‘survivors means the weak remnants who remained after the oppression of the Canaanites. The weak remnants, after so many years of affliction, prevailed upon the nobles of the Canaanites. God used Debora against the mighty; whom, together with Barak, the tribes of Israel came to follow. In this praise, she paraded the following tribes:

. *“From **Ephraim** were those whose roots were in Amalek. After you, **Benjamin**, with your peoples, From (**Manasseh**) Machir rulers came down, And from **Zebulun** those who bear the recruiter’s staff” (14)*

“Those who bear the recruiter’s staff”. *“Concerning the tithes of the herd or the flock, or whatever passes under the (recruiter’s) staff, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord”* Leviticus 27: 32). . That is why, according

to some, that recruiter used to come from the tribe of Zebulun to count the number of the recruits; so that everyone would enjoy his portion of the spoil. According to some, having this assignment refers to their prominent position among the warriors.

*“And the princes of **Issachar**, were with Deborah, as Issachar, so was Barak, sent into the valley under his command”*
(15)

Here she commends the princes of Issachar who willingly joined Deborah, as she was already in the battle field. They did not just send their men, but came out themselves. To proclaim their courage, she did not liken them to the brave Barak, but even encouraged Barak by their example. They rushed to the valley under his command (4: 14); namely to the valley where the enemy were, with their foot soldiers, horsemen, and iron chariots..

“Among the divisions of Reuben There were great resolves of heart; Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the pipings for the flocks? The divisions of Reuben

have great searching of heart” (15, 16)

“Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death; **Naphtali** also, on the heights of the battlefield” (18)

In the last chapter we saw how Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to war in Kedesh (18). where they had a lion's share in the battle; to be commended by Deborah as holding the recruiting staff (14). Now, at the end of her talk about the tribes, Deborah adds that Zebulun and Nephtali jeopardized their lives to the point of death with rare courage and love, on the heights of the battle field, a further sign of bravery, to confront the enemy on a high place without fear.

Together with commending the tribes who fought under the command of Barak, Deborah tactfully and gently rebuked those who refrained to take part; particularly those who were dwelling east of the Jordan, in the land of Gilead (the two tribes of **Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh**); joined in that slothfulness by the tribes of **Dan and Asher**.

In our study of the book of Numbers, we saw how those two and a half tribes, who chose to dwell east of the Jordan, represent the Jews who did not enjoy crossing the Jordan, to enjoy the inheritance of the new covenant. The tribe of Dan, according to some scholars, they refer to the heretics, out of whom the antichrist will come in the era of apostasy. As to Asher; Deborah mentions that, dwelling on the sea coast, they were bound to the disturbances and riots of the world..... It is as though those who rejected the crown of conquest, were those who rejected Jesus (the Jews); and the heretics, bearers of the spirit of the antichrist; and lovers of the world.

It is as though she says to **Reuben**. The firstborn among the tribes, that he forsook his brothers by sitting at the water streams, to think about the situation; and the fertility of the land, instead of joining his brethren in their strife against the enemy. He preferred to sit among the sheepfolds to hear the pipings of the shepherds for the flocks, instead of hearing the sound of the trumpets of war. This tribe represents the soul bound to the water streams of the world; and to the sheep, namely to the carnal body. In other words, those whose spirit was

corrupted by the love of the world, the evil desires of the body, away from the spiritual strive against sin.

.
“Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, and why did **Dan** remain on ships [**Asher** continued at the seashore, And stayed by his inlets?” (17).

She continued to rebuke the rest of the tribes who dwelt east of the Jordan. Gilead refers to the soul that stayed beyond the Jordan, and abstained from being buried together with the Lord Christ in the waters of the Jordan; choosing the easy and wide road, rather than the fellowship with the passions and burial of the Lord. Then Deborah moved to talk about the enemy themselves. Or the battlefield, and said”

“ *“The kings came and fought, Then the kings of Canaan fought In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; They took no spoils of silver”* (19)

Here she talks about the kings who supported the king of Canaan, in ‘Taanash’, a town five miles south-east of ‘Megiddo’. Its Canaanite name, meaning (sandy land) belonged to Issachar, then moved to Manasseh, then to the Levites. By coming down to it, they assumed that they will take the spoil and the silver from the king of Canaan as wages; but were shocked to see that heaven itself fought against them:

..
“*They fought from the heavens; the stars from their courses fought against Sisera. the torrent of Kishon swept them away, that ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength!*” (20, 21)

Expecting to have conquest with ease, and to enjoy their wages in silver and spoil; the allies of the king of Canaan found out that nature itself fought against them; the stars of heaven, like soldiers stood against them; and the torrent of Kishon swept the dead together with the wounded and the survivors; which was confirmed by the Historian Josephus.

Once man return to God with repentance, neither the left nor the right strokes of the enemy can reach him; But God would grant him support from heaven; and the heavenly creatures, together with the saints, as spiritual hosts will come to their aid. The water of the rivers (the fountains of the Holy Spirit) will sweep the sin away; and, by the strength of the Spirit, he will say: "Tread, O my soul, with majesty". When our soul overcomes the devil and his evil works, that have captivated her for such a long time, she will say: "*Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. When I fall, I will arise. When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me*" (Micah 7: 8).

5- THE DEFEAT OF SISERA:

Having revealed in the second part of her praise that God intervened, using nature to the account of His believers, she reveals now in the last part of her song of praise, the weakness of Sisera and his defeat, saying:

"Then the horses' hooves pounded, the galloping, galloping of his steeds" (22)

Perceiving that they confront defeat, the army of Sisera attempted madly to flee in terror; by striking their horses so strongly that they pounded the ground with their hooves; but "*A horse is a vain hope for safely. Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength*" (Psalm 33: 17)

What are those horses that pound the ground with their hooves, and deliver no salvation for man; but trusting in human help, or in himself for salvation; As, according to St. Augustine: [He is deceived, who thinks he acquires salvation from men; and he who depends on his own strength to escape from perdition].

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“ ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the Lord, ‘Curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’ “Most

blessed among women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; blessed is she among women in tents” (23, 24)

Curse dwelt upon the town of ‘Meroz’ with all its inhabitants; while blessing dwelt upon ‘Jael’ wife of Heber the Kenite.....’Meroz’ for taking a negative stand; seeing Sisera fleeing, it did not hold him nor delivered him to those whom God supported.Whereas ‘Jael’ killed him. The town of ‘Meroz’ represents him who does not gather with the Lord, but scatters (Matthew 12: 30; Luke 11: 23). ‘Jael’, on the other hand, represents him who works against the kingdom of the devil, to the account of the Lord.....While the town of ‘Meroz’ with all her inhabitants showed cowardice, the woman, lonely in her tent, showed courage against evil.

It is said that the town of ‘Meroz’, close to the River Kaishon has been utterly wiped out, for sparing Sisera’s life; and not supporting Deborah and Barak.

“He asked for water, she gave milk; she brought out cream in a lordly bowl. she stretched her hand to the tent peg, her right hand to the workmen’s hammer; she pounded Sisera,

she pierced his head, she split and struck through his temple. At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;.....; where he sank, there he fell dead” (25 - 27).

As we said before, ‘Jael’ is a portrait of the church of the Gentiles, who, with faith in the cross, struck the head of the serpent, crushed the devil underneath her feet, and deprived him of any authority on her.

“The mother of Sisera looked through the window, and cried out through the lattice, ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?’ Her wisest

ladies answered her, Yes, she answered herself, ‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil: To every man a girl or two; For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments, Plunder of

garments embroidered and dyed, two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?’” (28-30)

6- THE END OF DEBORAH’S SONG OF PRAISE:

“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun When it comes out in full strength.” So the land had rest for forty years. (31)

In some versions, “*Let those who love You*”, refer to the people of God, whose enemy (the devil) God destroyed. And the church shined like the sun, when it

comes out in full strength. Let our land, namely our bodies, have rest in the Lord from the wars and evil desires; as long as the Lord Himself is working in us against the true enemy.



CHAPTER 6

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD AND GIDEON

When the people fell under humiliation by the Midianites, God sent 'Gideon' a judge and savior of the people.

1- Midian oppress the people OF Israel	1 - 6
2- A need for a savior	7 - 10
3- The Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon	11 - 24
4- Gideon tears down the altar of Baal	25 - 27
5- The city stirred up against Gideon	28 - 32
6- The sign of the fleece	33 - 40

1- MIDIAN OPPRESS THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL:

“Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years”
(1)

Again the circle of sin, then chastisement, then salvation repeats itself.

The people of Midian, descendants of 'Keturah' the second wife of Abraham (Genesis 25: 1, 2) were a congregation of nomads who dwelt east and south-east of the Black Sea.

“and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which

are in the mountains. So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. Then

they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor donkey. For they

would come up with their livestock and their tents, coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without number; and they would enter the land to

destroy it. So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord” 2 – 6)

This portrait of events repeated itself, not only in the era of the judges, but in the daily life of man in all times. Whenever he finds rest, instead of giving thanks and praise to the Lord, he forgets Him, to fall under the humiliation of sin, that gets authority on him through his slothfulness, destroys his inner crops, and leaves him no sustenance. Every sin draws another one behind it, to come as numerous as locusts, on the heart, mind, and senses; to swallow all the possibilities and energies of man and deprive him of every vitality.

2- A NEED FOR A SAVIOR:

“And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet to the children of Israel, who said to them,

“Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and

out of the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. Also I said to you, “I am the Lord your God; do not fear the gods of

the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.” But you have not obeyed My voice.’” (7 – 10)

According to St. Pavnoutius: [While preoccupied with the riches and pleasures of this life; if we are suddenly faced by a temptation, that may threaten the loss of riches, or of a beloved one, it provokes us to come close to God, with whom we refrained to walk while we were enjoying rest. In the Holy Book we find several examples of such a situation, because of the sins of the children of Israel that made God deliver them to their enemies. And once they suffer the oppression and violence of the enemies, they return to God, and cry out to Him. Concerning this the psalmist says: "*When He slew them, then they sought Him, and they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they remembered that God was their Rock; and the Most High God their Redeemer*" (Psalm 78: 34, 35); And, "*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distress*" (Psalm 107: 19)]

God, therefore, sent affliction unto them to draw them to salvation, and sent them a prophet to reveal to them the exalted love of God; claimed by the Jews to be Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron, who spoke to them during their celebration of a Feast, reminding them, as it was customary, of the works of God with their fathers, to provoke in them the spirit of hope and suretyin particular of the events of the exodus from the land of bondage, and driving out the pagan nations before them, to let them inherit the promised land..... The clear line of God's dealings with His people in most of the writings of the prophets.

3- THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARS TO GIDEON:

"Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the

winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites.; And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!" (11, 12)

The Angel of the Lord here is one of the apparitions of the Word of God, as it is clear from His saying to Gideon: *"Have I not sent you?; I will be with you"* (14, 16). For the angel does not send prophets, judges on his own; nor say, *"I will be with you"*. These are the words of the Son of God, to proclaim His presence with the men of God. The Son of God was called *"The Messenger of the covenant"* (Malachi 3: 1), and, *"The angel of His presence"* (Isaiah 63: 9).

The Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in the village of Ophrah, meaning (deer), or (dusty), west of the Jordan, inhabited by the Abiezites of the tribe of Manasseh; where there was probably a sanctuary (temple) before the days of the Israelites.—the village of 'Teba', 8 miles north of Bissan..... The Son of God appeared to Gideon, whose name means (a wrestler); while he was threshing wheat with a rod to separate the wheat from hay; on account of that he had no proper threshing tools because of the persistent attacks of the Midianites.; He was threshing wheat in the winepress, most probably hidden in a cave from the eyes of the Midianites; which was the situation of all the people at that time.

In Gideon, St. Ambrose sees a symbol of the true Savior Jesus Christ..... Gideon was found under the terebinth tree; as though under the shadow of the wisdom of the cross, the life-giving tree.Gideon was threshing wheat with a rod; as though prophesying what the Savior will do through the incarnation to happen in a secret way. According to St, Ambrose, the rod is the cross, which separates the wheat from the hay; the elect hidden saints, from the trash of no benefit. By the cross, the proved truth (the wheat), is proclaimed, separate from the works of the old man. Wheat in the church, appear by the cross, as though in the winepress; for {the church is the winepress of the perpetual fountain that flows with the fruit of the heavenly vineyard}.

So the True Gideon – the Lord Christ – works in His church, as though in a winepress, strikes the heads of wheat by His cross; to separate the grains from the hay; to hide it from the Midianites (11), and to offer it as food to His children. The Lord separates the saints and hides them in Him, from the devil and his evil works (the Midianites), to present them to the Father, as the heavenly joyful fruition of His field.

Going back to the conversation between the Angel of the Lord and Gideon; we find that the Angel of the Lord started by addressing the greeting: “*The Lord is with you, mighty man of valor!*” (12). For Gideon was probably well known for his bravery and might; even though he says: “*My clan is the weakest in Manasseh; and I am the least in my father’s house*” (15)..... God chose the brave Gideon, lest He might seem to work only with the weak and those with little talents.Anyway, “*With plenty or few, He saves people*”..... Yet, while brave and strong, Gideon humbly perceived his tribe, clan, and himself; For Manasseh was not the firstborn as was Reuben, nor holy to the Lord as was Levi; And he himself was the least among his brothers, as far as age and honor were concerned.

Gideon was a symbol of the Lord Christ “*The Mighty Man of Valor*”; the Word of God, by whom everything was done; capable of raising the dead, and creating from void; Who by incarnation, came to be the least of all; having become a servant of humanity, discredited and reproached; even to the death by the cross.

“Gideon said to Him, “O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did

not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” 13)

By saying this, Gideon did not doubt the words of the Lord, but in the daring of love he was rather admonishing, whether God was with them; He did not say “with me”; for he could not taste the presence of God, personally between God and himself, outside the holy congregation; How could the whole people suffer from the Midianites?!While he could not deny the amazing works of God with His early fathers; yet he wonders, if God is with them, why does his generation not enjoy what the previous generations had enjoyed?! How beautiful was Gideon’s heart, carrying such a kindling jealousy toward his brethren in the Lord!, to stand with such a love and daring, to admonish the Lord Himself, to take His mercy from Him (by force).

“Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” (14)

Here, he speaks about the Angel of the Lord as “*Jehovah*”, who “turned to Gideon”. Having proclaimed his jealousy, and entered into an open debate with the Lord, Gideon proved worthy of being the object of “God turning to him”; for God rejoices in such a kind of heart, and turns to use it as a vessel of righteousness. He commanded him to go “*in that might of his*”, meaning in his holy zeal; and probably intended it as a rebuke to him for trusting in his own strengthBut it is obvious from the context that the Lord has called him to work, saying: “*Have I not sent you?!*”; as though he says to him: ‘Do not be afraid of what have befallen you; for I am now sending you, and will work by you, the way I did by your fathers. The Way God previously said to Joshua: “*Have I not commanded you?!*” (Joshua 1: 9).

Here, Gideon stands, not to excuse himself of work, but to take the divine work (by force), with the spirit of humility, saying:

“O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house” (15)

Here Gideon calls him: “My Lord”, by Hebrew: “*Adonai*”, a title only of God. Proclaiming the weakness of his tribe, and confessing his personal humble status, is the way of all those who truly work in the field of the Lord; who feel their own weakness, together with their trust in God who works in them We see the prophet Moses say: “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt*” (Exodus 3: 11); which was instantly followed by God’s response: “*I will certainly be with you*” (Exodus 3: 12). With the same spirit, Isaiah, at the beginning of his prophetic work, proclaims: “*Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*” (Isaiah 6: 5); And Jeremiah says, as well, “*Ah, Lord God, Behold, I cannot speak, for I am (a kid)*” (Jeremiah 1: 6)

“And the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man”

“Then he said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You

and bring out my offering and set it before You. And He said, “I will wait until you come back.” (16 – 18)

Why did Gideon seek a sign that it was God who spoke to him?.....Probably, because he saw himself unworthy of such a grace, and of receiving such a mission; and counted what was going on, a vision and not real, he wished for a sign. Intending to offer hospitality to his guest; with the hope for a divine proclamation of receiving it, He asked him not to depart, until he comes to Him, and bring out his offering and set it before Him

“So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot; and he brought them

out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented them. The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out

the broth.” And he did so..

Then the Angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the rock and consumed the

meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the Lord departed out of his sight” (19 – 21)

The sign that Gideon sought, was that the Angel of God would wait until he offers his offering on a rock that represented an altar; So the Angel of the Lord did, and by letting fire rise out of the rock and consume the meat and the unleavened bread, He proclaimed the divine acceptance of the offering (Leviticus 9: 24; I kings 18: 38).

Presenting a spiritual interpretation of that encounter, St. Ambrose says: [The Rock refers to the body of the Lord Christ; according to what is written: *'All drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ'* (1 Corinthians 10: 4)..... Here he proclaims in a secret way that when the body of the Lord Jesus Christ is crucified, the sin of the whole world will be taken away; not just the actual sins, but even the evil desires of the mind. The meat of the young goat refers to the actual sins; and the broth refers to the seduction of the evil desires; as it is written that the children of Israel, intensively raving for meat, wailed saying: *"Who will give us meat to eat?!"* (Numbers 11: 4). By putting out the end of the staff that was in His hand, and touching the rock, fire rose out of it and consumed the offering. This fact proclaims that the body of Christ, full of the divine Spirit, will burn all the sins of the human nature; Hence the Lord said: *"I came to send fire on the earth"* (Luke 12: 49).Again St. Ambrose says: [The tree under which the Angel sat, and the staff with which He touched the rock, refer to the cross. The rock on which Gideon offered his burnt offering is Christ; according to the words of the apostle: *"The Rock was Christ"* (1 Corinthians 10: 4); and the young goat sacrificed refers to the human race that sinned. We may also understand of how the Angel touched the rock with the staff, and fire arose out of the rock to consume the young goat; that the staff was the cross, namely Christ; and that it was the fire of love that arose to consume the sins of the human race. Christ – the true Gideon -- says about Himself in the gospel: *"I came to send fire on the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled"* (Luke 12: 49).]

*"Now Gideon perceived that He was the Angel of the Lord.
So Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen the Angel of
the Lord face to face" (22)*

*"Then the Lord said to him, "Peace be with you; do not fear,
you shall not die" (23)*

Having proclaimed His acceptance of the offering of Gideon, revealing the secret of the cross, in which our actual sins, as well as our hidden evil desires, are forgiven in the worthiness of precious blood; and the fire of the divine love sets forth to consume every weakness in us; “***The angel of the Lord departed out of his sight***” (21). That departure, in such an incomprehensible exalted way, the depth of Gideon’s heart was so shaken; to assume that he would not live after seeing the Lord; the same way the Lord said to the prophet Moses: “*You cannot see my face, for no man shall see Me and live*” (Exodus 33: 20). Yet the Lord brought peace into his heart, by telling him that, out of His divine condescendence He revealed Himself to him, as much he could endure, lest he dies. According to St. John Chrysostom, in his article ‘Not perceiving the nature of God’, on the tongue of God: [I shall not proclaim my Essence itself; but shall condescend (in visions), because of the weakness of those who see Me].

“ So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it ‘The-Lord-Is-Peace’. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites” (24)

Gideon so called the altar he built, for he counted the divine words “*Peace be with you*” (23), as not just a common greeting, but a divine gift that filled his depths inside, and will touch his life and those of the holy congregation.

I wish our heart be like the “*Ophrah of the Abiezrites*”, which means (My father is a Helper); where we encounter the true Gideon, with our actual sins and our hidden thoughts, on the Rock, that by the cross He will consume them by a divine fire. I wish we would hear the voice of the Lord, saying: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your*

hear be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14: 27).; and to set in it a divine altar, that will perpetually proclaim His salvation works

4- GIDEON TEARS DOWN THE ALTAR OF BAAL: .

“Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father

has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and to take the second bull and offer

a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down”

With the apparition of the Lord to Gideon, and with the consecration of that location by such an apparition, it was impossible for the burnt offerings to the Lord to be offered where the sacrifices were offered to the Baal. That divine command to Gideon was not a permission for him to practice the priesthood task; for he was not of the tribe of Levi, who were, at the time most probably on the run from the affliction; not able to practice the worship with their proper rites; nor to offer the burnt offering at the tabernacle of meeting in Shiloh But that divine command was for an exceptional individual task, with the goal of humiliating the Baal and Ashetoreth particularly with the command to use the wood of the image which he shall cut down, as fuel for the burnt offering.

On another aspect, according to St. Ambrose, that task was a prophecy and a heavenly secret, to be done; saying: [The wise man, Gideon, obeyed the words of the inspiration to the letter, killed the bull prepared to be a sacrifice to the Baal; and offered another seven years bull as a sacrifice to the Lord. By so doing. He showed very clearly that by the coming of the Lord, all the pagan sacrifices will be void, and the sacrifice of the Lord's passions will only remain, as a godly work by the people. Being seven years old, that second bull was indeed a symbol of the Lord Christ; as in Christ, according to the prophet Isaiah, the fullness of the spiritual virtues dwell. Christ was presented once in the symbol of a kid goat; and in another as a cheep; and in a third as a bull. As a kid goat, being a sacrifice on sins; as a cheep, for He was a sacrifice by His own free will (His meekness); and a bull, being without blemish Gideon had therefore, seen the secret].

“ So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it

by day, he did it by night.” (27)

5- THE CITY STIRRED UP AGAINST GIDEON:

.”And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was

being offered on the altar which had been built. So they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And when they had inquired and asked, they said, “Gideon the son of

Joash has done this thing. Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut

down the wooden image that was beside it." (28 -30)

It so seems that, because Joash was a worshipper of Baal; while his son Gideon was a worshipper of the true God; the son lived isolated from the father, and had his own servants. He chose ten men, most probably the most zealous on worshipping the living God, to do according to the Lord's command; by night for fear of his father's household – the 'Abiezrites', who forsook the worship of God and perverted to idol-worship. By "the men of the city". He means the Canaanites who used to dwell there, and remained with the Abiezrites.

Who are those ten men, but the law with its ten commandments, sent by God to serve man, to guide him to destroy the inner altar of evil, and to enjoy the life-giving sacrifice of the cross. 'The father's household', and 'the men of the city', represent what the Lord Christ meant, when He proclaimed: "*A man's enemies will be those of his own household*" (Matthew 10: 36). For the fiercest opponent of man, are the evil desires of his own body, the corrupt thoughts of his mind, and the perversion of his emotions. The most serious of them is 'the Ego', that sits inside man to kill in him every living spiritual thought.

Let us then hold fast to the spiritual law in Jesus Christ, like ten men; and let us work by the Lord in spite of every inner opposition in the body, mind, and emotions; in order to crucify the ego, and that the Lord Himself would transfigure in us, as He does in His altar or in His heavenly temple.

Going back to Gideon, we see that the men of the city arose early in the morning, to worship Baal at sunrise, being the god of the sun. and when they saw what happened to their god, they were stirred-up against Gideon the son of Joash;

probably because of their prior knowledge that he was zealous against idol-worship. But his father was so impressed by the courage of his son to stand by him in their faces, and mockingly said to them:

“Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him?..... If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!” (31)

“Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, “Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar.” (32)

The positive stand against evil taken by Gideon, made the weak souls, like his father's, become stronger; who, perceiving the vanity of the helpless idol-worship, he called his son Jerubaa'l', namely, through whom, the day of judgment on Baal came.

“Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel” (33)

Being in the heart of Palestine, the Valley of Jezreel has often been a battle field. This valley extends from Mount Carmel to the Valley of the Jordan. One of its tributaries crosses between Mount Tabor and Tel-Morah', and another one between 'Tel-Morah and 'Mount Gilboa'. This valley had its name after that of a prominent city, in which location nowadays is a village called 'xxxxxxxx'. The valley is called now 'The garden of Ben-Amer'

“ But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him” (34). And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who

also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them” (34, 35).

Seeing how the enemies gathered together, and how they encamped for war, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon . Gideon hid in the Lord, as the body hides in the garment; and became a tool to fulfill a divine goal. Seeing how his own family so quickly turned around, Gideon sent messengers throughout all Manasseh (35), and to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; It is amazing that his own people, the Abiezrites whom he used to fear, gathered behind him for war; it happened so suddenly and so strongly, not through the influence of Gideon, but was undoubtedly the work of the Spirit of the Lord, that came upon him; and turned his opponents into supporters.

It is also amazing that the tribe of ‘Asher’ that has forsaken Deborah, and did not stand by her in her war against Sisera (5: 7), came up to follow Gideon together with Zebulun and Naphtali. Man’s weakness in the spiritual battle, does not mean to an ultimate surrender, for he, who was frail and of no use in ministry, can turn into a mighty man of valor in the spirit. That is why the true spiritual leader does not only depend upon those successful in their spiritual strife; but will also support those who previously failed him; on account of that, by the Spirit of the Lord, he may set them up, to be spiritual leaders with work and activity in the kingdom of God.

That is a living godly portrait, experienced by the believer when he walks by the Spirit of the Lord, whom he enjoyed in the two sacraments of Baptism and Meron. For, as much as the believer responds to the Spirit of God, God will turn the body that was an opponent by its evil desires, to a holy tool that works with all

its energies and feelings to the account of the glory of God; in harmony with the holy souls, and responding to the work of the Spirit of God.

6- THE SIGN OF THE FLEECE:

“So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it

is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said. .

So when he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground” (36 – 40).

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Gideon asks the Lord to give him a sign to go to war. The two signs God provided him have a spiritual concept, expressed by many fathers:

According to **St. Ambrose**: [The dew on the fleece is “the faith” that was in Judea; for the Word of God comes down as dew, according to the prophet Moses who says: “*Let my teaching drop as the rain; my speech distill as the dew*” (Deuteronomy 32: 2. So it was, when the whole world was dry because of the

heat of the vain fantasies of the fruitless nations, the dew of the heavenly visitation came down on the fleece in Judea. But after the rejection of the Lord Christ by "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 15: 24), who were once referred to as the water-sogged fleece; the dew of faith dried up in the hearts of the Jews; and the divine flow of faith turned into the hearts of the Gentiles. That is why the whole world now, is wet with the dew of faith; while the Jews have killed their prophets and guides. No wonder that they are now suffering from the dryness of faith; for God denied them the continuous rain of the prophets; saying: "*I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain on it*" (Isaiah 5: 6). How honorable is the rain of the prophetic cloud ; as according to the prophet David: '*He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing; like showers that water the earth*' (Psalm 72: 6). The Holy Books promised us that this rain will come down to water the whole world, when our Lord and Savior comes with the dew of the divine Spirit. The dew has actually come down, so did the rain. The Lord came and with Him the heavenly rain. That is why, whoever was thirsty before, let him come now to quench his thirst by the inner divine Spirit. That was what Gideon saw, that the tribes of the Gentiles drink by the precious faith from the true heavenly dew]. Again St. Ambrose says:.[Finally on the entire earth, as it was on the threshing floor, the church was watered by the dew of the spiritual grace; while the Synagogue remained dry from the dew and rain of the Word of God].

According to **St. Augustine**: [The Lord Christ, Himself, came down as rain on the fleece; when the earth all around was dry; when He said: "*I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 15: 24)]

According to **St. Jerome**: [When the fleece of Judea was dry, in spite of that the whole world was watered by the dew of heaven; And when "*many will come from east and west, from north and south, and sit down in the kingdom of God* (Luke 13: 29), *sit in Abraham's bosom* (Luke 16: 22). Then, it will be no more that, "In Judah, the name of God is known, and His name is great in Israel" (psalm 76: 1).

For the voice of the apostles reached all the Gentiles; “*Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*” (Psalm 19: 4)

According to **St Erinaos**: [So has (Gideon) referred to that the Jews will no more, have the Holy Spirit from God; as the words of God on the tongue of Isaiah, came to say: “*I will also command the clouds , that they rain no rain on it*” (Isaiah 5: 6); For the rain (or dew) are the Spirit of God, all over the earth]

Commenting on having that sign realized on the threshing floor, **St. Ambrose** says: [Gideon did not place the fleece in a field or a garden, but in the threshing floor, where the crop of wheat is, “*For the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few*” (Luke 10: 2); Through faith in the Lord, there is fruitful harvest of virtues in the church to come. Having a bowlful of water, after wringing the dew out of the fleece, Gideon did not use it to wash feet; but left that task to the Lord Christ, who “*did not come to be served, but to serve*” (Matthew 20: 28).

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CHAPTER 7

GIDEON AND THE MIDIANITES

Being sure of God's company with him, Gideon rose early to make war against the Midianites.

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| 3- The defeat of the Midianites | 19 -
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1- GOS SAVES WITH THE FEW:

“Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the Midianites was on the north

side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley” (1)

“Herod’, a Hebrew word meaning (trembling); the place was so called on account of the trembling and disturbance that came upon the army of the Midianites in that battle (19- 22). It is claimed that it is actually ‘Ein-Glod’, or (Ein-Galot), but changed to ‘Herod’, because of mishearing, or mispronunciation. It is located north-west of Mount Gilboa, or the mountain of Gilead, about a mile south-east of Jezreel, close to Bisan. As to the ‘Hill of Moraah’, it is about four miles from the ‘Ein’, called ‘Mount Dohey’, of 1815 miles above seal level; between Mout Tabor

northward, and Mount Gilboa southward. 'Morah' is Canaanite word, meaning (teacher).

Gideon coming to that place (beside the Well of Herod), was not without meaning; for the secret of conquest is the divine possibilities enjoyed by the believer through the fountain of baptism, called 'Herod' (or trembling), for it represents terror to the devil. All the liturgies of the early church came carrying two main lines: Denying Satan with all his energies; and enjoying the possibilities of the Holy Trinity. According to the scholar **Tertullian**: [In the church under the hand of the bishop, we testify that we deny Satan, all his procession, and angels]. And according to **St. Cyril of Jerusalem**: [After that, you are anointed on your chests, to wear the shield of righteousness, and to holdfast against the tricks of Satan. The same way, after His baptism, and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit on Him, Christ came out and fought against the adversary; so you, after the holy baptism and the sacrament of anointment, will holdfast against the adversary power, to fight, wearing the perfect armor of the Holy Spirit, saying together with the apostle Paul: "*I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4: 13)]

While the Midianites were 135,000 warriors, those with Gideon were only 32,000

..

"And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying,

'My own hand has saved me" (2)

Even though the number of people with Gideon were few, compared to the Midianites, yet God intended to confirm that conquest is not through the number,

but through His divine work in the pure heart. According to **St. Gregory of Nyssa**: {God's pleasure is not in numbers}.

“Now therefore, proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, ‘Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead; And twenty-two thousand of

the people returned, and ten thousand remained” (3).

Unfortunately the number of the fearful was more than one third of the army. Those were not only useless, but, as it came in the book of Deuteronomy: *“What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted, let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart”* (Deuteronomy 20: 8)

“But the LORD said to Gideon, “The people are still too many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, that of whom I say to you, ‘This

one shall go with you,’ the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ the same shall not go”

So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, “Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself;

likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink, and put their hands to their mouths. And the number of the later group was three hundred men; but all the rest of the

*people lapped the water with their tongues as a dog laps..
Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who put
their hands to their mouths, I will save you, and*

*deliver the Midianites into your hand. Let all the other
people go, every man to his place."* (4-7)

According to some, those who put their hand to their mouths, control themselves more than those who lapped from the water with their tongues directly. God, therefore chose the former to work with, He works with the very few, to fight against those who were "*as numerous as locusts; their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude*" (12).

According to **St. Augustine** , the figure 300 refers to the cross; for the letter 'T' which bears the form of the cross, refers to the figure 300 in Greek. Adopting the same interpretation, **St. Ambrose** says: [Gideon chose 300 men for the battle, to show that the world should be liberated from the serious attacks of the enemy by the secret of the cross, and not through the multitudes of men.

The bearers of the cross (the three hundred) set forth to the spiritual strife under the leadership of the true Gideon; whereas the multitudes of other men, of no use for the spiritual work, went, everyone to his place; or back to the 'ego'. In other words, he who does not bear the secret of the cross in his life, is closed-shut around himself, to work, not to the account of God, but to that of himself. .

*"So the people took provisions and their trumpets in their
hands. And he sent away all the rest of Israel, every man to his
tent, and retained those three hundred men. Now*

the camp of Midian was below him in the valley" (8)

Those men took provisions and trumpets in their hands, according to the Septuagint version, from those who went back to their tentsThose provisions probably refer to faith, and the trumpets refer to the Word of God. For we cannot set forth to the spiritual bathe against the devil and all his works, except by faith and holding fast to the word of God; according to the words of the psalmist: *“I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed; I will never forget Your precepts; for by them You have given me Your commandments”* (Psalm 119: 446, 94).

2- GIDEON IS LIKENED TO A LOAF OF BARLEY BREAD:

It was not easy for Gideon to see God chose for him only 300 men out of about 32,000, to fight against 135,000 enemy warriors. Particularly that the battlefield was to take place be in the valley where there are no natural refuges, or caves to protect them against the arrows of the enemy; Together with the few possibilities and the military equipments that were robbed by the Midianites during the seven years of affliction; Besides that, his men, were not trained on war for many years, and lack military experience. In other words, Gideon was leading few men, poorly armed, and with no experience of war.Yet the Lord was with him, promised him conquest, and strengthened his faith,

*“ It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him,
“Arise, go down against the camp, for I have delivered it into
your hand. But if you are afraid to go down, go down*

to the camp with Purah your servant, and you shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to go down against the camp. Then he went down

with Purah his servant to the outpost of the armed men who were in the camp. Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as

numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, "I have had a dream: To my surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp

of Midian; it came to (the royal tent) and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed. Then his companion answered and said, "This is nothing else but the sword of

Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp." (9 – 14)

Barley. the cheapest of the kinds of bread in Palestine, is the food of the poor, and even given as fodder to the animals.By such a dream, God intended to proclaim, even to the enemy, that He will destroy them with Gideon, who seemed so weak and poor like a barley loaf of bread, of cheap price. We would expect the enemy to see a rock roll down to the valley to destroy anyone in its way; but to see a barley loaf of bread roll down to destroy the royal tent, and

turn it upside down, this, according to the Medianite soldier himself, is a divine work.

In the time of affliction, it is not only the believers who experience the work of God with them, through His heavenly exalted comforts, but even the adversaries would stand in awe before God's work by His children, who seem like a barley loaf of bread.

“ And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has

delivered the camp of Midian into your hand. Then he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty

pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do. When

I blow the trumpet, I and all who are with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!’” (15 – 18)

If God works with the few to refer to His own power, and not to that of man, Yet, He sanctifies the human effort, and does not despise, nor disregard the human wisdom, energies and talents. In the war of Gideon against the Midianites, having separated only 300 men to fight; yet God granted Gideon the wisdom and the good ordinance. He let him divide the 300 men into three companies, each company occupied a side of the camp, all around the

Midianites. All came at night in the second watch (for the Jews used to divide the night into three watches, each of four hours; the first watch starts at 6 o'clock pm); Every man carried a trumpet, an empty pitcher, and a torch inside the pitcher.

“So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew

the trumpets and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers—they held the torches in their left hands

and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing—and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!”. And every man stood in his place all around the camp;.....

When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp of the enemy; and the army fled to

Beth Acacia toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath” (19 – 22)

The Midianites who, at the time, were all most probably sleeping, except for a few sentinels; awakened on the sound of trumpets on all sides at once; and of men breaking their empty pitchers, probably those of their companions, to produce a sound, as though of military tools striking one another;That made the Midianites think that the battle had already begun between the two armies; In the darkness they started to strike one another by swords; with the

assumption that he is an enemy. While each of Gideon's men, standing in his place, watched the Midianites fighting against one another.

Seeing Gideon's men with their torches, on all sides from afar with their torches, and assuming that they have got new recruitments, the Midianites, amid the darkness, had to desert the camp and flee to Beth Acacia (22); between the Valley of Jezreel, and Zererah in the Valley of the Jordan. From there they fled to 'Abel Meholah', in the Valley of Ephraim in the Ford of the Jordan; probably the town of 'Sertan', whose name means (coolness) in the Valley of the Jordan. From there they fled to the edge of 'Abel Meholah', namely on its border; whose name means (the field of the dance); known nowadays as 'Tel el-Maklab' in the Valley of the Jordan; although according to some, it was west of the Jordan, 12 miles south of 'Beth Shaan'. From Abel Meholah they headed to 'Tabbath', fleeing with no pursuers, For it was God Himself who terrified them; or in other words, delivered them to their evil works, that made them lose their peace and comfort, to be unceasing on the run.. For according to the wise Solomon: "*The wicked is banished in his wickedness*" (Proverbs 14: 32); and, "*The wicked flee when no one pursues*" (Proverbs 28: 1). The wicked, therefore, sometimes flee to Beth Acacia, probably to find a shadow underneath some trees, the way his parents Adam and Eve did when they fled before the face of God; And sometimes set forth to 'Sertan', where the (coolness) would take away all the warmth of the spirit; and a third time he sets forth to the edge of the house of dancing, with the hope that the evil pleasures of this world may give him joy and peace. But in all this, he will be like a fugitive with no comfort; for he is far from God, the Grantor of peace, and the Source of the true comfort.

"And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites" (23).

“Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, ‘Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the watering places as far as

Beth Barah and the Jordan’ Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan” (24, 25)

While the Midianites were unconsciously fleeing from one place to another, Gideon sought from the inhabitants of the mountains of Ephraim, to come down, and seize from the Midianites all the watering places as far as ‘Beth Barah’, which means (of the barren land not suitable for agriculture), which is 30 miles north-east of Jerusalem. The goal of seizing the watering places, was to utterly destroy the chances of the Midianites to flee.

The watering places may refer God’s gifts and grace. If the devil, used even God’s gifts, our talents, and our energies created by God in us; to his account; Returning to the Lord, we retreat from the enemy with all our energies and talents; leaving no place for him in us; and denying him the chance to turn our energies into tools to work to his account; and he will, therefore, be utterly destroyed, as far as we are concerned, for good.

4- THE CAPTURE OF OREB AND ZEEB, THE TWO PRINCES OF MIDIAN:

“And they captured two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian

and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan” (25).

It did not stop at denying the Medianites of the watering places, but they also killed their two princes Oreb and Zeeb, and brought their heads to Gideon, after they pursued Midian in their escape. They called the rock on which they killed Oreb “the Rock of Oreb’. And the winepress at which they killed Zeeb ‘the Winepress of Zeeb’.

If the dove refers to the Holy Spirit; as well as to the church, led by the Holy Spirit; the raven refers to the evil spirit, as well as to the kingdom of the devil. In the episode of Noah (Genesis 7: 7), Noah sent the raven out of the arc, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground; but the raven did not return to Noah, and kept going to and fro; as though it was the evil spirit that descended from his heavenly position, to live on corruption, to move from a corpse to another, exulted in that widespread death and corruption. The evil spirit pours his evil in the life of the wicked who carry his features, and walk by his defiled mind.

And as the lamb refers to the Lord Christ, as well as to every believer united to Him; The wolf, on the other hand, refers to the devil, who has violence in its nature, and pours from this spirit on his followers, to devour the meek lambs.

