

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

impersonal or cosmic. He defines a witch "as one" (male or female) "who professes to work marvels, not through the aid and counsel of the supernatural beings in whom he believes as much as the rest, but by certain occult faculties and devices which he conceives himself to possess." Now first of all, a witch in modern English is a woman. Then witchcraft surely in all cases takes note of spiritual beings—evil ones with whom alliances are made to secure the ends desired. The divergent definitions of witchcraft which have been given—and others could be added—prove surely the need for some understanding on the matter among anthropologists and historians of human culture.

T. WITTON DAVIES.

*DAVID'S "CAPTURE" OF THE JEBUSITE  
"CITADEL" OF ZION (2 SAM. v. 6-9).*

I TAKE as the title of this paper the description which is commonly given of the contents of a very difficult passage. How great are the difficulties which beset the text of 2 Samuel v. 6-9 is well set forth in the new edition of Dr. Driver's *Notes*. Whether anything like a complete explanation of the passage is possible I will not undertake to say. But a fresh consideration of these four verses in connexion with their context does suggest that some of the chief difficulties arise from a misconception of the nature of the event which is here recorded. Was that event the capture of an almost impregnable citadel? Was it a great military exploit?

Certainly the Chronicler so understood it. In the parallel passage (1 Chron. xi. 4-7) "Jebus" or "the stronghold of Zion" is captured by a forlorn hope. David brings "all Israel" against the city; he calls for a volunteer to lead

the assault, promising a reward; Joab accepts the challenge, goes up first, and wins the reward. "And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first *shall be chief and captain*. And Joab, the son of Zeruiah, *went up first*, and was made chief." Here then in Chronicles is the account of the gallant storming of a hill-fortress.

When, however, we turn back to 2 Samuel we find missing just the three phrases which suggest an important and daring military operation. David goes to Jerusalem with "his men" only, his bodyguard, not with "all Israel." No reward is offered to anybody for making his way into "the hold," and above all no one "goes up" (except in the faulty translation of the English versions). Moreover, as if to assure us on this last point, it is written a few verses later (ver. 17) that David *went down* into the hold. It is reasonable to suppose that the same "hold" or "stronghold" is meant in all three verses, 7, 9, and 17, for the Hebrew word is the same in the three passages.

But if "the hold" (הַמְצִיִּדָה) were not a citadel, can any suggestion be made as to its nature? Surely yes! During the excavation of Gezer in the winter of 1907-8 Mr. R. A. S. Macalister found a large tunnel starting in the midst of the city and ending in a cave in which rose a great spring of water. The tunnel, reached by a downward flight of 80 steps, measured on an average 23 feet by 12 feet 10 inches. I venture to maintain that the whole locality (tunnel, cave, and spring) would have been described by the author of the books of Samuel as הַמְצִיִּדָה, "a hold."

If the word be indeed derived from the well known root צוּר "to hunt," its primary local meaning will be "a hunter's lurking place," a covert in which he may lie hid and watch for his quarry. Such a locality might or might not be a *cave* (הַמְעִיִּדָה), and it certainly would not be of necessity situated on the top of a commanding hill. Some secret

spot overlooking a spring or stream at which wild things drink would be an ideal "hold."

Such a place would have other uses, and in particular it might serve as a hiding-place for a man in flight before his enemies. So at the beginning of Psalm xci. the Psalmist speaks of the safety of him who dwells *in the secret place* (בְּסֵתֶר) of the most High, and then proceeds, "I will say of JEHOVAH, He is my refuge and my strong hold <sup>1</sup> (מְצִוֵּרֵי)." Surely the thought is of a natural hiding-place, *strong* because it is concealed and so difficult of access. There is at least nothing to suggest a citadel set on a hill.

