

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

II.

WE come now to the second division of the book (ii. 6-xvi.), its central and principal part, comprising the history of the "Judges," properly so called. This consists essentially of a series of older narratives, fitted into a framework by a later editor, or redactor, and provided by him, where necessary, with introductory and concluding remarks. This editor, or redactor, is imbued strongly with the spirit of Deuteronomy. His additions exhibit a phraseology and colouring different from that of the rest of the book; all contain the same recurring expressions, and many are cast in the same type or form of words, so that they are recognisable without difficulty. Thus the history of each of the six greater Judges is fitted into a framework as follows—the details vary slightly, but the general resemblance is unmistakable: iii. 7-11, "And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, . . . and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, . . . and the children of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years; . . . and the children of Israel cried unto Yahweh, and he raised up unto them a saviour, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, . . . and Yahweh delivered Cushan-rishathaim into his hand . . .; and the land had rest forty years." The scheme is similar in the case of Ehud (iii. 12-15, 30), Barak (iv. 1-3; v. 31 *end*), Gideon (vi. 1, 2*a*, 6*b*; viii. 28), Jephthah (x. 6-7, 10; xi. 33*b*; xii. 7), Samson (xiii. 1; xv. 20; xvi. 31 *end*). In all—except in the case of Samson, in which the introduction, especially, is much shorter than in the other cases—we have the same succession of apostasy, subjugation, the cry for help, and deliverance, described

often in the same, always in similar, phraseology. Let the reader notice how frequently at or near the *beginning* and *close* of the narrative of each of the greater Judges the following expressions occur: *did that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh, sold* ¹ *or delivered them into the hand of . . . , cried unto Yahweh, subdued, and the land had rest . . .* (see the passages just quoted).² It is evident that in this part of the book a series of older, independent narratives has been taken by the compiler and arranged by him in a framework, designed with the purpose of stating the chronology of [the period, as he conceived it (for it cannot be historical), and exhibiting a theory of the occasion and nature of the work which the Judges generally were called to undertake. In the case of the six minor Judges (Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon) detailed particulars were probably not accessible to the compiler; hence the narratives are much briefer, though here also they show much mutual similarity of literary form (iii. 31; x. 1-2, 3-5; xii. 8-10, 11-12, 13-15).

To this history of the Judges, ii. 6-iii. 6 forms the introduction. This introduction deals with *three* subjects:—

(1) ii. 6-10. The transition from the period of Joshua to that of the Judges, and the change by which, in the judgment of the compiler, it was marked. Here *vv.* 6-9 are identical [substantially with [Joshua xxiv. 28, 31, 29, 30, only one verse being in a different position: *v.* 10 is new. Thus:—

¹ This figure is almost peculiar to the compiler of this book (ii. 14; iii. 8; iv. 2; x. 7) and to the kindred author of 1 Sam. xii. 9; cf. also Deut. xxxii. 30 (in the Song). It is used rather differently in the older narrative (Judges iv. 9), though its use by the compiler may have been suggested by this passage.

² In the *Century Bible* the passages due—or due mainly (for some almost certainly include older elements)—to the compiler are indicated by the letter D.

JOSH. xxiv. 28, 31, 29, 30.

²⁸ And Joshua sent the people away,
every
man to his inheritance.

³¹ And Israel served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and who had known all the work of Yahweh, which he had wrought for Israel. ²⁹ And it came to pass after these things, and Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being an hundred and ten years old. ³⁰ And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash.

JUDGES ii. 6-10.

⁶ And Joshua sent the people away, and the children of Israel went every
man to his inheritance to possess the land.

And the people served Yahweh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Yahweh, which he had wrought for Israel. ⁹And

Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died, being an hundred and ten years old, ⁹And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. ¹⁰ And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers : and there arose another generation after them, which knew not Yahweh, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel.

Judges ii. 6 is rendered in A. V., R. V., " Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance," etc. This paraphrase is illegitimate. The Hebrew is exactly the same as in Joshua xxiv. 28 ; the verb cannot be grammatically rendered as a pluperfect, and it implies that what is described took place *after* the events narrated in Judges i. 1-ii. 5. This is obviously inconsistent with Judges i. 1, as it now stands, including the words *after the death of Joshua*. The passage forms in Joshua xxiv. a suitable conclusion to the history of Joshua ; in Judges ii. it forms, with *v.* 10, a suitable introduction to the history of the Judges. In our ignor-

ance of the precise manner in which the books were compiled, it is impossible to say with confidence how the duplication arose. All that is clear is that it was by some oversight either inserted here, or left here, after the introduction of the words *and it came to pass after the death of Joshua* in i. 1 had really made it out of place. The passage consists of an excerpt from an older narrative, *vv.* 6, 8, 9 (=Josh. xxiv. 28, 29, 30), amplified in *v.* 7 (=Josh. xxiv. 31), and *v.* 10, by a later, Deuteronomic hand.