In other words, ‘Oreb’ and ‘Zeeb’, the two Midianite princes, refer to the devil, concerning his love of corruption (Oreb), and devouring (Zeeb); But if we bind ourselves to the true Gideon, our Lord Jesus Christ, we would kill in ourselves every longing for defilement, and every intention toward violence and devouring; as though we kill in it Oreb and Zeeb.

It is amazing how Oreb and Zeeb were successively killed on a rock, and at a winepress. If the Rock refers to the Lord Christ, according to the saying of the apostle (1 Corinthians 10: 4), and the winepress refers to the church; the devil

with all his corruption and violence, will lose his life and being, through our unity with the Lord Christ, our Rock, and our membership in the church.

By the end of that battle, in which Gideon and his men, defeated Oreb, Zeeb, and their men, we can say that the secret of power lies in the spiritual way taken by Gideon on several aspects:

- 1- His men were 300, by which they proclaimed that they were bearers of the cross
- 2- Divided into three groups, they worked together, and with the same spirit, under the leadership of Gideon; as though they were the church bearing the feature of resurrection, for the figure 3 refers to the resurrection after the burial in the tomb together with the Lord Christ.
- 3- Each man carried a trumpet, namely the Word of God;empty breakable pitches, that refer to the bodies put to death concerning their evil desires, to be sanctified in the Lord;and a torch, namely the work of the grace of God, that grants enlightenment to the soul.
- 4- Killing Oreb and Zeeb refer to their rejection of corruption and viciousness.

That is the way of the spiritual conquest under the leadership of the Lord Christ – the True Gideon –the Grantor of conquest.

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CHAPTER 8

KILLING ZEBAH AND ZALMUNNA

By the spirit of humility, Gideon reconciled with the stirred-up men of Ephraim; and with the spirit of strife, he set forth to capture and to kill the two kings of Midian..

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| 1- Gideon reconciles with the men of Ephraim | 1 - 3 |
| 2- The shameful attitude of Succoth and Panuel | 4 - 9 |
| 3- Gideon kills the two kings of Midian | 10 - 21 |
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| 5- The death of Gideon | 29 - 35 |

1- GIDEON RECONCILES WITH THE MEN OF EPHRAIM:

“Now the men of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?” And they reprimanded him sharply” (1).

The tribe of Ephraim was known for its strength among the tribes, and occupied the best portion of the promised land. Even when Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the ten tribes were called ‘Ephraim’ (Jeremiah 31: 9 , 19, 20). With such prominence, that tribe expected to be called by Gideon to join him in the battle against the Midianites; and as he failed to do that, they reprimanded him sharply (1). Here, Gideon showed his wise leadership in dealing with this situation, with great amiability and humility that absorbed their anger. Referring to them the favor of killing the two princes of Midian Oreb and Zeeb, he said to them:

“What have I done now in comparison with you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God has delivered into your hands the

princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. And what was I able to do in comparison with you?’ Then their anger toward him subsided when he said that” (2, 3)

In great humility he proclaimed that the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim is better than the vintage of Abiezer, his own family. By referring to them the favor of, and commending them on getting the heads of the two Midianite princes, their anger toward him subdued, according to the words of the Holy Book: *“A soft answer turns away wrath”* (Proverb 15: 1). Gideon could have rebuked them, on account of the fact that the Midianites enslaved them for seven years, and they never moved. But, being a wise leader, he proclaimed, instead, their good side. He pretended that what he has already done was just a preparation for the battle; whereas they did what was befitting of their honor and greatness. By that, he gained them as supporters, instead of losing them as opponents. He wisely counted Ephraim, of such lowly soul, in need of a word of encouragement, and not of rebuke.

2- THE SHAMEFUL ATTITUDE OF SUCCOTH AND PANUEL:

“When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who were with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. Then he said to the men of Succoth

“Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian” (4, 5)

Seeing how exhausted his men became through their pursuit of the Midianites, Gideon sought from the inhabitants of Succoth, something that would cost them only a little, namely to provide those few men with loaves of bread; those who were fighting to the account of the whole congregation; in particular, that they have not ceased to strive, but were on their way to get the heads of the two Midianite kings Sebah and Zalmunna. It was befitting of the people of Succoth to join Gideon in the battle to liberate them from the bondage of the Midianites; but, lacking enough faith to do that; they should at least contribute by providing the warriors with bread. In having such coolness of feeling, a surrender to bondage, and being a bad example to those who were faithful in their strife, they were worst than those men of Ephraim, and even than the enemies themselves.They did not only refrain to give, but their leaders even mockingly said:

“Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?” (6)

‘Succoth’, means (booths), located east of the Jordan, and north of ‘Jebok’, nowadays ‘Tel-Akhsas’, west of ‘Der-Ala’ close to (the river of Zerkah), 4 miles east of the Jordan. It carried the name ‘Succoth’, after Jacob set in it booths for himself, his children, and his livestock (Genesis 33: 17); It was a portion of the tribe of Gad.

“So Gideon said, “For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers!” (7)

In this, Gideon, who was so humble before God (6: 15), and before the men of Ephraim, appeared very firm, and even violent with the people of Succoth; Being the judge over Israel, it was his duty to chastise firmly, those people with the tools of chastisement, to separate the hay from the wheat, lest the curse would dwell on the whole people. If the people of Scuccoth were ‘wheat’, they would be glorified by the threshing implement, which separate the wheat from the hay; but being ‘thorns and briars’, they are worthy of being destroyed by the threshing implement, and gathered for burning..... Wheat do not fear the threshing implement but rather wait for it with joy; whereas the thorns and hay have terror of it.

What Gideon threatened to do, does not only concern the people of Succoth, but every man, whose inner land produce thorns and briars of curse. In other words, would fall under the destructive threshing implement of Gideon, he who lives, carnally (in flesh), by his mind, heart, and life, bearing the thorns of the curse of sin in himself; Whereas, he who walks by the Spirit and has the heavenly fruition, no threshing implement would harm him, but would rather glorify him.

I pray to God to take away from us our carnal thoughts, to burn in us the thorns of sin that strangle the soul, and to destroy all what are foreign with His threshing implement (His Holy Cross), to let us live by the truth as spirituals who dwell in the heavenlies

“Then he went up from there to Penuel and spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered. So he also

spoke to the men of Penuel, saying, "When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!" (8, 9)

The word 'Panuel' means (the face of God), a camp east of the Jordan, east of Succoth, where Hacob saw God face to face (Genesis 32: 30). It was befitting of those who see God's face, to go down with Gideon to fight against the Midianites, but they, instead, took refuge in the tower of their city during the battle. And after it came to an end, they refused to provide Gideon and his men with bread. They represent those who, even though had a spiritual experience with the Lord for some time, like seeing Him face to face, they reject the spiritual strife, and trust in their self-righteousness (their tower), which, accordingly, is worth of being demolished;

In other words, if the people of Succoth represent the carnal man, who is worthy of having his flesh destroyed, and the thorns of his evil desires broken down;; those of Panuel represent him who has the outer appearance of the spirit, but is closed-shut around his 'Ego'; The former is struck by the left strokes, namely the sins of the body; while the later, by the right strikes of the self-righteousness. The former is in need of the threshing implement of the true Gideon, namely, of the cross of the Lord to destroy and to crucify the evil desires of his body; and the later needs Gideon 's tools to tear down the tower of his Ego.

3- GIDEON KILLS THE TWO KINGS OF MIDIANL

"Now Zebah and Zalmunna were at Karkor, and their armies with them, about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the East; for one hundred and twenty

thousand men who drew the sword had fallen; Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while

the camp felt secure. When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army” (10 – 13)

The word ‘Zebah’ means (a sacrifice); probably because he was a Nazirite to the Midianite gods. While the word ‘Zalmunna’ is a Midianite word meaning (to whom no refuge was given), (who has no shadow), or (the dark god). ‘Karkur’, meaning (flat to the ground), is a town close to the eastern border of ‘Gad’, probably in the Valley of ‘Serhan’.

The two kings Zebah and Zalmunna refer to the devil and his followers; for the former, by his name, means that he is a sacrifice to the idols; and the later proclaims the kingdom of the dark god Now, as the true Gideon -- Jesus Christ – leads the spiritual battle through His men, bearers of the cross, there is nothing left before the devil but to flee to ‘Karkor’, namely to go down to the level of the ground, to lose his authority and his awe before his believers.

If the enemy, at the beginning, seemed strong and mighty, with 135,000 warriors; yet, whoever hides in the true Gideon, would despise the devil, and crush him under his feet on the ground. Our Lord Jesus Christ confirms: *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall, by any means hurt you”* (Luke 10: 18, 19).

That is what St. John Chrysostom confirmed in several of his writings, beside some of his articles concentrated on that the devil has no more authority on us

“Gideon went up by the road of those who dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and attacked the army while the camp felt secure”. When the two kings felt that they were finally safe, away from Gideon, they were surprised to see him in the wilderness; Gideon represented the Lord Christ, who was led by His Holy Spirit to the wilderness to enter with the devil into a battle on the

mountain, that ended up with His conquest to our account, and the defeat of the enemy.

The word 'Nobah' is a Hebrew word meaning (barking), a town in the portion of 'Gad'. Its name came to conform to the battle; for the devil is often likened to a dog that violently barks before its house, but attacks no one but the fearful, whom it distinguishes by the smell of his body sweat caused by his fear. Whereas it flees before the brave who does not fear them..... The demons attempt to terrify us by their barks, but flee before the true believers in great cowardice.

'Jogbehah', means (a high place), probably is 'Gebihat' nowadays, a village 6 miles north-east of 'Amman' the capital of the kingdom of Jordan, on the way to the city of 'Salt'. The battle took place at 'Jogbehah', namely at the high lofty place; for it is the foremost feature of the Satan; in whose pride he got into animosity against God, and entered into a losing battle that ended in his eternal perdition. The (high place), may refer to the high mountain where the battle of temptation against Christ took place (Matthew 4); Or it may also refer to the cross, high up on Mount Golgotha, where we had our conquest in our Lord Jesus Christ over the deadly darkness.

“Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of Heres” (13)

The word 'Heres' in Hebrew means (the sun); hence it came in the Chaldean version as “before sunrise”; Although, according to others, Gideon set forth from the 'Ascent of Heres', namely from (the height of the sun); so called probably because on it they used to worship the sun.

“And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated him; and he wrote down for him the (names) of the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven

men. Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, "Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now

in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of

Succoth".

Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city" (14 -17)

Such a verdict, even though it seems very cruel, yet we see it followed almost all over the world, at the times of war and emergencies, for the sake of the security of the whole people.

Here we notice that the figure 77 is the same one uttered by the Lord Christ, when the apostle Peter asked Him: "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him: I do not say to you 'up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'"* (Matthew 18: 21, 22). Commenting on this figure, St. Augustine says: [The law represents the figure 10; and breaking the law represents a hidden commandment; *namely "Do not break the law"*, which if added to the ten, it makes the eleventh commandment. So if the figure 77 is the product of multiplying 11 X 7; it therefore, symbolizes the man who broke all the commandments of the Old Testament (11); and those of the New Testament (7). ; It is as though, we should forgive any sin mentioned in the Holy Book.. By the same line of thought , we can say that Gideon killed the 77 elders by the threshing implements between the thorns , as a reference to the Lord Christ who, with His cross, destroyed all our sins, disobedience, and breaking of the commandments, mentioned in the two testaments, together with destroying the thorns of the curse that dwelt upon us.

It is to be noticed that Gideon did not instantly kill the two kings, but took them along to be seen by the people of Succoth and Panuel

“And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor? So they answered, “As you are, so were they; each one resembled the son of a king.”

Then he said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you. And he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them;

But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he was still a youth. So Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man is, so is his strength

.So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels’ necks” (18 -21)

By so doing, he probably intended to show the people of Succoth and Panuel that his is not blood-thirsty; and would not condemn anyone to death before interrogating him. And even after their confession he demanded from his son to do the killing, to show them that he was not keen about killing them by his own handsBeing a judge, he loved justice, yet with firmness.

“He took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels’ necks” (21). Having been worshippers of the moon, those crescent ornaments were also put on by men (8: 26), and women (Isaiah 2: 18) as ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ to bring to them good luck, and to keep away harm from them. It is as though Gideon took away their gods that were unable to protect them.

4- GIDEON MAKES GOLDEN EPHOD FOR HIMSELF:.

“Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.” (22)

Gideon proved that he is led by the Holy Spirit, by passing through a difficult test, when his people demanded from him to rule over them, he and his son, and his grandson after him, for he delivered them from the hand of Midian.(22). This is the first time Israel attempts to set the inherited royal system; for Israel counted God Himself as their King; When, therefore, they sought from the prophet Samuel to set a king over them, the Lord said: *“They have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them”* (1 Samuel 8: 7)..... Having walked by the Spirit, and was not seduced by authority, Gideon said to them:

“I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you” (22=23)

By so saying, Gideon revealed what was deep in his heart; for even in his work as a judge he did not covet authority, but was truly a servant of the Lord and of his people; and he accepted the assignment for the sake of obedience, and for being sure that it is God who works.

“Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” For they had golden earrings, because

they were Ishmaelites” (24)

Even though Gideon passed the difficult test in rejecting the kingdom for himself, his children and grandchildren, yet, in human weakness he demanded from the people to give him the golden earrings from the plunder they took from the Medianites, who, being Ishmaelites, had golden earrings.. Counting his request as nothing, compared to his salvation work, and his rejection of the kingdom for himself and his children, they answered:

“We will gladly give them’, And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. Now the weight of the gold earrings that

he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides

the chains that were around their camels’ necks. Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became

a snare to Gideon and to his house” (25-27).

There was controversy among the scholars concerning that issue of ‘the ephod’; According to some, as the ephod, being the attire of the high priest (Exodus 28: 4), that was an indication that Gideon, who rejected the kingdom, has fallen into coveting the priesthood, in spite of not belonging to the tribe of Levi. Whereas according to others, basing their view on what came in verse 28: *“It became a snare to Gideon and to his house”*.. the ephod here belong to the idols; for the pagans used to have ephod in every house for their idols, from which they used to seek counsel before any action (1 Samuel 23: 9-12; 30: 7, 8);Yet

many scholars believe that Gideon was not an idol-worshipper, but remained faithful to the Lord, died at a good old age (32), and was counted among the men of faith (), and believed that the ephod he made , he kept, but did not worship.

4- DEATH OF GIDEON:

“ Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon”

Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash (Gideon) went and dwelt in his own house..

Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives. And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. Thus the children of Israel did not

remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in

accordance with the good he had done for Israel” (28 – 35)

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CHAPTER 9

ABIMELECH'S CONSPIRACY

Gideon was a man of faith; yet, after his death, came his corrupt son, Abimelech, who provoked the people of Shechem – his mother's family – to help him kill his seventy brothers to reign. His reign lasted only three years, which came to an end by a conspiracy against him, and a chastisement over the people of Shechem for what they did.

1- Abimelech kills his seventy brothers	1 - 6
2- Jotham talks to the people of Shechem	7 - 21
3- The people of Shechem conspire against Abimelech	22 - 25
4- The defeat of Gaal the son of Ebed	26 - 41
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1- ABIMELECH KILLS HIS SEVENTY BROTHERS:

“Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal (Gideon) went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's

father, saying, Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: ‘Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one

reign over you? ' Remember that I am your own flesh and bone'."

And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they

said, "He is our brother" (1 - 3)

All the qualifications of Abimelech were: "*I am your own flesh and bone*" (2)..And the logic of the people of Shechem (both Israelites and Canaanites), was "*He is our brother!*" (3); namely a fellow citizen of our city;, who would never oppose us, but support us when he reigns.. Namely, the public service turns into compliments to the account of blood ties, and personal relationships

Abimelech was Gideon's son from a concubine from Shechem of an influential tribe, most probably Canaanite. Knowing that he had no right to inherit like his brothers, on account of being born by a concubine, he was more bound to his mother's family, who were also prejudiced with him against his brothers.

Here the love of authority appearing in Abimelech's life, made him kill all his brothers on one stone except for 'Jotham' who hid himself. His short reign, filled with disturbances, ended up being murdered himself. In other words, While Gideon's heart did not bear longing for authority, or love of honor, he has been successful to accomplish his mission, and the land was quiet for forty years; during which he, his men, and all the people lived with their heads lifted up before the Midianites; the days of his son, on the other hand, being evil, and for his love of authority, he, together with his city and all the people were led to perdition.

What we say about Abimelech, we also repeat concerning the choice of any shepherd or minister in the Lord's vineyard. According to St. Augustine: [I wish all those who are preoccupied in ministry, keep themselves away from the love of honor, and the appearances of power]. And according to St. John Chrysostom: [Those who belong to Christ tend to destroy His kingdom, more so than His adversaries and opponents; through

choosing whom is not worthy of ministry.... It would not be feasible for them to apologize for not knowing him beforehand; for that would rather increase the weight of their guilt. He who intend to buy a slave, will he not let a physician examine him, seek guarantees from the seller; enquire from his neighbors concerning his reputation; and after all that, would put him under probation for a certain period?! But when the congregation of God intend to choose someone for such a great mission of ministry, they do it slothfully and negligently, merely as a favor for some?! Who will intercede for them on the day of judgment?!

“ So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. Then he went to

his father’s house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself

.And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem” (4 – 6)

If Abimelech erred because of his love of authority, the Ephramites, who dwelt in Shechem also did for receiving him a king, according to the request of his pagan family. Here, both the king and the subjects erred: the former in his love of human honor; and the later in their bad choice.

They were killed in ‘Ophrah’ which means (a deer), or (of dust); and all the men of Sechem gathered together, and made Abimelech king . That was the first time we hear of a king from among the children of Israel; even though he was not a king over all the tribes; but his kingdom seemed to be limited to Shechem and some of the cities around;He was therefore not counted as a king over Israel, not like Saul or David.

He was enthroned beside the terebinth tree, considered as a holy sanctuary by the Canaanites, who worshipped their gods near it; By the Israelites who cherished it for their father Jacob hid the foreign gods and the earrings under it (Genesis 35: 4); And under it Joshua set the stone of testimony (Joshua 24: 26);; According to some that terebinth tree was used as a pillar on which the Canaanites set their banner.

2- JOTHAM TALKS TO THE PEOPLE OF SHECHEM:

“**Jotham**” is a Hebrew word meaning (Jehovah is perfect),

Having been informed by some, how Abimelech, who killed his brothers, was reigned a king by the people of Shechem; he went to Shechem to rebuke them on their bad choice , and on killing his brothers without a cause..... We know that the Valley in which Shechem (Nables) is located, is between Mount Gerzim, and Mount Ebal. On the former, in the days of Joshua, half the tribes of Israel stood to utter the blessings; and on the later, the other half stood to utter the curses (Joshua 8: 33-35). Jotham stood on Mount Gerzim to talk as though on a podium. the sound in the desert could resonate loud enough to be heard afar.. He used a parable of ‘the trees and the bramble’, on one aspect, in a vague, yet an attractive way, to exhort them to listen, and to reconsider their position; then gave it a painful ending; And on another aspect he could proclaim the bitterness in his soul, without mentioning any specific names.And in case, it so happens that they are stirred up against him, he could flee to hide in one of the many caves of the mountain, where they could not find him.

“Jotham went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out, and he said to them: “Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that God may listen to you!”

The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' But the olive tree said to them 'Should I cease giving my oil, with which

they honor God and men, And go to sway over trees?' (7 – 10).