(2) ii. 11–19. The compiler's theory of the history of the period, which he intends to be illustrated by the narratives following. The principles by which the course of the history is explained are the same as those which re-appear in the introductions to the several narratives: apostasy, provoking Yahweh's anger, and leading to subjugation; subjugation, producing misery which moves Yahweh to raise up a judge to deliver them; then, after the judge is dead, a fresh lapse into idolatry, resulting in a recurrence of the same cycle of consequences.

(3) ii. 20–iii. 6. This section deals with a different subject, viz., why the conquest of Canaan was incomplete, and why various nations remained in and around Canaan to vex and harass the Israelites. To this question *three* answers are given: the nations in question were left, viz. :—

(a) As a punishment for Israel's disloyalty to Yahweh (ii. 20–21).

(b) As a trial of Israel's fidelity, to "prove" Israel, whether it would remain faithful to Yahweh or not (ii. 22; iii. 1a, 3, 4).

(c) As a wise appointment of Yahweh, in order that succeeding generations of Israelites, not less than the invaders themselves, might have experience of war, and so be able to hold their own against their foes (ii. 23; iii. 2).

In this section, the connexion of thought is often so

imperfect,¹ and the reasons assigned for the incomplete conquest of Canaan are so dissimilar, and at the same time so imperfectly co-ordinated with one another, that the whole cannot be the work of the compiler; and we are authorised in the inference that he has incorporated in his work older materials—possibly also that his work has in parts been glossed. The case is, however, one in which the exact limits of the passages belonging to the different sources cannot be certainly determined.² It is hardly necessary to remark that naturally this uncertainty does not neutralise the obvious indications that the section is not homogeneous, or alter the fact that it contains the three independent representations pointed out above.

In the compiler's representation of the subjects of both ii. 11–19 and ii. 20–iii. 6 there are, now, unhistorical elements. (1) In his theory of the period, like other Deuteronomic writers (see the last paper), he generalises to a degree beyond what is historically probable, and that in two respects. (a) The judges were clearly *local* heroes—Ehud, for instance, delivers Benjamin, Barak the northern tribes, Gideon Ephraim, and Jephthah the Israelites on the east of Jordan: but they are represented by the compiler as ruling the *whole* of Israel. It is the “children of Israel,” absolutely, who do evil in the sight of Yahweh, and are delivered by the judge, not particular tribes only; even the minor judges are described regularly as judging “Israel” (xii.

¹ Notice in particular that ii. 23 cannot be the original sequel of either *vv.* 20–21 or of *vv.* 20–22: the fact that the Canaanites were not delivered “into the hand of Joshua” (*v.* 23) cannot be a consequence of what happened *after Joshua's death*, viz., of Yahweh's resolution, on account of Israel's transgression, not to drive out any more of the nations which “Joshua left when he died” (*v.* 21).

² Père Lagrange, for instance (*Le livre des Juges*, 1903, pp. 39 f., 44) connects iii. 1 with iii. 2 (considering the “proof” spoken of in iii. 1 to be a proof of Israel's *military* efficiency), and finds the test of Israel's fidelity in ii. 22, 23, iii. 4 (which he regards as a series of glosses, introduced into the text by a later hand).

7-15). (b) As was pointed out long ago by the late Professor Davidson (EXPOSITOR, Jan., 1887, pp. 48-50¹), the regular succession of apostasy, subjugation, cry for help, and deliverance, is not history, but a theoretical explanation of history, applied on a scale larger than is historically probable. It is of course true that Israel's unity and national strength depended upon Yahweh: "that which made it a people was its God: its feeling of Him made it feel itself a people"; the antithesis between it and the nations lay in Him: its sense that Yahweh was its God inspired it with national sentiment, and kindled in it ardour for the national well-being (Judges v.). It is equally true that when its faith was weakened, and it followed "other gods," its national strength decayed and it fell a prey to its neighbours: but these principles, though true in themselves, are applied by the compiler of Judges on a scale larger than is historically probable or consistent with human nature; he speaks of Israel as a *unity*; but "a falling away of a whole people to Baal, and then a conversion to Jehovah, to be followed by a falling away again twenty or forty years afterwards, is not after the manner of history or according to the operations of the human mind."² The compiler attributes to the nation at large defections which in reality were only partial, and probably, even so, much less extensive than he represents. He reads the history from a religious point of view; and regards the subjection and deliverance of Israel as the direct consequences of their apostasy and penitence, respectively. It is the compiler's mode of accounting for, and explaining, the vicissitudes through which the nation passed during the

¹ = *Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 30-32. This article and pp. 16-39 of the *Theology* are evidently merely slightly divergent recensions of one and the same lecture.

² *Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 31.

period of the Judges. This tendency to regard prosperity as resulting directly from piety, and reverses from wickedness, appears in a more fully developed form in the pragmatism of the Chronicler.¹

Then, secondly, the fact that so many Canaanites remained in Yahweh's land no doubt perplexed Hebrew thinkers. The natural explanation is that suggested in chap. i.: the Canaanites were superior to the Hebrews in strength and military resources; they had chariots of iron and fortresses, which the Israelites could not successfully attack. With this military inferiority to the Canaanites the cause assigned in ii. 1b-5a may have co-operated: the Israelites were too ready to come to terms with the Canaanites, and might have expelled more of them than they actually did. But in addition to these two historical explanations, there are given also three moral, or theological, explanations: these nations, viz., were suffered to remain (1) as a punishment for Israel's forsaking Yahweh; (2) for the purpose of testing Israel's fidelity to its religion; and (3) in order that succeeding generations of Israelites might have the needed opportunities for learning the art of war. As has been already pointed out, these three explanations cannot all come from a single hand: elements from older sources have been combined and amplified by the compiler without being perfectly adjusted or harmonised.

The third part of the Book consists of chaps. xvii.-xxi. This comprises two narratives, not describing the exploits of any judge, but relating two incidents belonging to the same period of history. Chaps. xvii.-xviii. describe the origin of the northern Dan, with its famous shrine and oracle. It is a remarkable narrative, presenting a vivid

¹ See the art. CHRONICLES in the *Encycl. Biblica*, col. 770; or the present writer's *Introduction*, p. 526.

picture of life and habits in Israel at the time. The tribe, or clan (xviii. 2, 11) of Dan, unable to obtain a fixed home in their provisional settlement about Zorah and Eshtaol—both visible on the left hand of the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem, as the train begins to climb slowly up through the Shephélah to the high central ground of Palestine—in Samson's country, some 15 miles west of Jerusalem, send out five men, as spies, to find if possible a new dwelling-place. On their way they pass the house of Micah, in the hill country of Ephraim, and consult his oracle; encouraged by the answer, "Go in peace: before Yahweh is your way on which ye are going," they proceed, and find an isolated and unguarded Phœnician town in the far north of Canaan—most probably the modern Tell el-Kadi, standing on a mound close to one of the principal sources of the Jordan, about four miles west of Bāniās. They return home, and report accordingly. Six hundred men are then sent out to seize Laish. On their way they pass Micah's house: in spite of his pleading remonstrance, "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and are gone away, and what have I more? and how then say ye unto me, What aileth thee?" they carry off his image and priest, capture Laish, put the inhabitants to the sword, settle there, and set up the image, where it remains till much later times, served by a priesthood which claimed descent from Moses. As in Deborah's song Dan is already in its northern home, the episode must belong to the early part of the period. It thus introduces us to an archaic stage of Israelite history. We wonder whether we have a type of the manner in which other tribes gained, or enlarged, their territory. We remember the advice given by Joshua to the house of Joseph in Joshua xvii. 15, "If thou be a great people, get thee up into the forest, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim." A private

person, moreover—like Gideon afterwards (viii. 27)—has a “house of gods,” or shrine, with its instruments of divination, “the ephod and the teraphim” (xvii. 5), evidently esteemed in the neighbourhood (cf. xviii. 22–23, where Micah’s neighbours gather together, pursue the body of Danites, and endeavour to recover the image and the priest who tended it); a priest is needed to serve it: a man could consecrate one of his sons, if necessary, but a “Levite” was preferred; a fixed annual salary is paid him; and Micah expresses his satisfaction at securing one who happened to be moving about in Ephraim at the time, in the words, “Now know I that Yahweh will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest” (xvii. 13). But the “Levites” at this time are not all members of one tribe: Micah’s Levite belongs to the “family of Judah” (xvii. 7); the term seems thus to denote a member not of a tribe, but of a *profession*¹; a “Levite” belonged to a guild, the members of which possessed the traditional religious lore, and especially the art of using and interpreting the oracle. No disapproval appears to be expressed by the narrator for what Micah instituted and maintained.