What is this olive tree but the living church, or in a better terms the believer bound to the church, and planted in her as an olive tree, As the Psalmist says: "*I am like a green olive tree in the house of God*" (Psalm 52: 8); and as the prophet Jeremiah says: "*The Lord called your name Green Olive Tree, lovely and of good fruit*" (Jeremiah 11: 16). For the believer, fruitful by the Spirit, already being full inside, will not seek authority; and even in case he is approached to reign, he would serve God and people by the inner oil of grace, rather than be preoccupied with the outer appearances, however honorable they may be. He would say, together with the olive tree: "*Should I cease giving my oil, with which they honor God and men, and go to sway over trees?*" (10). What would bring joy to the heart of the olive tree, more than to be honored by its fellow trees, is to give its oil in the golden lampstand to burn before the altar of God, to give it (as medicine) to heal men, and as food to satisfy them.

"Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and reign over us!' But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, And go to sway over trees?'" (10,11)

Like the olive tree, the fig tree refers to the living church that embraces its members inside it like tiny seeds, by the cover of the spirit of love and sweet unity, according to the words of St. John Chrysostom; Namely the fig tree would rather hold fast to the sweet cover, or the spirit of love and unity, to give good fruit to everyone, instead of being preoccupied with the temporal honors, that tear the unity apart, and take love away from the holy congregation.

“Then the trees said to the vine, ‘You come and reign over us!’ But the vine said to them, ‘Should I cease my new wine, Which cheers both God and men, And go to sway over trees?’” (12, 13)

If the olive tree desired to give its oil to burn and be consumed for the sake of God and men; and the fig tree, to give the spirit of love and unity, for the sake of the satisfaction of everyone; The vine, as well, representing the church, being the house of the cross, where the grapes are squeezed to produce new wine; rejoices in the cross and passion, to give pleasure to God and men, and prefers to walk the rough way and the narrow door for the sake of the Lord and the salvation of men (Matthew 7: 14). Through the cross, namely the winepress, the vine produces wine used as a drink offering to be poured upon the daily offering (Exodus 29: 38-40); which refers to God’s rejoice bound to the sacrifice of Christ, or to our comfort melded with the afflictions for the sake of the Lord.

“Then all the trees said to the bramble, ‘You come and reign over us!’. And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me as king over you, then come and take

shelter in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!’” (14, 15)

The bramble is a plant with thorns, which abound in the hot regions, and need only little water to grow. The bramble sought from the other trees to come and take shelter in its shade, even though the other trees are taller and bigger than itself. Besides, the bramble has sharp leaves and thorns that make it difficult to take shade under it. And being almost dry, it is prone to burning by heat, and cause the other plants close to it to burn as well. So Jotham likens Abimelech to the bramble, useless, dry, and thorny; and on account of being prone to burning, it harms the trees all around it..

Jotham rebukes the people of Shechem for killing his brothers who did not seek authority, but, like olive, fig trees, and vine, were ready to serve and to give; and for anointing

Abimelech a king, the bramble who burns with his evil, and will let them, as well, burn together with him.

Before fleeing away, Jotham, did not forget to rebuke them for having paid the faithful love and strife of Gideon, for their sake, back with killing his children; and mockingly, yet with warning, he ended his talk by saying:

“Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he

deserves -- for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; but you have risen up against my father’s house this day, and

killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother— if then you

have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. “But if not, let fire come from

Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of Shechem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!” (16 – 20)

The people of Shechem assumed that being from their city, Abimelech will tend to support them; but they did not perceive that, being like the dry bramble with thorns, he will burn, and make them burn together with him, on account of their evil collaboration with him in

killing the seven innocent children of Gideon; and for choosing such a corrupt man as king over them.

It is obvious that the wrong choice of spiritual leadership leads to perdition to both the minister and the ministered together. It is like taking shelter among the bramble full of thorns, with the assumption that it can protect them, when it, burning with the fire of evil, will, itself burn, and burn those taking shelter in it..

“And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother” (21)

Many places bear this name ‘Beer’.. According to some, he went to Beersheba.; and to others, he went to what is called ‘Beera’, nowadays, ten miles north of JerusalemAnyway, it was not possible for Jotham to flee from the people of Shechem who enthroned Abimelech a king over them; namely to flee from the evil who has the devil as his king; except by taking shelter in the true well (Beer) of the water of the holy baptism; where Christ crushed the devil under His feet, granting us, by His Holy Spirit, the spirit of sonhood, to receive the Father as a King over us, instead of Abimelech (meaning my father reigns).

3- THE PEOPLE OF SHECHEM DEAL TREACHEROUSLY WITH ABIMELECH:

The people of Shechem made Abimelech king; he did not reign over all Israel, but only over the region of Shechem; for he was hated by the rest of the tribes, for killing his brothers, for being the son of a concubine, and for taking the authority by force. That is why it is said:

“Abimelech reigned over Israel three years” (22)

We do not know how he lived those three years, but,

“God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech; that the crime done to the seventy

sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers” (24 - 25)

Namely, God made the two sides perceive the evil in one another, sent a spirit of ill will, and hate between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and they dealt treacherously with one another (23) Those who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers, came to loathe him; probably for feeling that whoever kills his own brothers to take the authority by force, would never be trusted to give to others.

“And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech” (25)

According to the prophet Isaiah: *“Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; And you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, you will be plundered. When you make an end of dealing treacherously with, they will deal treacherously with you” (Isaiah 33: 1)*. Those who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers, now exert all effort to kill him; They set evil men in ambush on the tops of Mounts Gerzim and Ebal around Shechem; to see who could put their plan into effect; and robbed all who passed by them along the way, and it

was told Abimelech. By so doing they intended to create disturbances in the region, and when Abimelech comes out to see things for himself, they would kill him.

4- THE DEFEAT OF GAAL THE SON OF EBED:

The ambush they set on the mountains saw a man called 'Gaal the son of Ebed', his Hebrew name means (hate), who hated Abimelech, probably for fear that he who killed his own brothers, could never be trusted. Having under his leadership a company of thieves, the people of Shechem rejoiced, for they found in him the man who could realize their plan.

“Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him” (26)

They started their plan by going through a pagan religious rite:

“they went out into the fields, and gathered grapes from their vineyards and trod them, and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and

cursed Abimelech” (27).

Namely they sought from their gods to forsake him, to be accursed, and they could kill him..... That is why to chastise Moab, God says on the tongue of the prophet Isaiah: *“Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field. In the vineyard there will be no singing, nor there will be shouting. No treaders will tread out wine in the presses. I have made their shouting cease” (Isaiah 16: 10)*

“Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerubbaal, and is not Zebul

his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? If only this people were under my authority; then I would

remove Abimelech” (27 - 29)

Namely, The descendants of ‘Hamor’ had more right for the kingdom than that stranger, the son of a concubine.Although Shechem the son of Hamor raped Dinah, daughter of Jacob, and was killed, together with the men of the city by Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34); yet Israel entered into a relationship of friendship with the people of Shechem, who had prominence, fame, and weight. The name ‘Hamor’ came from the sacrifice of a donkey (Homar), that was a main item in making treaties among the Ammorites in the eighteenth century B.C..

;

“ When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused” (30)

king Abimelech dwelt outside the city in ‘Tarmah’, most probab,y ‘Arumah’ (41), meaning in Hebrew (height); though by some to be ‘Armah’ 6 miles, north-east of Sechem. .

Being the ruler of Sechem, and a deputy of Abimalech, Zebul pretended to be a friend of Gaal; while he sent a secret message to tell the king what was going on,; and counseled him not to enter into the city, but to come with his men down by night, and lie in wait in the field; and when Gaal and his men come out in the morning, he would fight them at the city gate, and Gaal would have no stronghold where he can take refuge.

“he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city

against you. Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in wait in the field. And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning,

that you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and when he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity.” (31 – 33)

So Abimelech and all the people who were with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies.

When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate, Abimelech and the people who were with him rose from lying in wait. And when Gaal saw

the people, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!”. But Zebul said to him, “You see the shadows of the mountains as if they

were men. So Gaal spoke again and said, “See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners Terebinth Tree.”

(34 – 37)

Then Zebul said to him, "Where indeed is your mouth now, with which you said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Are not these the people whom you despised?

Go out, if you will, and fight with them now." So Gaal went out, leading the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him;

and many fell wounded, to the very entrance of the gate. Then Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they would not dwell in Shechem"

(38 – 41)

"And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in

wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. Then Abimelech and the company that

was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the other two companies rushed upon all who were in the fields and killed them. So

Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who were in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt" (42 – 45).

Corruption, like fire, consumes itself. The people of Shechem who set Abimelech a king, later dealt treacherous with him, using an evil (tool) -- Gaal the son of Ebed and his company of robbers. The (tool) perished; and the situation deteriorated, when Abimelech came to know what lied in the heart of the people of Shechem; he set forth to destroy them; but he could not flee from the horrible crime of murder, he committed against his own brothers

5- ABIMELECH STRIKES SECHEM:

Perceiving that their plan failed, the people of Sechem, in an attempt to appease Abimelech, they drove Gaal out with his men, and came out to the field to tell Abimelech what they did. Yet having known their treachery, Abimelech killed all those in the field, and forced his way through the gate of the city, and killed all the people in it, and demolished the city, and sowed it with salt. Saying “*he sowed the city with salt*” does not mean that he threw salt on the cultivated land to corrupt it, but it was a common expression of the desolation that dwells upon a country, and lasts for a long time.

“ Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard that, they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. ⁴⁷ And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the

tower of Shechem were gathered together. Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and

cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid it on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, “What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I

have done. So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put them against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them,

so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women” (46 -49)

Hearing what happened in the city, men of the tower of Shechem took refuge in the tower as a material stronghold, and in the pagan gods ;;;; ; But Abimelech went out together with men up to Mount Zalmon, (Mount Solomon according to some), a part of Mount Gerzim toward the south; although, according to others, it is Mount ‘Solamieh’, or ‘Mount Ebal’. It was called ‘Zalmon’ because the dense trees that give it shade.....

“All the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women”. (49). By that the parable uttered by Jotham was literally realized: *“Let fire comes out of the brambles and consume the cedar of Lebanon (15)*

6- ABIMELECH KILLED BY A WOMAN:

“Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it. But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women—all the people of the city—

fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower. So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower

to burn it with fire. But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer,

and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So his young man thrust him through, and he died. And when the men of Israel saw

that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place"
(50 – 56)

'Thebez', a city whose Hebrew name means (splendor) or (light), close to Shechem, known nowadays as 'Thobaz', 10 miles north-east of Shechem (Naples), on the way to 'Bissan' or 'Beth-shan'. Hearing what happened to the people of Shechem, this city also revolted against Abimelech; for everyone wanted to get rid of him.

"Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers.. And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on

their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal".(56 – 57)

The people of Shechem, on account of that they chose Abimelech, not for the sake of a virtue in him, but for the sake of blood relationship, they perished together with him. That is why, it came in the apostolic laws, written in the Synode of Antioch: [Bishopry is not to be inherited, not to be included in a will, nor to be granted a gift to someone. Priesthood is not to be inherited].

CHAPTER 10

THE PERVERSION OF ISRAEL

In this chapter we see the often repeated episode of perversions, despite God's care for his people.

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1- 'Tola' the son of 'Puah' set a judge | 1 - 2 |
| 2- 'Jaer' the Gileadite set a judge | 3 - 5 |
| 3- Israel oppressed again by the people of Ammon | 6 - 18 |

1- SETTING TOLA THE SON OF PUAH:

“After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of Ephraim” (1)

“Tola judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in Shamir” (2).

'Shamir' or 'Shamor', a Hebrew name, meaning (thorns) or (marble); probably 'Sator', located between Samaria and Genin nowadays. In it Tola was set a judge; despite the fact that he was from the tribe of Issachar, and the city was in the portion of the tribe of Ephraim. He was set to save Israel from atrocities too little to mention. He ruled Israel for 23 years, almost peaceful years.

The word 'Tola' means (a warm), or (scarlet cloth); And 'Puah' means (the dyers' work)..... As though, when the reign of Abimelech came to an end -- the authority-lover; the bramble that sent fire to consume him and those who set him a king; who was not killed by an enemy from outside, but by his own household, whom he also killed. By his death a judge was set – Tola the son of Puah -- ; as though by the scarlet cloth, the dyers' work; dyed by the holy blood (the scarlet), to give 23 years of peace; even though he dwelt and was buried in Shamir; namely among the thorns.

While Abimelech chose the seemingly easy way to secure his life and his kingdom, by killing his own brothers, reigning only for three years, in which he had no taste of peace, and ended up with a tragedy that utterly destroyed him; Tola, on the other hand, even though his name meant a lowly (warm); yet, choosing to walk along the difficult way of thorns and suffering, he gave the people of God long years of rest. He was like a shepherd who bears trouble to let the others have rest; who came to death every day; to let his brethren enjoy life in the Lord. According to the beautiful words of St. John Chrysostom, the great giving shepherd: [I wish you can feel the fire kindling in my heart, to know that I burn, mourning on the congregation present here, more than a young woman on her early widowhood; or a father on the death of his only son I wish I can give my eyes ten thousand times and more, for the sake of the penitence of your souls].

2- SETTING JAER THE GILEADITE A JUDGE:

“After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called

*“Havoth Jair’ to this day, which are in the land of Gilead.
And Jair died and was buried in Camon” (3 – 5).*

After the burial of ‘Tola’ whose name bears the meaning of ‘a warm’, after giving his people 23 years of peace, ‘Jair the Gileadite’ was set a judge, to give his people, 22 years, most probably of peace, as well. We know about him, nothing more than he had 30 sons who rode on 30 donkeys, a sign of honor and wealth, had 30 so-called towns, which were actually, not more than ranches with buildings; called ‘Havoth Jaer’, namely (ranches of Jair).

If the name ‘Tola’ in Hebrew means (a warm) a sign of his humility, or (a scarlet cloth), a sign of being dyed and purified by the blood of the Savior; the name ‘Jair’ means (enlightening). The former ‘Tola’ carried the blood of Christ , to judge by the spirit of meekness; and the later ‘Jair’ carried the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ Himself, to come to be like Him who sent him, saying to him: *“You are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5: 14)..... According to some, Jair here, was probably a descendant of Jair, mentioned in the book of Numbers (32: 41).

If ‘Jair refers to the soul, enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the waters of baptism; his 30 sons refer to the gifts, of man, his feelings and energies, sanctified as his sons in the Lord; each riding a donkey, namely honored and rich in the Lord, and (rules) on a city or ranch; namely, all what is inside us, come to be holy for the Lord; not befitting of him to walk in abominations, or to be used for evil, but to live honored by the holy life.

The figure 30, here, refers to the baptism of the Lord Christ; who was baptized in the water of the Jordan when He was 30 years old. For through His baptism we came to have the right to enjoy baptism; and to be counted as holy kings and priests in Him; to rule, and not to be enslaved to the devil and his evil works. That

is what made St. Jerome say: [The Savior, Himself, did not preach the kingdom of heaven, except after He sanctified the Jordan by being baptized in it].

3- ISRAEL OPPRESSED AGAIN BY THE PEOPLE OF AMMON:

I

“Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the

gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him” (6)

Having enjoyed rest, the people got back to partake of idol-worship, together with the pagan nations around them. They came to worship the Baals (namely the gods of the sun), and the Ashtoreths (the goddesses of the moon); as well as the gods of Aram, like ‘Rimmon’ (2 Kings 5: 18), god of thunder and rain; and the gods of Sidon, like the Baals and the Ashtoreths (Every nation had her own Baal and Ashtoreth); the gods of Moab, like ‘Camush’ and Baal-Peor gods of the people of Ammon like ‘Molech’ or ‘Melchom’ (Leviticus 18: 21); and gods of the Philistines, like ‘Dagon’, god of the fish, whose idol had the face and hands of man, and the body of a fish.

They started by worshipping those gods together with worshipping the true God; as a show of non-bigotry; but they soon forsook the worship of the living God, where the way is rough and the door is narrow, and held fast to the pagan worship, where the way is easy and the door is wide open,

“So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. From that year they

harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years—all the children of Israel who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead

. Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely

distressed” (7 – 9).

“And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘We have sinned against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals’ “ (10)

The Lord admonished them on paying his care and salvation, back with denial and evil; and in firm fatherhood He said: *“I will deliver you no more” (13)*; not to close the door of mercy in their face, but to confirm to them His firmness, and to seek from them to enter into the depth in solving their problems.

“So the LORD said to the children of Israel, ‘Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines?

Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken Me and

served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress'." (11 – 13)

"And the children of Israel said to the LORD, 'We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray'." So they put away the foreign

gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.(14 – 16)

As a compassionate father, "*the soul of the Lord could no longer endure the misery of Israel*", nor to see the tears of His children. In the book of the songs He says: "*Turn your eyes away from Me, for they have overcome Me*" (Songs 6: 5). And chastising with firmness, He, with love, turns back to say: "*My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; For I am God and not man; the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror*" (Hosea 11: 8, 9).

Amazing in His love, he does not endure even man's penitence; and the greatest example for that is what He did with 'Ahab' the evil king, who killed and inherited (1 kings 21: 19), about whom the Holy Book testified: "*There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord*" (1 kings 21: 25). But once he listened to the Lord's words against him, on the tongue of the prophet Elijah, he tore off his clothes and put on sackcloth on his body. Not enduring to see him do so, God said to the prophet Elijah: "*See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me. I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house*" (1 kings 21: 29)

“Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah”

And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over

all the inhabitants of Gilead.” (17 - 18)

God therefore, did not forsake them, and when the people of Ammon encamped in Gilead, and the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah (17) God was preparing for them a savior – ‘Jephthah the Gileadite’.

‘Mizpah’ , a Hebrew word meaning (the tower of watchmen), has been called **‘Mizpah of Gilead** (11: 29), **‘Ramath Mizpah’** (Joshua 13: 26), **“Ramoth Gilead”** (1 kings 4: 13). It is where Jacob made a the heap as a witness on the covenant he made that day with Laban (genesis 31: 49) ; Its location nowadays is probably ‘Tel-Ramoth, or ‘Salt’, within the portion of Gad.

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CHAPTER 11

JEPHTHAH SET A JUDGE

“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. Gilead’s wife bore sons; and when his wife’s sons

grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him, “You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house, for you are the son of another woman. Then Jephthah fled

from his brothers and dwelt in the land of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him” (1 – 3)

Even though Jephthah’s brothers drove him out, to have no inheritance in their father’s house, because he was the son of a harlot, yet, having a heart wide open with love, when the Spirit of the Lord dwelt on him, he stood to save them.

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|---|---------|
| 1- Jephthah flees from his brothers | 1 - 3 |
| 2- The elders of Gilead and Jephthah | 4 - 11 |
| 3- Jephthah negotiates with the king of Ammon | 12 - 28 |
| 4- Jephthah’s bitter vow | 29 – 40 |

1- JEPHTHAH FLEES FROM HIS BROTHERS:

The word '**Jephthah**' means (he who opens). By such a name, he probably carried a symbolic portrait of the Lord Christ. and His salvation works.. When his brothers' hearts were closed shut, and drove him away from their midst, so as to have no inheritance in their father's house, he had to flee to dwell in the land of 'Tob', namely 'Teba east of the Jordan, outside the border of Israel (2 Samuel 10: 6); from where 'Hanun' king of Ammon hired men, when he made himself repulsive to king David; called nowadays 'Mephes' or 'Um Kiss'. Jephthah, however opened up his heart to stand up and save them from the people of Ammon. In this he is a symbol of the Lord Christ, before whom, humanity closed its doors, to find no place to be born among the people, and was born in a fold of cows. In His ministry, the Lord Jesus openly proclaimed that "*the Son of Man has nowhere to place His head*" (Matthew 8: 20). Yet, while being driven out by the Jews with all their categories, He opened His heart to them, together with the Gentiles, on the cross, to embrace all, and to carry them to the bosom of His Father, to reconcile us with Him forever (2 Corinthians 5: 18).