The second appendix (chaps. xix.–xxi.) describes the outrage at Gibeah—now *Tell el-Fûl*, three miles north of Jerusalem,² the subsequent war against Benjamin, and the means ultimately adopted to prevent the tribe from being exterminated. Again a wandering Levite, sojourning temporarily in Ephraim (xix. 1), is brought before us, and he is the principal figure in chap. xix. This chapter is clear, and evidently ancient; and it occasions no difficulty. The case is different in chaps. xx.–xxi., especially in chap.

¹ Cf. McNeile, *Exodus*, pp. 26 (on Exod. iv. 14), lxvi., lxvii.

² Notice the precise indications of its site: a little north of Jerusalem (xix. 10, 12), south of Ramah (*er-Râm*, 5 miles north of Jerusalem), and a little aside from the main road to the north (*vv.* 13–15), as *Tell el-Fûl* actually is.

xx., containing the account of the vengeance taken upon Gibeah and Benjamin, and its consequences. Not only does the description appear in parts to be in duplicate (as *vv.* 29-36*a* and *vv.* 36*b*-46), but the narrative contains particulars which cannot be historical. The numbers are incredibly large: Deborah (*v.* 8) places the number of warriors in *entire* Israel at 40,000; here 400,000 Israelites advance against 25,700 Benjaminites; the Benjaminites, without losing a man themselves, slay of the 400,000 Israelites on the first day 22,000 men, and on the second day 18,000 men; but on the third day 10,000 Israelites slay 25,100 of the 25,700 Benjaminites. The whole of these numbers are most improbable.

Then, secondly, whereas elsewhere in the book the tribes are uniformly represented as acting separately, and only now and then combining temporarily and partially—even Deborah and Barak only collect contingents from five tribes—in this narrative Israel is represented as entirely centralised: the people are gathered together “from Dan to Beersheba,” including even “the land of Gilead,” “as one man” (*xx.* 1). This representation of the joint action of the “congregation”¹ (*xx.* 1; *cf.* *xxi.* 10, 13, 16) is at variance with everything that we learn from other sources respecting the condition of Israel at the time. Elsewhere, both in Judges and Samuel, the people are impelled into action by the initiative of an individual leader: here they move, in vast numbers, automatically: there is no mention even of the head who must have been needful for the purpose of directing the military operations. However keenly the rest of Israel may have felt its indignation aroused by the deed of Gibeah, and the readiness of the Benjaminites to screen the perpetrators (*xx.* 13), the combination can hardly have taken place on the scale depicted.

¹ See on this term the footnote, p. 529.

When, however, the narrative is examined attentively, it is seen that these difficulties attach only to *parts* of it; and the conclusion to which the facts taken all together point is that an older and simpler narrative has been expanded in parts by a later writer whose aim it was to give an *ideal* picture of the community as inspired throughout by a keen sense of right, and as acting unanimously to give effect to their feeling. Hence the exaggeration both in the numbers¹ and also in the scale upon which the tribes are represented as combining for the purpose.² But the older and simpler narrative which forms the nucleus of the chapter is homogeneous with chap. xix., and has every appearance of being equally historical. And it must have contained the *substance* of the existing narrative, only without its unhistorical features.³

¹ Wherever in the Old Testament incredibly high numbers occur, it is a sure sign that the writer is very remote from the events which he is describing, and has no exact knowledge of the facts (cf. the *Chronicles*, passim). Writers living near to the events described deal with figures that are moderate and credible; so e.g. in most parts of 1 and 2 Samuel.

² We have such ideal narratives elsewhere in the Old Testament: there is a notable example in the description in Num. xxxi. of the war of vengeance against Midian, which it is a relief to be able to regard in this light. In this chapter the simpler elements supplied by tradition respecting an actual war between Israel and Midian have been elaborated by the priestly compiler, in accordance with his love of system, into an ideal picture of the manner in which he conceived a sacred war must have been conducted by Israel in the Mosaic age. But the *details* are wholly unhistorical.