The Lord Christ, "*He who opens, and no one shuts*" (Revelation 3: 7); is the true Jephthah, who opens the gates of paradise before his believers, after they closed it shut by disobedience.

He was called 'Jephthah the Gileadite': for he was raised in Gilead; and because his father's name was 'Gilead'.

Even though the Holy Book confirmed that he was 'one of illegitimate birth', yet this is not counted against him; because "*The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, but the soul who sins shall die*" (Ezekiel 18: 20). Indeed the law denied him entrance into the assembly of the Lord; yet it did not deny him the leadership of the army, to be a judge, nor the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance.

Commenting on this, St. Jerome says: [Jephthah , whom the apostle counts among the righteous (Hebrew 11: 32), was "one of illegitimate birth", yet, it is written: that the sons shall bear neither the virtues nor the guilt of their fathers; God will judge us only on the time when we were born anew in Christ].

It was befitting of Jephthah's brothers to gain and not to lose him, for it was no fault of his; but they unwisely drove him away; to be banded together with worthless men, to go out raiding with him (3). They drove him away to be attached to evildoers, and to practice what is unbefitting; something, even though does not justify Jephthah, yet it does not relieve his brothers of their responsibility for what he ended up to.

2- THE ELDERS OF GILEAD AND JEPHTHAH:

When Jephthah was driven out by his brothers, he fled to beyond Israel, to the land of 'Tob'..... as though he is the Lord Christ who was driven out by His own, to set forth to 'Golgotha', being the true land of 'Tob' (namely goodness); for there, the goodness of the Lord, and His heart kindled with love toward everyone, were proclaimed; according to the words of the lord, Himself: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3: 16).

To drive Jephthah away from Gilead, it so seems that his brothers used a legal verdict issued by the elders of Gilead.

"It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against Israel. And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel, that the elders of

Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. Then they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon" (6)

On account of that they sought him to be their commander, for being a mighty man of valor; Jephthah declined their offer, proclaiming his protest, saying:

“Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress? And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “That is

why we have turned again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

“So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, ‘If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I be your head?’”

“And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, ‘The LORD will be a witness between us, if we do not do according to your words’ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead,

and the people made him head and commander over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah” (7 – 11).

Here we see Jephthah represent a unique personality. For we are used to see spiritual leaders, who once they receive the position of leadership, they pervert and become swallowed by the love of authority and honor. But Jephthah, here, who started his life among evildoers who raided together with him; when he was asked to become a commander in the war, he desired to be a head over Israel both in war and in peace. Yet, once he received the responsibility, we see him become a man of faith, amazing in his behavior. If some, not enduring responsibilities and honor, collapse spiritually; some others are so

internally awed by the responsibility, to set forth to new beginnings of spiritual work in the Lord.

Having got his new assignment, after his debate with the elders of Gilead, not from their hands, but from the hands of the Lord Himself, Jephthah therefore did not trust in himself, nor in his men, as much as he did in the Lord Himself; said *"If you take me back home to fight against the people of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them to me"* (9). If it was them who brought him back; yet he fights by the Lord Himself, the secret of his conquest and victory. Commenting on this, St. John Chrysostom says: [We cannot run along the way of God, except carried on the wings of the Spirit].

3- JEPHTHAH NEGOTIATES WITH THE KING OF AMMON:

Jephthah did not hasten to fight the people of Ammon, despite the fact that they have previously humiliated the children of Israel for many years, but, with a high spirit of wisdom, he sought peace.

" Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, saying, "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land?" (12)

" And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of Jephthah, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those lands peaceably."

“So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon, and said to him, “Thus says Jephthah: ‘Israel did not take away the land of Moab, nor the

land of the people of Ammon; for when Israel came up from Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to Kadesh. Then Israel sent

messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “Please let me pass through your land.” But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of

Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel remained in Kadesh. And they went along through the wilderness and bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab,

came to the east side of the land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of

Moab. Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon; and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land into our place.,

But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. And the LORD

God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the Amorites, who

inhabited that country. They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the wilderness to the Jordan (12 – 22)

The fact is that God has forbidden Israel to fight against both the people of Ammon and of Moab (Deuteronomy 2: 9, 19). What the Children of Israel took by force what belonged to the Ammorites. And Ammon seek his land that extends from the River Arnon (whose name means (corrected'), to the River of Jabok (whose name means voided) -- the River of Zarkah. to the River Jordan, is not based on the truth.

On another aspect, Israel, having taken over that disputed land since 300 years ago, it became, therefore, its own by law .

The third important evidence presented by Jephthah to the King of Ammon was that, what Israel has got was not from the people of Ammon, or from those of Moab, or even from the king of the Ammorites, but they got it from the Lord Himself, as a divine gift.

‘And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; should you then possess it? Will you not possess whatever Chemosh

your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess” (23, 24)

“And now, are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel? Did he ever fight against them? While Israel dwelt in Heshbon

and its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time? Therefore

I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people

of Ammon.’ However, the king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent him” (25 – 28).

The issue of the debate now, is not the disputed land, but the kingdom of God. God granted the children of Israel to possess, and expelled the nations before them. Will they reject the work of God with them?. The land itself -- in Jephthah's sight – bears the sign of being the possession of the Lord, and the acceptance by the believers of His promises and gifts; Any slothfulness in possessing it, therefore, would be counted as a **reproach** against the Person of the Lord. By such a line of thought, the apostle Paul considered the organs of his body, as though the land on which the people of Ammon, and those of Moab, have reigned for years. But once God expelled evil from those members , to reign by Himself on them, Will man give it back to the pagan nations(namely to the sins and evil desires)?!; As the apostle Paul say: “*Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?!*” (1 Corinthians 6: 15)

God delivered to us our life renewed in Him by His Holy Spirit; as though it is the land extending from ‘Arnon’ (the corrected) to ‘Jabok’ (the voided), to the ‘Jordan’, where we find Christ dwelling. So we find our life extend from “the Arnon’, namely we start by doing a true inner (correction), by the Holy Spirit of God; to ‘Jabok’, namely, where there is a complete voidance of the devil, and all his evil work, he who occupied the site, to the Jordan, fort the Lord Christ to reign in its water, to proclaim His conquest over Leviathan, who dwelt in those waters,

and to open the gates of heaven, so as to hear the joyful voice of the Father, and to see the dwelling of the Holy Spirit..... Having received such a new life in the Lord, namely the land voided from the devil , to let the Lord reign on it; it would not be befitting of us to let the enemy repossess it again!

How beautiful are the words said by Jephthah: “*They took possession of the territory from Arnon to Jabbok; and from the wilderness to the Jordan*” (22). It is as though he says that the believers possess from the site of the inner (correction) to the (voidance); namely, they practically walk in their spiritual life; and as they seek to correct and to renew their life in the Lord, they void themselves completely from the devil and his works. As to saying: “*and from the wilderness to the Jordan*”;: he means, as though moving from the barrenness and draught to the paradise where the Lord Christ, the Tree of Life is inside it. The Jordan or the baptism are nothing but the return to the life on a heavenly level; for it is an entrance into a unity with the Father in His Son Jesus Christ, as a Member in His Holy Body, by the Holy Spirit. Those are how the fathers of the church felt when talking to the Catechumen, whom they felt as leading them to paradise itself; Among those fathers are St. John Chrysostom; and father Theodore of Misis.

Finally, as Jephthah asked the king of Ammon to reconsider his decision to fight against Israel, he sought from him to follow the lead of the king of Moab; who also lost his land the way the people of Ammon did, but did not fight against Israel; or, after starting to fight, he reconsidered himself and refrained to do.

4- JEPHTHAH’S BITTER VOW:.

“ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he

advanced toward the people of Ammon”

“And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of

my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering” (29 – 31)

“So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands.. And he defeated them from Aroer as far as Minnith—

twenty cities—and to Abel Keramim, with a very great slaughter. Thus the people of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel” (32 – 33).

“When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter, coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she was his only child. Besides her he had

neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, “Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low! You are among

those who trouble me! For I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it.” (34 – 35)

This vow, According to many fathers lacked every kind of wisdom. It is probable that, by it, God intended to teach Jephthah and all believers, along the generations, a very important lesson; by allowing for his only virgin daughter to come out to meet him; Seeing her, he tore his clothes in bitterness. According to St. Ambrose: [It was a bitter vow, and fulfilling it was more bitter. It is better not to vow altogether than to vow something that God Himself has no pleasure in]..

According to St. John Chrysostom: [By not stopping this sacrifice, the way He did with that of Isaac the son of Abraham, in spite His disapproval of the human sacrifices; God intended to give a lesson to humanity, that men should not hasten to make such a vow, lest by it they may lose their children. By allowing this vow to be fulfilled, God put an end to its repetition in the future. He also says: Although God did not stop the sacrifice this time, as He did in that of Isaac, He clearly showed on many occasions His disapproval of human sacrifices].

Anyway, despite God's hate of human sacrifices, but Jephthah and his daughter – most probably with lack of the right knowledge – both intended to present to God the most precious thing they have. In spite of the fact that she was his only child, and beside her he had neither son nor daughter, and that she was a virgin who knew no man, Jephthah did not go back on his vow, which would mean that he would die childless. And his daughter, offered her own life, even though with the bitterness of soul, on account of that she was going to die childless, and with reproach.:

Anyway, even though she could have managed, some way or another, to avoid such a sad destiny, she, from the beginning, and with her complete free will, said to her father:

. “My father, if you have given your word to the LORD, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD has avenged you of your enemies,

the people of Ammon” (36).

*.” Then she said to her father, “Let this thing be done for me:
let me alone for two months, that I may go and wander on the
mountains and bewail my virginity, my*

friends and I.” (37)

She went to bewail her virginity; for every girl in Israel longed to have seed, from which the Messiah would eventually come. And now she is going to die a virgin, and lose that hope

*“So he said, “Go.” And he sent her away for two months; and
she went with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the
mountains. And it was so at the end of two*

*months that she returned to her father, and he carried out
his vow with her which he had vowed” (38 – 39).*

*“And it became a custom in Israel that the daughters of Israel
went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the
Gileadite” (40)*

Offering his daughter a sacrifice to God, Jephthah bore a symbol of a man who offers his life (his only daughter) a sacrifice of love to God. That is why, when Lolian -- a rich noble man – lost his wife and his two daughters, St. Jerome wrote to exhort him to join monasticism, to offer his life a vow dedicated to worship God; something that brings pleasure to God, better than any other kind of offering. He wrote to him, saying: [Offering his virgin daughter a sacrifice to God, Jephthah was counted by the apostle among the saints (Hebrew 11: 32). I

do not want you to offer to the Lord something that a thief can rob, or an enemy could take away But I want you to offer Him what goes together with you to the grave; No, but to the kingdom, to the paradise of joy].

Finally, according to St. John Chrysostim [Lamenting the daughter of Jephthah, the virgins intend to make men more wise in the future; and perceive that what Jephthah did was not according to the will of God].

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CHAPTER 12

JEPHTHAH'S WAR AGAINST EPHRAIM

Instead of thanking Jephthah for his strife against the people of Ammon, and for fighting against them to the account of Israel as a whole, the men of Ephraim criticized him in an un-appropriate way, as it was always their custom, . But Jephthah did not attempt to gain them as Gideon did (8: 1-3), but opposed them, fought against them, and killed 42,000 of their men.

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|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1- Jephthah fight against Ephraim | 1 - 7 |
| 2- Ibsan of Bethlehem | 8 - 10 |
| 3- Elon the Zebulunite | 11 - 12 |
| 4- Abdon the son of Hillel | 13 – 15 |

1- JEPHTHAH FIGHTS AGAINST EPHRAIM:

Ephraim was known for its might men of valor, but also for bearing the spirit of pride. They always sought to be ahead in every situation. When Gideon conquered they rebuked him on account of that he did not seek their help; but he gained them by his spirit of humility (8: 1-3). Now, as Jephthah conquered,

“The men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, ‘Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did

not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire” (1)

They counted disregarding them an unforgivable guilt. And it did not stop at admonition, but even went further to threatening to burn his house down on him with fire. Instead of gaining them with the spirit of meekness and humility, as Gideon did, Jephthah revealed how they failed to do their role in the salvation from the hand of the Ammonites; and that when their brethren cried out to seek their support, they so despised them that they sought his help (Jephthah). Thus, Jephthah, exposing them, he proclaimed his own sacrifice for the sake of the people, saying:

“My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. So when I saw that you would not

deliver me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me

this day to fight against me?” (2, 3)

Here, again, he proclaimed that God delivered the enemies in his hand; as though to tell them that by fighting against him, they oppose God working in him (3).

“Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, “You Gileadites are fugitives

of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites.” (4)

Jephthah did not stop at revealing that the Ephraimites are liars, proclaiming that they were called to fight and did not respond; accusing them of negligence and slothfulness, and of being opponents of God Himself, who granted conquest to him; But he gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought them; because of their insult against the people of Gilead, saying to them: *“You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites”*. In other words because they claimed that the Gileadites were a group of fugitives who escaped from being accused of committing crimes of robbery and murders; and, escaping from Ephraim they did not go to Manasseh, but stayed in Gilead –the land between the two tribes.

The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites arrived” .

“Then any Ephraimite who escaped said, “Let me cross over’, the men of Gilead would say to him, ‘Are you an Ephraimite?’ If he said, ‘Yes’, they would kill him. And if he said

‘No’, then they would say to him, then say, ‘Shibboleth’ And he would say, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords

of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites” (5 - 6)

While the Ephraimites would be blamed for their pride that crushed them to death, Jephthah lost that whole tribe, and caused Israel to lose tens of thousands of them, instead of gaining them with love and humility.

“And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in among the cities of Gilead” (7)

2- Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon

We do not know much about those three judges; probably on account of that they did not enter into afflictions, or had no specific attitudes, but had peaceful years with their people, and died in peace. Any way, all the judges mentioned in this book represent diverse samples and different kinds of believers; and were worthy of having their names mentioned in the book of life; although those who have passed through afflictions would be worthy of a greater reward, in case they walked by the spirit of living faith.

Ibzan:

“After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹ He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons.

He judged Israel seven years. ¹⁰ Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem” (8 – 10).

About that judge we know nothing more than his name, location (Bethlehem), most probably not Bethlehem of Judah, as believed by Josephus, but Bethlehem of Zebulun (Joshua 19: 1, 15). that he had 30 sons and 30 daughters, and made them marry spouses from elsewhere, probably to make the family of wider range; and that he ruled for 7 years, died, and buried in Bethlehem.

Elon the Zebulunite:

¹¹ After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. ¹² And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun” (11).

Elon; a Hebrew name, meaning (oak). Ruled for 10 years, died, and buried in Elon , a village in Zebulun, different than Elon of Dan (Joshua 19: 43)' According to same, its name means (place of the deer).

Abdon the son of Hillel:

“ After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. ¹⁴ He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years.

Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites” (12)

3- ELON THE ZEBULUNITE:

‘Elon’, a Hebrew name meaning (oak), judged Israel for ten years, then died in ‘Elon’, a village in Zebulun ; different from ‘Elon’ of Dan (Joshua 19: 43); though believed by some to mean (place of the deers).

5- ABDON THE SON OF HILLEL:

‘Abdon’ means (abd or slave); and ‘Hillel’ means (exultation or praise)

He was raised in ‘Feroton’ in Ephraim, meaning (height), seven miles and a half south-west of Shechem (Nables).

He judged Israel for eight years; and had 40 sons and 30 grandsons, who rode 70 donkeys, a sign of riches and honor

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CHAPTER 13

SAMSON

By delivering Israel into the hands of the Philistines for forty years, God intended to chastise them, but he was preparing Samson as a judge to save them.

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| 1- The angel of the Lord and the wife of Manoah | 1 - 7 |
| 2- The angel of the Lord and Manoah | 8 – 25 |

1- THE ANGEL OF THE LORD AND THE WIFE OF MANOAH:

“Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years” (1)

The Philistines at that time, and up to the time of king David, had great weight. They were not Canaanites, but were called ‘Caphtorians’, after their origin ‘Caphtor’ (the Island of Crete).

If, according to some, the forty years ended by what came in (1 Samuel 7: 13); ‘Eli’ the priest would have already died, and ‘Samson’ would have reached his full manhood. According to others, Samson judged during the days in which Elon judged in North of Philistine; and he probably started his work in the days of Jephthah..... (The judges sometimes appeared at the same time in different locations; the Philistines and the people of Ammon enslaved Israel at the same time; the history of Jephthah came to proclaim saving them from the

people of Ammon; and the history of Samson came to proclaim saving them from the Philistines).

“Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children” (2).

The parents of Samson were in ‘Zorah’, a Hebrew word meaning (a strike or a bee), on the coast of Judah, then belonged to ‘Dan’ (Joshua 15: 33; 19: 41). Known nowadays as ‘Zorah’ or ‘Sorah’, 14 miles West of Jerusalem; and 23 miles South-east of Jaffa; on a hill above the Valley of ‘Sourok’.

Samson’s life began by the appearance of the angel of the Lord, most probably a proclamation of the Second Person of the Word of God, to the wife of a godly man called ‘Manoah’; a Hebrew name meaning (repose) or (comfort), so called by his parents, with the hope that by his birth, they would have rest from their troublesManoah, even though he did not have any apparent role in the salvation of his people, yet, by his, and his wife’s godliness, they produced ‘Samson’, the man of faith! We can say that, by their holy life and prayers, they presented to God and to the holy congregation, a blessed fruition in the Lord; although they did not pluck from it during their life on earth.

“His wife was barren and had no children”; Her barrenness was probably considered by both the relatives and foreigners as a reproach and a sign of God’s displeasure. How much we need to receive the fruition from the hand of God, and not through nature, even when delayed; which would distort our image in the eyes of other people.

In the ‘Telmud’ it came that the name of Manoah’s wife was ‘Hasalphoty’, a Hebrew name meaning (gives shadow on me). If Manoah refers to the soul that

found her repose or rest in the Lord by the Holy Spirit, 'Hasalphoty', on the other hand, refers to the body which enjoys the shadow of the cross on it, so as not to stay barren, and not to bring fruition on its own according to nature, but, through the divine promise, an exalted spiritual fruition, namely the true 'Samson', or the true 'Sun',through the transfiguration of the Lord Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, in us.

“And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son” (3).

Even though the woman, in the sight of others was an object of reproach, but, in the sight of God, she was worthy of appearing to her in the form of an angel, as much as she could endure; and to give her, by Himself, the good news. While confirming to her that, according to nature, she would never give birth on her own, yet what she will get is a fruition of His love and divine promise.

“Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (4 – 5)

The angel of the Lord commanded her not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything uncleanas though the Lord was preparing for Samson a holy atmosphere, even while still a fetus in his mother's womb. In the eyes of his

mother, that was not a deprivation, but a joyful fellowship of her fetus, who was called to work, and prepared for it, while still in his mother's womb.

"No razor shall come upon his head"; If the Nazirite, generally symbolizes the Lord Christ, anointed for our salvation, in whom the Father smells the fragrance of pleasure, on behalf of all believers, He would, therefore represent the Head, from which the believers in him would never be removed, as the hair of the head, by which they live and with whom they unite.

⁶ So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'" ⁽⁶⁻⁷⁾

In an amazing confidence, she told her husband the words of the angel of the Lord, which she did not doubt, as her mother 'Sarah' did. Her husband's heart was so blazed with longing that;

"Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born." ⁽⁸⁾

The man sought that from God, not to confirm the divine promise his wife enjoyed; for his language shows his complete trust in it; but he sought to see him, to enjoy listening to him, and to get the blessing his wife had.

“And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, ‘Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!’”

So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, ‘Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?’”

And He said, “I am.”

Manoah said, “Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy’s rule of life, and his work?”

So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, ‘Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe.’”

Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You.” (9 – 15)

It so seems that, because Manoah thought of the angel of the Lord as a man – probably a prophet – he therefore intended to offer him hospitality; for which, to correct his concept, the angel of the Lord said to him:

“Though you detain Me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know He was the Angel of the LORD.)⁽¹⁶⁾

It is not to be understood that the One who talks here does not accept the offering; but because Manoah thought of Him as a man, it would be unfitting to offer him a burnt offering, unless his concept is corrected, and *he* comes to perceive His true identity. The same way, we read in the gospel, when the Lord Christ once said to a young man: *“Why do you call Me good; no one is good but One, that is that is God”* (Matthew 19: 17); Namely, it is not befitting of him to call Him good, unless he first confess His Divinity..... The angel of the Lord confirmed to him that no worship should be offered except to God alone; Or, according to St. Athanasius the apostolic: [To God alone, we should offer worship; This we know from the angels themselves; For although the angels are more exalted in glory than the other creatures, yet they are still creation, to whom no worship should be offered]

“Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What is Your name, that when Your words come to pass we may honor You?”⁽¹⁷⁾

As though he says to him: I want to recognize you by your name, that when your words to me and to my wife are fulfilled, we can pay you back according to what befits your person.

¹⁸ And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name, seeing it is wonderful?”⁽¹⁸⁾

In Isaiah, it came: *“For unto us, a Child is born; unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder; and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace”* (Isaiah 9: 6). And according to St. Gregory of Nyssa: [We may learn from this that there is one name for the divine Nature, namely **“The Wonderful”**, that reveals what emerges in the heart of man concerning it in an unutterable way]. In other words, His name is “Wonderful”, namely beyond perception and utterance, that brings the heart and mind into a state of amazement and awe..

Through that name **“The Wonderful”**, the One who talks revealed that He is a **Divine Person;**

“ So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife

looked on— it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. When the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew that He was the Angel of the LORD” (19 – 21)

WHAT IS THIS ROCK BUT THE LORD CHRIST, WHO, HIMSELF, CAME TO BE THE SACRIFICE OF OUR LOVE. IT IS A LIVING PORTRAIT OF THE SALVATION WORK BY THE CROSS; .IN WHICH THE Lord Christ presents himself a sacrifice of love ablaze with fire, through which He wipes our sins off (the young goat); and through the flame of His love, He brings us, as members in His Holy Body, up to His heavens, so that we, ourselves would come to be flame of fire, by our unity with him.

And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God!”

But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have told us such things as these at this time.”^(22 – 23)

Manoah learned from the prophet Moses that “*No man shall see (God) and live*”

*Exodus 33: 4); but his wife perceived that God, by His mercy, appeared to them, not to let them die, but to receive their burnt offering, to show them some of His secrets; and to grant them His promises. God showed Himself to them as much as they could

endure; to enjoy what is for their salvation and edification. As according to St. John Chrysostom, on the tongue of God Himself: [I do not proclaim My essence Itself; but condescend (in visions), because of the weakness of those who see Me]

In that vision, Manoah's wife saw three things:

- a- God received their burnt offering and grain offering, a sign of His pleasure in them
- b- God showed them all those secrets, a sign of His exalted and limitless might
- c- God let them hear His promise to grant them a son, a Nazirite to Him, a sign of His love for them.

“So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move upon him at Mahaneh Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol” (24 – 25) .

According to St. Jerome, the word 'Samson' is derived from 'Sun' and 'On' (namely power); His name is, therefore: (The power of the sun). Manoah and his wife enjoyed that child who came as a symbol of the 'Sun of Righteousness', the True Savior, Jesus Christ; as, according to the Holy Scripture: *:The Spirit of the Lord began to move him” (25)*



CHAPTER 14

SAMSON MARRIES A WOMAN OF THE GENTILES

Samson insisted on marrying a Gentile woman, despite the displeasure of his parents at the beginning. A wedding banquet was held for seven days, during which he posed a riddle which was recognized by the Philistines through his wife. The episode of his marriage bore deep spiritual symbols.

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|---|---------|
| 1- Samson's marriage to a woman of the Gentiles | 1 - 4 |
| 2- Samson tears a young lion apart | 5 - 9 |
| 3- Samson poses a riddle to his companions | 10 - 20 |

1- SAMSON MARRIES A WOMAN OF THE GENTILES:

"Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. So he went up and told his father and mother, saying,

“I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife. Then his father and mother said to him, ‘Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?’ And Samson said to his father, ‘Get her for me, for she pleases me well’, But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD—that He was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines” For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel (1 – 4).

Timnah, a Hebrew word, meaning (a specific portion), is a city at the border of the land of ‘Judah’, then was given to ‘Dan’ (Joshua 19: 42); where the Philistines dwelt. Nowadays known as ‘Tibnah’, on a plateau of 740 feet above sea level. It is therefore of less altitude than ‘Zorah’ the city of Samson, of altitude of 1500 feet above sea level; Hence it is said: “*Samson went down*”; It is three miles South-west of Beth-Shams.

Contrary to the law that disapproves of marrying a Gentile woman (Exodus 34: 16), giving your daughter to their son, or taking their daughter for your son (Deuteronomy 7: 3, 4), Samson went down to Timnah to marry a Philistine woman, described by St. Augustine as a harlot; if not physically, she was a harlot spiritually by her idol-worship. Against his parents initial refusal, Samson insisted on marrying that Gentile woman; and hearing him say “*she pleases me well*”, they consented, “*not knowing that it was of the Lord*” (4); who turned Samson’s wish to marry a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines, to a cause for their perdition.

That work bore a symbol of the work of the Lord Christ; who went down, not to Timnah, namely to (a specific portion), but went down to the earth, to be betrothed from among the Gentiles to a bride – His church, that extends from one corner of the earth to its end. He went down to be betrothed spiritually to humanity; something that was not approved by His own (the Jews); who did not know that it was a divine command from heaven itself.

2- TEARING A YOUNG LION APART:

“So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to the vineyards of Timnah.

Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn

apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand. But he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the carcass of

the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion.⁹ He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating. When he came to his

father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion” (5 – 9).

What is the vineyard of Timnah, but that of the Lord Himself, to which the divine Word Himself went down to get betrothed to His bride the holy church. Before Samson met his bride, he was with his parents when a young lion came roaring against him. He was as though the Lord Christ, who was with His own, the Jews, before He encounters His bride of Gentile origin; when He encountered the devil, who, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom it may devour (1 Peter 5: 8). He then tore him apart by His hands, He stretched on the cross. And as Samson did not tell his father or his mother what he has done, So it was with the Jews – Christ’s own – who could not recognize the secret of the cross, or the secret of the conquest of Christ over the devil.

When he returned to get the woman he has betrothed, *“he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And behold, the carcass of the lion that quickly dried up to accommodate a swarm of bees that produced honey. He took some of it in his hands and went along eating. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them, and they also ate, but he did not tell them that he has taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion” (9)*, because he had in mind to pose it as a riddle to his friends; Or he probably feared that his parents would refrain of eating it on account of that it is taken from a dead carcass; Or still, he probably feared that they would probably be offended that, being a Nazirite, it was unbecoming of him to touch a carcass, so as not to get unclean.Anyway, if, by the cross, the lion, namely the devil, truly died, and came to be a dead carcass, he presented to us, believers; the honey of the secrets of the exalted love of God, to enjoy through the hands of the true Samson – Jesus Christ -- From it, his father and mother, namely the Jews, His own; ate, for among them came to be many believers in Him.

That episode which was a part of history, being a symbol of the salvation work of the Lord Christ, has drawn the interest of many fathers of the church, to talk about its spiritual concept. The following are quotations of their writings:

+ Samson was born by a divine promise, and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him (13: 25) Once he was shadowed by the secret to come, he sought a wife from among the Gentiles; and, as it is written "*his father and mother did not know that it was from the Lord*" (14: 4).....
On account of that he was moved by the Spirit of the Lord, Samson seemed stronger than his peers, and fought the adversaries on his own; And some other time he tore up a vicious lion by his bare hands in an exalted way.But I wish he kept the grace by the same power he confronted the wild beast.

“ The Gentile people who believed, came to have the honey..... The people who were before in bondage , came to be now the people of Christ.

(St. Ambrose)

+ What a divine secret!..... What an obvious secret! We fled from the killer, and overcame the strong.We came to have the food of life, at the same site where we were to be devoured..... The dangers turned into peace, the bitterness into sweetness; and the grace came instead of disobedience, the strength instead of weakness, and life instead of death,

+ As a Jew, when Samson killed that lion, he found honey inside it; as a symbol of the inheritance that saves.

(St. Ambrose)

- + According to some fathers, the lion refers to **our Lord Jesus Christ**, which is very befitting, as in His mouth, after His death , we find the taste of honey; For, what could be sweeter than the Word of God?!

The lion could also be interpreted as **the Gentiles who believed**; ho were previously a vain body, then came to be the body of Christ, in which the apostles – as bees – stored the honey of wisdom, they have gathered from the dew of heaven, and from the flowers of the divine grace; to have therefore, food from the mouth of Him who died. For, after being wild like lions, having received the Word of God by godly hearts, the Gentiles produced the fruition of salvation.

- + Samson might symbolize **the Jewish people** who killed Christ, when He sought the long desired unity with the church. Surely, there was no unity of the church with Christ, before the lion who came from the tribe of Judah dies. Our Lord is the Lion, who was overcome, then prevailed:was overcome, when He was killed by the Jews; but prevailed through His conquest over the devil, by his death on the cross.
- + Let us then be food for God (honey in the carcass of a lion); lest we would be food for the serpent.Let us, as honey, be eaten by Christ, lest we would be eaten by the devil (and become dust).

(St. Augustine)

- + The honey in the carcass of the lion, could be understood as **the teachings of Christ**; For we read: *“How sweet are Your words (Your*

promises) to my taste; sweeter than honey in my mouth” (Psalm 119: 103). The congregation of Christians hasten to the teachings of Christ, as though to the cell of sweet honey.

(St. Augustine)

3- SAMSON POSES A RIDDLE TO HIS COMPANIONS:

“ So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there, for young men used to do so. And it happened, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions

to be with him. Then Samson said to them, “Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty

linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing.” And they said to him,

“Pose your riddle, that we may hear it. So he said to them: ‘Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet’.

Now for three days they could not explain the riddle. But it came to pass on the seventh day that they said to Samson's wife, 'Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle

to us, or else we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? Is that not so?'. Then Samson's wife wept on him, and said, 'You

only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained it to me'. And he said to her, 'Look, I have not explained it to my

father or my mother; so should I explain it to you?' Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because

she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people.

So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: 'What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?' And he said to them 'If you had not

plowed with my heifer, You would not have solved my riddle!'

'Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who

had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man". (10 – 20)

That episode reveals to us the secret of what is written in the Holy Book: *"For his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord; that he was seeking an occasion to move against the philistines"* (4). The days of the banquet turned into mourning instead of joy; for his wife kept weeping on him, and kept asking him every day to explain to her the riddle he posed; The men, likewise, all the week long have been so confused and disturbed, that they finally had to threaten the miserable bride to burn her and her father's house with fire. The banquet came to an end by: *"On the seventh day he told her, And she explained the riddle to the sons of her people", and "Samson's anger was aroused, killed thirty men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. Then he went back to his father's house, and his wife was given to his companion, who had been his best man" (20).*

.....What a wedding!

But we should bear in mind the Book's confirmation that: *"The child (Samson) grew and the Lord blessed him; and the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him"* (13: 24, 25). When he killed the lion, it was said: *"The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart"* (14: 6); And when he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty men, it was said: *"The Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily" (???)*. If it was later said that the secret of his strength was in his long hair; it was because his hair referred to that being a Nazirite, his life was consecrated to the Lord. Yet his strength was not in his hair itself, but in being moved by the Spirit of the Lord. That was expressed by St. Augustine, saying: [The strength of Samson, beloved brethren, was from the grace of God more so than from nature; For if it was from nature, it would not have forsaken him when his hair was cut off. Where was his supernatural might, except in what the Holy

Book said: "*The Spirit of the Lord moved him*" (13: 25). His strength referred to the Spirit of the Lord; but Samson, himself, was no more than a vessel (that could be either empty or full; and has its own capacity). That is why the grace was commended when Paul the apostle was called "*a chosen vessel*" (Acts 9: 16).

Commenting on Samson's marriage to a pagan woman, setting a banquet, posing a riddle to his companions, and revealing its secret to the woman, St. Augustine says: [The woman whom Samson married is the church, who committed harlotry with the idols before recognizing the One God; with whom the Lord Christ later united. Anyway, having been enlightened, and received faith from Him, she was qualified to know the secrets of salvation, and of the heavenly hidden things. As to the riddle, saying: "*Out of the eater came something to eat; and out of the strong came something sweet*" (14); To whom does this refer, but to the Lord Christ Himself, risen from the dead?! Yes indeed, for out of the eater, namely out of death, who devoured and swallowed everything, came the food, namely Him who said: "*I am the bread which came down from heaven*" (John 6: 41). The Gentiles came to faith, and received the sweetness of life from Him who carried the bitter oppression of humanity; to whom it offered bitter vinegar to drink. So, out of the dead Lion, namely out of the death of the Lord Christ, who lied down like a lion, came a swarm of bees, namely the congregation of Christians. And when Samson said: "*If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle*" (18); this 'heifer' is the church, to whom the secret of our faith was proclaimed by her Man, and through the teachings and preaching of the apostles and the saintly fathers, the secrets of the Holy Trinity, the resurrection, the ultimate judgment, the kingdom of heaven, and the promise of the reward of eternal life, came to the end of the earth]

And commenting on the saying of the Holy Book: "*For three days they could not explain the riddle*" (14); and remained as such up till the seventh day, St. Ambrose says: [It was not possible to know the secrets, except by the faith of the

church in the seventh day; the time in which the law is consummated (the figure 7 symbolizes perfection), after the passions of Christ (namely three days after His burial). That is why, even the apostles could not understand, “*Because Jesus was not yet glorified*” (John 7: 39); they had to wait three days, during which Christ was buried, to be glorified by His cross and resurrection And on the seventh day, when the perfection of the law is proclaimed through the gospel of the Truth, they would come to perceive the secret through the church.

Finally, the banquet, by which the church (the woman) came to know the secrets, and declared it to the pagan world (the thirty men), to enjoy the “changes of clothing” of salvation through the water of baptism (for the figure 30 reminds us of the age at which the Lord Christ got baptized); was, itself, the secret of perdition of thirty foreigners and the confiscation of their changes of clothing. It is as though what man gets of grace and blessing through the work of the true Samson, and his banquet of salvation; are counted as perdition to the devil, and confiscation of his possessions which he had previously taken by force. After being the ‘Morning Star’, the possibilities of the devil were taken away; to make man enjoy heavenly possibilities, and to soar among the heavenly hosts. In the water of baptism, we enjoy the splendid changes of clothing; while the devil is denied his authority over us.

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CHAPTER 15

SAMSON'S WARS AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

Giving his wife to his companion triggered a series of fights by Samson against the Philistines who humiliated his people for many years.

1- Samson burns the fields of the Philistines with fire

16

2- Samson kills a thousand men of the enemy

8 - 17

3- Water came out from the hollow place that is in Lehi, for Samson to drink

18 – 20

“After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, “Let me go in to my wife, into her room. But her father

would not permit him to go in.

Her father said, “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. Is not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.” (1, 2)

A young goat was a common gift at that time (Genesis 38: 17; Luke 15 29).

Her father was wrong to hasten to give Samson's wife to his companion before she gets a divorce from Samson, or even before warning him; with the wrong assumption that her beautiful younger sister might make up for Samson's love for his wife. Anyway, that triggered Samson's anger, with the Spirit of the Lord dwelling upon him, to make war of revenge against his enemies.

"Samson said to them, 'This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!'. Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches,

turned the foxes tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. When he had set the torches on fire, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and

burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards and olive groves" (3 – 5)

Then the Philistines said, "Who has done this?". And they answered, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.

So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire" (6)

Considering burning his wife as a further insult, .

“Samson said to them, ‘Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease’” (7)

Commenting on this, St. Augustine says: [That companion who married Samson's wife, is a symbol of all heretics. It is indeed a great secret, O brethren. The heretics who intend to divide the church, wish to get married to the Lord's bride, and to take her away. Through their dissent from church and the gospels, by their evil, namely by their adultery, they attempt to acquire the church as their portion; Hence, Paul, the apostle, the faithful minister, and friend of the Lord's bride, says: *“For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11: 2); and with a jealousy of faith, he adds: *“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (Jesus)”* (Corinthians 11: 3)

Now let us see the secret work Samson has done when he was wronged by his companion in the person of his wife: He took the foxes, about which it is written in the book of the songs: *“Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines”* (Song 2: 15). Saying “catch”, he means (Judge or apply pressure on them) to keep them from corrupting the vines of the church. By saying: *“Catch the foxes”*, he means condemn the heretics by the authority of the divine law; hasten to chain them by the testimony of the Holy Book. What does he mean by turning the foxes tail to tail; and putting a torch between each pair of tails? What are the tails of the heretics, but the results they reached by their heresy. Those should be condemned, chained and burned with torches; for having corrupted the fruition and the good works of those who have fallen into their snares].

“So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam” (8)

“**Etam**”, A Hebrew name meaning (the dwelling place of the beasts of prey) is two miles South-east of Bethlehem in the land of Judah

Anyway, if we, together with Samson, reject any thought that may corrupt the church of God, and burn its tail with torches, to destroy the fruition of evil and the kingdom of the devil; it is befitting of us to flee to a cleft in the Rock, namely to the pierced side of the Lord Christ, the True Rock. Let us go to ‘Elam’ (the dwelling place of the beasts of prey), Let us enter into the wounds of Christ and take refuge in them.

“Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” So they answered,

“We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.” (9 – 10)

2- SAMSON KILLS A THOUSAND MEN OF THE ENEMY:

When Samson burned the fields of the Philistines and killed many of them, the men of Judah felt committed to deliver Samson into the hands of the Philistines who ruled over them, to avoid their wrath. They counted it better to have Samson die for the whole people; as though a symbol of the Lord Christ, about whom his

own said: *“It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish”* (John 11: 50).

“Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, ‘Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have

done to us?’. And he said to them, ‘As they did to me, so I have done to them’. But they said to him, ‘We have come down to arrest you, that we may deliver you into the

hand of the Philistines’.. Then Samson said to them, ‘Swear to me that you will not kill me yourselves’. So they spoke to him, saying, ‘No, but we will tie you securely and

deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you. And they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock” (11 – 13)

The way the men of Judah bound Samson by two new ropes, and delivered him to the enemies, without killing him, the Jews did to the lord Christ, after accusing Him of being an evildoer and a blasphemer.

“When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that

is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands” (14)

In this he was like the Lord Christ who, on the cross, confronted the enemies; and being, Himself, “the resurrection”, death could not take hold of him, nor Hades could **detain** Him. By His divinity, He broke loose the two ropes of death and Hades, and proclaimed breaking their authority off His believers, united to Him.

“He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it” (15)

What does this mean but that, man, who, through sin, came down to the irrational nature of animals; and death completely destroyed him, the Lord took hold of him anew, as though with a jawbone of a donkey, and provided him with the word of the living faith, by which he could kill the adversary evil hosts, or the work of the devil, symbolized by 'thousand evil men'.