³ The *details* of the analysis are in parts uncertain, as phraseological criteria almost fail us: but Moore refers to the older narrative (except a few words here and there) xx. 1 (except *and the congregation . . . Gilead*), 3-8, 14, 19, 29, 36b (from *for*: Heb. *and*), 37-41, 44a, 47. Lagrange assigns to it somewhat less (not vv. 14, 19, 29, but including 10b). We can scarcely be sure that it may not have contained more. (In v. 31 read *Gibeon* for *Gibeah*; in vv. 38-39 read, omitting a *⁠*, *that they should make a cloud of smoke arise out of the city*, (39) *and that the men of Israel should turn in the battle*. Now Benjamin had begun to smite and kill, etc.; and in v. 42 read, with MSS. of LXX, *and they which came out of the city* (i.e. the ambush, after it had done its work) *destroyed them in the midst*. In A.V. and R.V. of v. 41 notice *amazed* in its old sense of *bewildered*: the Hebrew means *affrighted*, as Jer. li. 32. Cf. *amazement* in 1 Pet. iii. 6 A.V. for *ῥρόσησ*,

In chap. xxi. *vv.* 1, 15, 16 (with *And they said* for *And the elders of the congregation said*), 17–23 (the rape of the Shiloh maidens) yield a narrative which has every mark of being historical. At Shiloh, twenty miles north of Jerusalem, in a secluded corner of Ephraim, shut in by hills,¹ there is a pilgrimage held annually in the vineyards in honour of Yahweh, a vintage festival celebrated by the maidens of Shiloh with dances (cf. Exod. xv. 20) and merriment: the two hundred Benjaminites who still lack wives are bidden go and seize their wives from among the dancers. It is instructive to notice how the oath which has been taken is dealt with. After the Benjaminites had come forward to shield the perpetrators of the outrage in Gibeah, the fathers who heard what had happened had sworn not to give their daughters to members of the tribe in marriage. But the tribe was in danger of extinction: what then was to be done? The oath could not be revoked, and they dared not break it: so it is evaded. The Israelites will not *give* their daughters in marriage to the Benjaminites; but the Benjaminites may go and take them by force.² But *vv.* 2–14 (the war against Jabesh-Gilead) contain several of the same marks of lateness³ which occur in the

¹ See the art. SHILOH in Hastings' *D.B.*, vol. iv.

² In v. 22 read and render: "Grant them graciously unto us, because they received not each his wife in the war [viz., against Jabesh-Gilead]; for if *ye* (emph.) had given them to them, ye would surely now be guilty."

³ Notice especially "congregation" (קָהָל) in xxi. 10, 13, 16, as in xx. 1. This term, which denotes Israel as an organized religious body, is especially characteristic of the priestly sections of the Hexateuch (in which it occurs more than 100 times): in all the historical books from Judges to 2 Kings it occurs only in 1 Kings viii. 5 (where it is not in the LXX: see Skinner or Barnes, *ad loc.*), xii. 20, and never, as in the Hexateuch and here, as an authority prescribing what is to be done. The corresponding term in the older literature is "people of Yahweh." Compare also the expression in xxi. 11, 12, with Num. xxxi. 17, 18, 35 (P). Lagrange places against the later elements in chaps. xix., xx. the letter P. But, though they have *affinities* with P, their general style is too dissimilar to that of P to make it likely that they are by any of the actual writers of P.

later parts of chap. xx. ; and the original nucleus of these verses must have been more or less re-cast by a later hand.

I hope that I have said enough to give you a fair general idea of the scope and character of the Book of Judges, and of the principles which it is important to hold in view in studying it. The book is a singularly attractive one. It gives us many invaluable glimpses into the history, and many a graphic and vivid picture of life and manners in early Israel. It shews us how in many parts of the land Israelites and Canaanites lived side by side, sometimes peaceably, sometimes struggling for supremacy, and how, at a time when there was no central authority, by the valour of individual leaders they repelled their foes ; it discloses to us the imperfect cohesion of the tribes, and yet how racial and religious feeling held them together, and united many of them, at least on one great occasion, against a common foe. But it must always be remembered that, if we want to obtain a true picture of Israel under the Judges, we must strip off all the additions of the Deuteronomic compiler, and the later elements in chaps. xx.-xxi., both of which reflect the point of view of a far later age, and import into the early period principles and ideas then unknown : when we have done this we have before us a picture of old Israel, the substantial accuracy of which we have no occasion to distrust.

S. R. DRIVER.

EUCHARISTIC SYMBOLISM IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

THE Fourth Gospel is the product of a period when the ordinances of the Church were already well established, and when the symbolism of the sacraments was generally recognised, although not yet fully developed. The author therefore is not free to create his symbolism. He takes his