Intending to belittle the defeated enemy, he Samson sang the song of conquest, saying::

““With the jawbone of a donkey, Heaps upon heaps, With the jawbone of a donkey I have slain a thousand men!” (16)

“And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi” (17)

4- WATER CAME OUT OF THE HOLLOW PLACE IN LEHI FOR SAMSON TO DRINK:

“Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, ‘You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall I die of thirst

and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?’. So God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit returned, and he revived.

Therefore he called its name En Hakkore which is in Lehi to this day” (18, 19)

According to some, Samson, here, play with words. Having called the place “Ramath Lehi”, he called the fountain from which God made water come out: “The hollow place” , namely (the tooth root canal). It is as though God brought out for him water from (the tooth root canal) in the jawbone of the donkey.

Killing a thousand evil men by the jawbone of a donkey, refers to the salvation work of the God, and the destruction of the hosts of the devil. The flow of water coming out of the hollow place, refers to what followed the salvation work on the cross, when the flow of the Holy Spirit came down to revive the soul, and to renew her in baptism.

Commenting on what Samson did by the jawbone, and on the water that came out of the hollow place, St, Augustine said:: [Samson killed a thousand men by a donkey jawbone. The Gentiles are likened to a donkey; the way the Holy Book

says about the Jews and the Gentiles: “*The ox knows its owner; and the donkey its master’s crib*” (Isaiah 1: 3). Before the coming of the Lord Christ, the devil tore the Gentiles apart into pieces, and scattered them like dry bones of a donkey. But when the Lord came – the true Samson -- He took hold of them all by His pure hands, repaired them by His power, and by them He brought awe on His adversaries. So are we, who have previously delivered our members to the devil, to be killed by him, The Lord Christ took hold of us, and turned us into “the righteousness of God”, despite our dryness, because we did not have the dew of God’s grace in us; He turned us into fountains and rivers. In the old, Samson prayed, and God split the hollow place that is in Lehi, and water came out; and the words of the Lord: “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*” (John 7: 38) were clearly fulfilled in us.

Finally, Samson called it “Ein Hakkore” (18), namely (the fountain of the prayer) as a memorial of his prayer to God, and His response to him.

. “*And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines*” (20)..

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CHAPTER 16

SAMSON AND DELILAH

If the Spirit of God has been with Samson for a long time, and granted him strength, Once Samson fell into love with Delilah, and laid his head on her knees, he lost the glory of his vow, was denied of his insight, and came to be a laughing stock of the enemy.

1- Samson in the house of a harlot	1 - 3
2- Samson's love for Delilah	4 - 5
3- Samson mocks Delilah and tells her lies	6 - 15
4- Samson reveals the secret of his strength to Delilah	16 - 17
5- Samson's fall	18 - 22
6- Samson dies	23 – 31

1- SAMSON IN THE HOUSE OF A HARLOT:

“Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her. When the Gazites were told, ‘Samson has come here’ they surrounded the place and lay in wait for

him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, 'In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him'. And Samson lay low till midnight; then he arose

at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put them on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the

hill that faces Hebron” (1 – 3)

Having been able to kill a thousand men by a jawbone of a donkey, Samson thought of going to Gaza, one of the greatest centers of the Philistines; to see a harlot there, with the assumption that, with the Spirit of the Lord, he could get in and out of it unharmed. . In that he did wrong, although, according to St. Augustine: [This action, with all its significances, represents a living portrait of the salvation work of the Lord, when He entered into Hades after His resurrection from the dead, to destroy its gates, and to grant His believers the power of His resurrection. According to St. Augustine, Samson would be wrong if going to the house of the harlot was for an ulterior reason, ; but it would be otherwise if his going there was as a prophet, bearing in his person a symbol of the Lord Christ.. He confirms that the Holy Book did not say that Samson had any relationship with the harlot, other than, just to spend the night in her house. His enemies laid in wait for him all night, at the city gates, to kill him in the morning, like the Roman guards did at the tomb of the Lord resurrected from the dead. But Samson, at midnight, took hold of the gate of the city, and the two gateposts, pulled them up and put on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill. If the harlot refers to the Synagogue who condemned the Lord to death; the Lord, is risen secretly after midnight, pulled up the city gates, namely the gates of the pit, the gates of death, and then ascended up to the top of the mountain; namely up to heaven.

If St. Augustine saw a symbolic aspect in this episode, yet, according to many of the church fathers, Samson did wrong by going to the house of a harlot to spend the night, whatever his motives were. According to St. Ambrose: [Samson, who had overcome the lion, could not overcome his evil desire. He who tore the of his enemies, could not tear the ropes of his lust..... He who burned the shocks and the standing grain of his enemies, was burnt by the fire of the forbidden lust kindled by a single woman]. Even St. Augustine does not completely justify his behavior, saying: [When Samson realized virtues and miracles, he was representing the Lord Christ, the Head of the church; and when he was acting with wisdom, he was a portrait of those who walk in the church with righteousness. But, once he was overcome by lust, and walked slothfully, he represented the sinners in the church].

2- HIS LOVE FOR DELILAH:

“Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, ‘Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver” (4 – 5)

If the Spirit of the Lord dwelt upon Samson in more than one occasion, and he carried out the role of successful leadership; Yet, once he fell in the love of Delilah, he completely collapsed. According to St. John Chrysostom,: [Many men,

like Samson perished in marriage, but not because of marriage itself, but because of their corrupt will]. And according to father Aphrahat: [The enemy fought against Samson through a woman, who robbed his vow].

“**Delilah**” is a Hebrew word meaning (a spoiled or a beloved woman); a name, according to many scholars, she carried when she grew up and became loved by men, and lived as a harlot. Having been a money-lover, when the five lords of the Philistines, princes of the five main cities: (Gath, Eshdod, Gaza, Eshkelon, and Ekron) came up to her, and promised, everyone of them will give her eleven hundred pieces of silver, if she delivered Samson to them, she consented. According to St. Ambrose: [Delilah’s love of money deceived Samson, the bravest of men, he who tore off a lion by his bare hands].

Delilah was raised in the Valley of Sorek, namely (in the Valley of select vine), known nowadays as ‘the Valley of Darar (of harm), which starts 13 miles west of Jerusalem, and extends to the Mediterranean Sea. There is, as well, another valley in the north called ‘The ruins of Sorek’.

3- SAMSON MOCKS DELILAH AND TOLD HER LIES:’

“So Delilah said to Samson, ‘Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you’.”(6, 10; and 13).

Like the lords of the Philistines, Delilah assumed that Samson carries his exalted strength, as a result of magic work, and once he loses it, he would lose his strength, comes to be as any other man. And could be overcome. That is why Delilah kept nagging him with her question to know his secret. On another

aspect, the Philistines were lying in wait in the house, waiting for Delilah to expose his secret to confront him after removing his supernatural strength.. Being aware, for sure, from the beginning, the goal of her question, Samson, also kept deceiving her. He should have left from house altogether, but his great love for her, namely, being enslaved to his lust toward her, made him slothfully sure that he could keep his secrets, and have his desire from her at the same time. Yet he could not resist long, soon fell into the snares of evil, and collapsed.

“And Samson said to her, ‘If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man’

So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in

the room. And she said to him, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson!’. But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret

of his strength was not known..

*Then Delilah said to Samson, ‘Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with’
So he said to her, ‘If they bind me*

securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man’. Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with

them, and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' And men were lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

Delilah said to Samson, 'Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me what you may be bound with'. And he said to her, 'If you weave the seven locks of

my head into the web of the loom'— So she wove it tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, 'The Philistines are upon you, Samson!' But he awoke from

his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom" (7 – 15).

Once he started to mention his hair, he came to be very close to revealing his secret.

1- SAMSON REVEALS THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH TO DELILAH;

" Then she said to him, 'How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength

lies.' And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her,

'No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak,

and be like any other man' (16 – 17)

"His soul was so vexed to death", having bowed down before the evil desires of his body, instead of being wide open with the divine love, to receive God and His creation inside herself. Now he could no more keep his spiritual secret, and revealed everything in his heart. About such a behavior, some of the fathers of the church, like St. Gregory the Neziaren, speaking of St. Athanasius the apostolic, as a pillar of the church, likened the oppression of the wicked against the church to what they did against Samson; when they saved his hair, the secret of his strength; and said: So did the wicked when they persecuted St. Athanasius, the strong shepherd who supports his people; for once they manage to shave the hair of the church, namely to take her glory off, they would utter evil against her.

And commenting on this, St. Augustine says: [Let us, beloved brethren, beware, as much as we can, lest we would spiritually suffer what Samson physically did. Let us understand the mind as being a symbol of the man (Samson), and the body, as a symbol of the woman (Delilah). If man brings himself into subjection to his body, and plunges in pleasures, he will suffer from his body as Samson did from the woman (Delilah). Therefore, beloved brethren, it is befitting of us, by the help of God, to strive to realize the saying of the apostle: *"I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified"* (1 Corinthians 9: 27). Let us then, by the help of God, beware of the enemy, who by his razor, shaved the head of mankind, when Adam and Eve were deceived by his tricks. Our Head is Christ. If we surrender to a woman, namely to the evil desires of the body; we will be denied of the spiritual

grace; and will be like one whose hair of his vow is shaved. There is a razor that cuts with a good purpose, and another that cuts with a harmful purpose; There is: the razor of healing, the grantor of beauty -- our Lord Christ, who cuts out of our hearts the harmful evil thoughts, shaves the transgressions from the soul; grants the mind beauty, liberates us from the dead hair of the miserable bondage, and makes our life holy and pure, when our hair of vow grow anew This first razor we should seek, while the second one we should reject and avoid.. The first honored razor is Christ; and the second deadly one is the devil. According to the apostle, Christ is our Head; and the hair are either virtues or iniquities. That is why when the prophet spoke about his sins, he said: "*Those who hate me without a cause, are more than the hair of my head*" (Psalm 69: 4). For the virtues and the iniquities are symbolized by the hair; and when we shave by Christ, we are liberated from all iniquities; while if we do by the devil, we are denied of all the virtues]. And he also says: [When man surrenders to an evil desire, or gets preoccupied with of evil pleasure, his body would do to him what Delilah did to Samson].

Again, according to St. Augustine: [What does it mean that Samson carried strength in his hair?..... Notice, brethren; he did not carry it in his hands, in his feet, in his chest, nor in his head, but in his What is hair? The apostle answers: "*Hair is a covering*" 1 Corinthians 11 15). Christ carried strength in the cover when He or took refuge under the shadow of the old law What does it mean that Samson's secret became the object of betrayal by Delilah, when his head was shaved? The law was despised, and Christ was crucified. If they did not despise the law (shaving the head), they would not have crucified Christ; for they knew that it was not their right to kill Him, when they said to the Roman Governor: "*It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death*" (John 18: 31)].

5- SAMSON'S FALL:

“When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, ‘Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart’..

So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him

shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, ‘The Philistines are upon you, Samson’!. So he awoke

from his sleep, and said, ‘I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!’ But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him”. (18 – 20)

Having surrendered to Delilah, and revealed to her his whole secret, “*she lulled him to sleep on her knees*”.This time the book did not say: “*the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*”, but he said, “*I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free*” (20). Once man delivers himself to the evil desires of his body that humiliate him, he loses God’s care for him, he goes out, shakes himself free, trusting in his own strength. So, the love of evil desires melds with the ‘ego’; and instead of setting forth by the Spirit of God to strive, he limits himself in the ‘ego’ on the knees of his evil desires.

The mighty one has fallen, not on the knees of Delilah, but on those of his temporal evil desires; for the sake of which he opened the door of debate with Delilah, as his early parents Adam and Eve did with he serpent; and did not prevail..... He should have closed the door of debate like what the

righteous Joseph did with the wife of Potiphar, when he openly and frankly said: “*How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (Genesis 39: 9), then fled without further debate, and ultimately prevailed by the power of God.

“Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison” (21)

“He did not know that the Lord had departed from him” (20). Once he lost the company of God, he lost the secret of his strength, fell down into humiliation, lost his vision, led to where he did not wish to go, bound with bronze fetters, become a grinder in the prison, like an animal, and become a laughing stock in the sight of the wicked, who used to fear him and be terrified of his name. Commenting on that, St. Augustine says: [Indeed, our enemy the devil strongly mocks the sinners, when they come to lose the grace of Jesus. as it happened when Samson lost his hair. He make them lose their vision, put them in prison, turn them into animals that go round and round grinding grain]. And he says: [Our Lord advised us through the prophet: “*Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding*” (Psalm 32: 9), lest we would fail to bring our neck into subjection under the yoke of Christ, and make it like a donkey, fit to go around in a grinder Man was truly honored, before he fell into iniquity; like when Samson has forsaken the wisdom and grace, and was punished by blindness and working as a grinder in prison. Man, therefore, will be qualified to practice the work of animals, if he denies himself the light of understanding.Whoever subjects himself to the evil desires of his body, through the lulling of the wicked women, will end up like animals, like a donkey or a mule, bound to a grinder. The soul that falls into evil desires, the eyes of her mind would be blinded through the corruption of life; and evil thought would go around in her mind, as though grinding in the grinder of evil desires, without vision, and led by others. Whoever walks in the way of the sinners, will be bound by the bronze fetters of his evil

desires, and will be in a prison full of the darkness of his sins.....His heart through holding fast to evil, will be as hard as the grinding stone, and will grind the grain of the enemy through the bone marrow of his life, to feed the enemy; while his own soul will be hungry and in need to be fed].

2- DEATH OF SAMSON:

“ Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said: Our god has delivered into our hands

Samson our enemy! When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said ‘Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy, The destroyer of our land,

And the one who multiplied our dead” (23 – 24)

They thought that it was their god ‘Dagon’ who delivered Samson their enemy into their hands, and did not perceive that Samson’s fall was a fruit of God’s departure from him, because of the corruption of his life by his relationship with Delilah. Anyway, Samson had to be chastised, to return to the Lord his God by his whole heart, when he tastes the fruit of his evil; And the pagan Philistines had to be chastised, as well, on their evil. For if God delivered Samson into their hands to mock him as they wish, that was to be only for some time, to return with a greater strength, to be counted as one of the men of faith.

“ So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, ‘Call for Samson, that he may perform for us’. So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them.

And they stationed him between the pillars” (25)

Who can imagine how the blind Samson, the conqueror of thousands, felt while grinding like animals in prison, and while performing to entertain his enemies, all because of a temporary lust and evil pleasure?. How he felt toward Delilah who delivered her body to him for some time, to deliver him ultimately to the depths of bondage and humiliation?

.”However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven” (22)

Feeling inside his heart that the Lord returned to him;

*“Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, ‘Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them’
Now the temple was full of men and women.*

All the lords of the Philistines were there—about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed” (26 – 27).

Perceiving amid his affliction that God is the secret of his strength; he did not, any more trust in himself, and say: *“I will go out as before, and shake myself free”* (20); but humbly cried out, saying:

“O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!”

He took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. Then said, ‘Let me die

with the Philistines!’ And he pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more

than he had killed in his life”

And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah.

He had judged Israel twenty years” (28 - 31).

Commenting on the final events in Samson’s life, St. Augustine says: [The prison and the grinding stone, are the work of this world; The blindness of Samson refers to those who were blinded by their denial, did not know Christ, nor experienced His authority and His ascension to heaven. It also refers to what befell the Jews, when they took hold of Christ and brought Him forth to death; and it so happened that He killed His killers. Samson’s enemies

brought him to perform as a clown before them..... Notice here the portrait of the cross. Stretching out his hands like the two boards of the cross; Samson overcame his enemies; for his sufferings became perdition to his persecutors; hence the book says: "*The dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life*" (30)]. St. Augustine also says: [This fact proclaims the secret of the passions of Christ; through which the house of the devil has fallen, and the kingdom of death was destroyed. Indeed, the temple that gathered together the Lords of the Philistines, symbolizes the kingdom of the devil (in it their god dagon was worshipped); and was said to be supported upon two pillars; which, undoubtedly are "greed" and "evil pleasures". For all wickedness emerge from these two evils; as it is written: "*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6: 10); and, the evil pleasures trouble the body (Proverb 11: 8). Samson refers to the Lord Christ, whereas the vicious Delilah refers to the Synagogue. Samson was trapped by Delilah, and the Lord Christ was persecuted and crucified by the Synagogue on the Golgotha. Samson being blinded, refers to the wicked Christians who believed in Christ, only for some time, but did not persist on their faith and good deedsSamson was put down in prison, and the Lord Christ descended to Hades;When Samson stretched his hands to take hold of the two pillars; the temple of the Philistines fell on the lords and all the people; and when the Lord Christ stretched His hands on the two horizontal boards of the cross, the house of the devil, namely his kingdom was cast down together with its angels].

According to St. Erinaos: [The lad who held Samson by hand, refers to John the Baptist who showed the people the way to the faith in Christ;While the temple where the Philistines gathered together, refers to the world, dwelt by a diversity of pagan nations that deny faith, and offer sacrifices to the idols;; And the two pillars refer to the two testaments of the Holy Book.Samson leaning on the two pillars refers to the people learning the secret of the Lord Christ (who destroys the idol-worship)].

THE THIRD SECTION

(TWO EVENTS DURING THE ERA OF THE JUDGES))

(AN ANNEX TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES)

- **THE CARVED IMAGE AND THE MOLDED IMAGE OF MICAH**
- **THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE**

The book of the Judges wrote to us about the dealings of God with His people all along the era of the twelve judges; and ended up by two serious events that took place during that **epoch**.: The first event: (the episode of “the carved and molded image of Micah”, that reveals the extent of the perversion of the people, on the level of the Levites as well as the Laics, toward idol-worship, mixed with the formality of the worship of the true God, in a futile attempt to calm down their conscience, and to put it at ease.And the second episode concerns “The Levite and his concubine”, that reveals the extent of the ethical corruption reached by the people, of evil desires, and violence, in an indescribable way.

CHAPTER 17

THE CARVED IMAGE AND MOLDED IMAGE OF MICAH

The divine inspiration presents to us this episode to reveal the extent of the spiritual blindness that dwelt upon the people. Intending to please the Lord, a certain woman, set an ephod and house idols in her house; Her son Micah sought from one of his sons to be a priest; until a young Levite came to visit them, and they hired him to be a priest in their house.

- 1- Setting a carved and mounded image in Micah's house 1 - 6
- 2- Micah hires a Levite to become his private priest 7 – 13

1- SETTING A CARVED AND MOULDED IMAGE IN MICAH'S HOUSE:

“Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, ‘The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears— here is the silver with me; I took it’ And his mother said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!”. So when he

had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, 'I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved

image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you'. Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave

them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod

and household idols;^[a] and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.. In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (1 – 6).

This episode happened before the days of Samson. It so seems that Micah was called 'Michio', meaning (Who is like Jehovah?), or 'Micael', meaning ((Who is like God?); According to the Jewish scholars, his name became 'Micah' for he worshipped the idols. His previous name indicates that his parents were godly, who believed that no one is like Jehovah; but his mother perverted to idol-worship, side by side of her worship of the living God; she made out of the idol an image of God; which contradicts with the name of her son.

It so seems that her son stole eleven hundred shekels from his rich mother; who cursed the thief. Not enduring to hear the curse by his own ears, her son came with the silver to his mother, confessing that he was the one who robbed her (1). She refused to return the silver to her safe. She dedicated it to the Lord, made a carved image and a molded image, and gave them to her son to put in a shrine in his house..... According to some, she did not mean them as idol-worship, but meant to worship the true God through the carved and the molded images. She thought that by so doing, she would take the curse away from her son, and make his house a sanctuary to the Lord. Micah, in his turn, made ephod , namely, an attire for a priest, and household idols; And consecrated one of his sons to become his priest (5), and gave him, as a priest, offerings to offer them to

the Lord. A priest was therefore set, not from the Lord, but from his own father. All that revealed the extent of the ignorance and foolishness of this family; that give an example of the general corruption; expressed by the verse, saying: *“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes”* (6).

If Micah set out of his silver a god for himself; and his son a priest on his own; Many among us up to the present days, intend to set gods on their own. Some, as said by the apostle Paul: *“whose god is their bellies: (Philippians 3: 19)*; and some had their gods their temporal honor, etc And some seek priests, not called by God to rightly define the word of truth, but seek then from their own children, to make them give the divine commandments to suit themselves; and to distort the truth to suit their evil desires.

2- MICAH HIRES A LEVITE TO BECOME HIS PRIVATE PRIEST:

The corruption was not confined to the common people, many of whom set teraphims in their houses, as gods, to worship the true God; namely the worship of the living God got mixed with idol-worship; But it even extended to the priests and the Levites, who forgot all about their mission, as men whose portion is the Lord, and their work is the ministry in the holy temple, on behalf of the whole congregation; and came out searching for profit; and seeking to be hired by the people as their private priests for wages.. In the days of Nehemiah they worked in the fields (Nehemiah 13: 1). The leaven that should have borne within it the work of God to leaven the whole dough, got preoccupied with the issues of the world, and became up for hire, not to the account of God, but to that of their bellies. Among those Levites:

“ there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there. ⁸ The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah

to stay wherever he could find a place. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. ⁹ And Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?

So he said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay .”Micah said to him, “Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me,

and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.” So the Levite went in. ¹¹ Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young

man became like one of his sons to him. ¹² So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. ¹³ Then Micah said, “Now I

know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!” (7 – 13)

Micah counted himself happy to have a live-in private priest, instead of his son before him (5). And the young Levite found it a lucky break, in such difficult circumstances in which the Levites lived. Micah rejoiced to have his own gods, Ephod, and priest A painful portrait of the corruption that dwelt upon Israel in those days, as a fruit of their mixing with the pagans and partaking of their worship, disregarding the divine law.



CHAPTER 18

TAKING AWAY BY FORCE THE TWO IDOLS OF MICAH AND THE PRIEST

If the story of Micah, hiring the young Levite, reveals what dwelt upon Israel of spiritual blindness on the level of the individual and the families; The story of the tribe of Dan, taking away by force the idols of Micah and the priest living with him, reveals what is worst, which is that the blindness has dwelt on the level of the whole congregation, on the level of the tribes; when the tribe of Dan intended to have for themselves a god, and a priest, even by force.

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|--|--------|
| 1- The tribe of Dan seek an inheritance | 1 - 2 |
| 2- The spies in Micah's house | |
| 3 - 6 | |
| 3- The spies return to Eshtaol | 7 - 10 |
| 4- The Danites take away Micah's Ephod and the priest by force | |
| 11 - 26 | |
| 5- The Danites settle in Laish | 27 – |
| 31 | |

1- THE TRIBE OF DAN SEEKS AN INHERITANCE:

“ In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the

tribes of Israel had not fallen to them” (1)

“In those days there was no king in Israel”; That was after the death of Joshua, at the beginning of the era of the Judges. Rejecting God as their king, and having no earthly king, ***“everyone did what was right in his own eyes”*** (17: 6), on the individuals, families, and the tribes level; there was no leader, seer, nor a counselor. At that time the children of Dan saw that the portion which was given to them as an inheritance was counted as nothing, compared to their huge number; and ***“until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen yo them”***

“So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, “Go, search

the land.” So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there” (2)

2- THE SPUES IN MICAH’S HOUSE:

“While they were at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, ‘Who brought you here? What are you doing in this

place? What do you have here?’ He said to them, ‘Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest’ So they said to him, ‘Please inquire of God,

that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous’ And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way’.” (3 – 6)

The spies probably recognized the young Levite (3), because of a previous encounter in Bethlehem, for his way of talk as a Levite, or they heard him ministering in Micah’s house, and knew that he was a priest; or he might have passed before by them seeking work. They sought from him to inquire from God concerning their mission, and he gave them the answer they hoped for. It is a portrait that reveals the simplicity of many, yet without wisdom nor spiritual understanding..... They long to be delivered into the hands of God, and thirst for taking refuge in Him; but their partnership with the pagans has corrupted their minds.

1- THE SPIES RETURN TO ESHTAOL:

Considering the words of the young Levite, that was more like a blessing and encouragement, was to them as a divine council, and a prophecy, they set forth to Laish (meaning a lion); (Leshem), known nowadays as ‘Tel El-Kadi’, was a Canaanite town in the northern part of Philistine, in Valley of Beth-Rehob;

If ‘Laish’ means (a lion); although it represents the kingdom of the devil that carry a terrifying name, yet is actually very weak, without a true king, nor anyone to support it.

I wish we have no fear of the devil, nor be disturbed by him; for he only seem terrifying by deception; but if we hold fast to our crucified Lord Jesus, we can force our way into his kingdom, to find him very weak. About that St. John Chrysostom says: [The devil is not the cause of our sufferings, if we are aware of him;The weak of will, the lazy, and those who are not ready, will fall, even if there was no devil; they will fall by themselves in the depth of evil]; And he also says: [Do not fear the devil, even though he is a spirit without a body; for nothing is weaker than him who cannot have authority on us without being allowed by God].

2- THE DANITES TAKE AWAY MICAH'S EPHOD AND PRIEST BY FORCE:

“So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers

in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.

Then the spies came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, “What is your report?” So they said, “Arise, let us go up against them. For we

have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land. When you go, you will come to a secure people

and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth.”

“And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war” (7 -11)

It was the custom for the men of war to go to war to conquer, then they go back to bring their families to possess. But those men, so despised the inhabitants of Laish that they counted possessing it a matter of fact that need no battle nor effort; they therefore, took with them their women, children, and goods to possess.

It is a living portrait of the spiritual strife, when man, as a warrior (with a strong spirit), sets forth, and with him his wife (his body), his children (his spiritual fruition), and all his goods (his energies) To take over the place which was dwelt before by the devil, to settle down to reign with his spirit, body, and his spiritual fruition, and all his holy possibilities.

“Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There it is, west of Kirjath Jearim)” (12).

“Kirjath Jearim”, namely (village of the forests), one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9: 17), on the border of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15: 9, 10; 18: 14, 15), called (the village of Baal), a portion of Judah; most probably nowadays (the village of grapes), called ‘Abaghosh’, 9 miles west of Jerusalem.

They dwelt in that village for some time, to be called ‘Mahalet Dan’ by their name (12), probably on the border or behind the limits of the village; for it was the custom of the authors to call the east (in front), the West (behind), the North (the left), and the south (the right).

“And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah”

Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols,

a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.” So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man—to the

house of Micah—and greeted him. The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. Then the

five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at

the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men who were armed with weapons of war.

When these went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” And

they said to him, “Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or

that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?” So the priest’s heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place

among the people” (13 – 20).

A painful portrait of the concepts of the people in those days; as well as that of the priest whose heart became glad (20) to know that he will be a priest to a large congregation rather than to be a priest to one household. The priest took his place among the people to take refuge against Micah’s household. He found what would satisfy his own greed; and whom would protect him from men; but not what would satisfy his depths, nor what would take away his shame.

“Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them” (21)

They walked as carnal men; for the spiritual man would go forth by the spirit ahead of his body (his wife) and his gifts (his children). The spiritual man would walk with his body under the subjection of the spirit; not to have the body go ahead of him; and the spirit submit to the evil desires of the body, or proud with the gifts (the children)

“When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. And they

called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, ‘What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?’

So he said, ‘You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, ‘What ails you?’”

And the children of Dan said to him, 'Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!'

Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house" (22 – 26)

5- THE DANITES SETTLE IN LAISH:

"So they took the things Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge

of the sword and burned the city with fire. There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone.

It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father,

who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly was Laish (27 – 29)

They set forth to ;Laish', namely to (the lion), rebuild it anew, and called it 'Dan' They represent the believer who descends into the water of baptism, so that, by the crucified Lord Christ, he would destroy the devil, and take his evil works off himself, as though burn it with fire, to bear the new man, after the image of his Creator. And instead of 'Laish' which belongs to the devil, he sets

'dab', that refers to the condemnation of sin by the cross, and through the burial of our Lord Jesus.

“Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan

until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah’s carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh” (30 – 31)

It was befitting, however, of the children of Dan, having burned 'Laish' with fire, and built 'Dan' instead, to live for the Lord; but, unfortunately, they set up for themselves the carved imageBy that they represent the believers who, after enjoying the new man, they perverted to sin, away from the godly life of faith, to live according to their evil desires.

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CHAPTER 19

THE LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE

If the episode of the two carved and molded images of Micah, reveals the blindness of the insight that dwelt upon the people, not just on the individual level, but upon that of the whole congregation, who assumed that they bring pleasure to God by setting ephods, Teraphims, and having priests, even those who belong to the tribe of Levi, and even if that is done by force and stealing; The present episode of a Levite and his concubine, with whom his brethren, (the sons of Belial) committed evil all the night long until dawn, and she came to fall down dead at the door of her master; reveals the horror of the ethical corruption that dwelt upon them at that time.

1- A traveler Levite and his concubine

1 - 10

2- The Levite turns aside to lodge in Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin

11 – 30

1- A TRAVELER LEVITE AND HIS CONCUBINE:

The concubine was counted as a legitimate wife, even though in a lesser level than the regular one; for she was most probably a slave bought with a price, or a captive of war.

“ And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a

concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father’s house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was

there four whole months. Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him.

So she brought him into her father’s house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. Now his father-in-law, the young woman’s

father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman’s father said to his son-in-law, ‘Refresh your

heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way’.

So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman’s father said to the man, ‘Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart

be merry’ And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart,

but the young woman's father said, 'Please refresh your heart'. So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate.

And when the man stood to depart—he and his concubine and his servant—his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing

toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may

get home'." (1 – 9).

2- THE LEVITE TURNS ASIDE TO LODGE IN GIBEAH WHICH BELONGS TO BENJAMIN:

"However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys;

his concubine was also with him. They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, 'Come, please, and let us turn aside into this

city of the Jebusites and lodge in it'. But his master said to him, 'We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to

Gibeah'. So he said to his servant' 'Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah'. And they passed by and went their

way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down

in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night..

Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the

place were Benjamites.. And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, 'Where are you going, and where

do you come from?' So he said to him, *'We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem*

in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys,

and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything' , And the old man said, 'Peace

be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square.' So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder

to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank..

The crime of the people of Gibeah:

As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the

house, the old man, saying, 'Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!'

But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, 'No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my

house, do not commit this outrage. Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's^J concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as

you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!' But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And

they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.

Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was, till it was light. When her master arose in the

morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold.

And he said to her, 'Get up and let us be going'. But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place" (10 – 28)

If the concubine previously committed evil by her own will, for the sake of her own body pleasure, Now she dies because of the same sin; her evil desire became for her the sting of death. Having her hands stretched on the threshold, was a sign of crying out to her man, who, in cowardice, brought her out to the perverted men to abuse her all night long, so that he, himself, would sleep in peace inside the house. She was as though addresses his human conscience, in a way that would never go away from his memory all the days of his life.

"When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel" (29). .

His great anger made him commit such a horrible act, to stir up all Israel;

..

"And so it was that all who saw it said, 'No such a deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day; consider it,

confer, and speak up" (30)

It was indeed a bitter episode that reveals the extent of horror and violence that dwelt upon the people at that time.

In a newsletter to the bishops, writing about the bitterness that dwelt upon the church because of the Arian heresy, Pope St. Athanasius the apostolic, found no other analogy to the sufferings through which the church was going through, but to say that the church's suffering is greater than that of the Levite concerning his wife; for the latter was harmed in one person – his wife; whereas what Arius has done harmed the faith of the whole church.



CHAPTER 20

A WAR AGAINST THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

As every tribe of Israel received a part of the body of the wife of the Levite, and heard what the people of 'Gibeah' committed with her, all were stirred up against them.

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|---|---------|
| 1- All Israel stirred up against Gibeah | 1 - 13 |
| 2- Israel defeated twice before Benjamin | 14 – 28 |
| 3- Benjamin ultimately defeated before Israel | 29 – 48 |

1- ALL ISRAEL STIRRED UP AGAINST GIBEAH:

“So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the

LORD at Mizpah. And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot

soldiers who drew the sword”

Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. Then the children of Israel said, 'Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?'

So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, 'My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night

And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that

she died. So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness

and outrage in Israel. Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!' (1 – 7)

The law says that *"If it is true that such an abomination is committed among you, you shall surely kill these men, and strike the inhabitants of this city with the edge of the sword will be utterly; and completely burn with fire the city, for the Lord your God; It shall be heap forever; it shall not be built again"* Deuteronomy 13: 14 – 17). But it so happened that the children of Benjamin intended to defend their own, a dissension happened within the congregation; and a multitude of men were lost. They did not think about the bitter fruition of corruption; Their reasoning was material; despite their relative few number, they saw themselves, being mighty warriors, as capable of standing against the whole nation of Israel (1 Chronicles 12: 2

How great it would be for man to be open-minded with himself; to cut off the evil inside him whatever the price is; not to trust in his temporal possibilities, but to seek the blessing of the Lord, who dwells in the holy hearts, and embraces those returning to Him.Let us take away the (sons of Belial) from ourselves, not for fear of any one, but to consecrate our souls for the Lord.

“So all the people arose as one man, saying, ‘None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah:

We will go up against it by lot. We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out

of every ten thousand, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel’.

So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man”.(8 – 11)

1- ISRAEL DEFEATED TWICE BEFORE BENJAMIN:

“Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, ‘What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? Now therefore, deliver up the men,

the perverted men who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!. But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel.

Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel. And from their cities at that time the children

of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men. Among all this people

were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss.

Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war" (12 - 17)

It is interesting to know that in the tribe of Benjamin (the name in Arabic means the son of the right hand), this considerable number of left-handed men ..

The children of Israel seek the counsel of the Lord:

“Then the children of Benjamin arose and went up to the house of the Lord to inquire of God. “They said, ‘Which of us shall go up first to battle against the

children of Benjamin?’. The LORD said, ‘Judah first!’. So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. And the men of Israel

went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah. Then the children of Benjamin

came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites. And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged

themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day.

Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I again draw near for battle against

the children of my brother Benjamin?’ And the LORD said, ‘Go up against him’. So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second

day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all

these drew the sword.

Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until

evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God was

there in those days,²⁸ and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those

days), saying, 'Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?' And the LORD said, 'Go up, for tomorrow I will

deliver them into your hand'." (18 – 28)

Why was Israel defeated twice against Benjamin; although they inquire from the Lord?

- (1) Most probably because Israel did not seek the counsel of the Lord before hand, from the depths of their hearts; but practiced it as a form of formality, after they had already prepared themselves for war, and taken their decision; saying: "*None of us will go to his tent; nor will any turn back to his house*" (9); and cast a lot; and chose one tenth of them to go to war.....Their inquiry from the Lord was only a secondary complimentary act. God did not occupy

the first position in their life, to ask His counsel with contrition and humility.

(2) Their question in the first time was: “*Which of us shall go up first to battle against my brother Benjamin?*”. They have already taken the decision to fight against their brother, and it remained for them to ask who will go up first to war!..... It was befitting of them first to ask whether they should go up to war; for then, the Lord would probably counsel them to take another action, by which to take corruption away without blood-shedding).

(3) In the two first two times, the Lord did not say: ‘*I will deliver them into your hand*’. Although He allowed them to go to war, yet He did not promise them to have conquest; on account of that, although it was the children of Benjamin who committed that horrible sin; yet, as corruption has crawled into all the tribes; Israel, as a whole had to be chastised, so that if they present a true repentance to God, He would then chastise the children of Benjamin. God does not seek our cry-outs, even if it lasts the whole day long; but seeks first our repentance and our return to Him. If our depths are consecrated, He would respond to our hidden cry-outs, and to our secret sighs of the heart.

I wish we are not like those tribes who became full of anger against the corruption of the others, while not caring for the corruption that crawled into their own life; even if the corruption of the others was more horrible, compared to their hidden or manifest sins. In other words, I wish Israel purifies what is inside them; before God would take away the corruption of the others,

2- BENJAMIN ULTIMATELY DEFEATED BEFORE ISRAEL:

Having been chastised in the first two times, and humbled themselves before God, Israel set forth to go to war this time in the third day from the start of the war (29). As we know, the third day refers to our enjoyment of the power of the resurrection of the Lord Christ. No victory over sin, nor conquest over the hosts of darkness, except through the enjoyment of the resurrection of our Lord inside us.

“Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array

against Gibeah as at the other times. So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill

some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. And the

children of Benjamin said, ‘They are defeated before us, as at first’. But the children of Israel said, ‘Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways’. So all

the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel’s men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba.

And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce.

The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. And the men in ambush quickly

rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the

men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to

strike and kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, 'Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle'. But when the cloud began to rise from the city in

a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven. And when the men of Israel turned back, the men

of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but

the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst.

They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin

fell; all these were men of valor. Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then

they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them.

So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor. But six hundred men turned and fled toward the

wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months

And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found.

They also set fire to all the cities they came to” (29 – 48)

The casualties of the war were:

From Israel, 40,000 fell during the first two days, plus 30 men in the third day.

From Benjamin 25,000 men of valor; of which 18, 000 were killed in war; 5000 in the wilderness; 2000 at the Rock of Rimmon, (Rock of the Pomegranates) ; a

total of 25, 000, or more accurately 25, 100 (35). And the 600 men who turned out and fled toward the wilderness, to the Rock of Rimmon, where they stayed for four months; might have been spared by the children of Israel, as a despise of their few number. Benjamin lost all their men, whether killed or fled away. That was the fruition of sin and corruption.



CHAPTER 21.

BITTERNESS AND REMORSE IN ISRAEL

As the whole tribe of Benjamin were completely destroyed, Israel felt bitterness and remorse for losing one out of the twelve tribes.

1- Bitterness and remorse in Israel

1 - 15

2- The elders of Israel said: "There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin 16 – 25

1- BITTERNESS AND REMORSE IN ISRAEL:

Even though Israel defeated Benjamin, but their souls remained bitter, for feeling that they have lost one of their twelve tribes, of whom only 600 men of valor were fugitives in the Rock of Rimman.

Having "*sworn an oath at Mispah, saying: 'None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife'*" (1) By that they condemned the whole tribe to be wiped out of existence.

“Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, and said, ‘O LORD God of Israel

why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe missing in Israel’?

And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, ‘One tribe is cut off from Israel today. What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we

have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?’”

“So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. The children of Israel said, ‘Who is there

among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?’ For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD

at Mizpah, saying, ‘He shall surely be put to death’. And they said, ‘What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?’ And, in fact,

no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there.

So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, 'Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge

of the sword, including the women and children. And this is the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately'

So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is

in the land of Canaan".(2 – 12)

2- THE ELDERS OF ISRAEL SAID, 'THERE MUST BE AN INHERITANCE FOR THE SURVIVORS OF BENJAMIN:

Planning for a way to go around their vow, and solve the problem of the children of Benjamin,

"Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. So Benjamin came back at that time,

and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them. And the people grieved for Benjamin,

because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel".

“Then the elders of the congregation said, ‘What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?’ And they said, ‘There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin’ Then they said, ‘In fact, there is a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah’. Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, “Go, lie in wait in the vineyards,²¹ and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of Benjamin.²² Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, ‘Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for it is not as though you have given the women to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath’. And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught.

Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance” (13 – 24).

And the book came to an end by the verse, saying:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (25)

As though the goal of this book is to proclaim the corruption of the heart of man, and his desire, not for freedom for the sake of God, but for freedom to do what was right in his own eyes.

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