Again, in 1 Samuel xxii. 1, 4, 5 (*pace* Wellhausen and Budde who emend the text) that which is at first described as the "cave of Adullam" is afterwards spoken of as "the hold." Budde (*in loco*) evidently thinks that a fortified town would be a more appropriate place of refuge for David and his 400 men than a "cave," but such a consideration has a modern stamp upon it and affords very unsafe ground for altering the text. External testimony (LXX B and Lucian, Peshitta and Targum) confirms the Massoretic reading. The change of wording admits an easy explanation. The "hold" was a tangle of hill and forest, the centre of which, the "cave <sup>2</sup> of Adullam," served as David's headquarters. It was "strong" because the outlaws knew every step of it, and perhaps because they had artificially strengthened some of its natural defences. The Boers harassed the British from such "strongholds" during the war of 1899-1902.

Again, we may surely appeal to the usage of the plural form מְצִוֵּרֵי, "holds" or "strongholds," which is found in Judges and Samuel.<sup>3</sup> It is irregular in form, but there can

<sup>1</sup> Not "fortress," as R.V. gives inconsistently.

<sup>2</sup> Or "caves." The word is used as a collective in 1 Kings xviii. 4, 13.

<sup>3</sup> The plural form מְצִוֵּרֵי is found only in Ps. xxxi. 3.

be no reasonable doubt that it is *de facto* the plural of מצודה, and that it is used in the same sense. But the usage of this form forbids us to adopt the translation "citadel" or "fortress." In 1 Samuel xxiii. 14, 19, 29 מְצֻדוֹת, "holds" or "strongholds" are *contrasted* with "a town that hath gates and bars" (ver. 7). So again in Judges vi. 2 "strongholds" are mentioned along with mountain "dens" and "caves," in which the Israelites took refuge for fear of the Midianites.

If now we consider the meaning of 2 Samuel v. 6-9, being previously fortified by a study of the use of מצודה (מצודות), "stronghold," in Judges and Samuel, we shall be prepared to find in "the stronghold of Zion" not a castle or tower which openly dominated the surrounding country, but a secret natural refuge which a remnant of the old population of Canaan maintained for a reason to be shortly suggested. This result is of great importance for the topography of ancient Jerusalem. The later "city of David" was built on the site of the "stronghold of Zion," for David took up his abode in "the hold" and built round it the city which was afterwards called by his name (vv. 7, 9). The language of the passage reminds us of the conditions which the excavations at Gezer have revealed. Macalister found "waste and in the middle of a crowded city," and on further digging struck upon the tunnel, the cave, and the water spring—the "stronghold," let us call it—round which the later builders erected their massive city walls.

Into such a stronghold David and his men disappeared, no doubt, when the Philistines came up "to seek him" (ver. 17). The text of this verse has arrested the attention of commentators, for it reads, "David . . . went down to<sup>1</sup> the hold": κατέβη εἰς τὴν περὶοχὴν (LXX B). It has been suggested, e.g., by Budde (*in loco*) that David "went

<sup>1</sup> The preposition may be rendered equally well "into."

down" from Zion to Adullam (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 4, 5), but this is unlikely, since the "hold" naturally refers back to the "Hold of Zion" mentioned only eight and ten verses earlier in the same chapter. Neither would the suggestion give any real help, if it were adopted. The sequel tells that David fell upon the Philistines in the valley of Rephaim, immediately to the south of Jerusalem. Now whether Adullam was within striking distance of the Plain of Rephaim we do not know, whereas it is certain that David could surprise the enemy from Zion by a night march of little more than an hour. David then "*went down* into the hold of Zion"; and the "hold" was a hiding-place and not a commanding citadel.

If this be so, the main objection to identifying the southern spur of the Eastern Hill with the site of the original "city of David" is removed. "The spur in question," writes C. R. Conder,<sup>1</sup> in arguing against the identification, "presents an area of only a few acres, the crest being lower than the summit of the other hills, and unfitted for the erection of a *citadel*."<sup>2</sup> But who said that there was any "citadel" of the Jebusites on Zion? Certainly not the author of Samuel. It is equally of course beside the mark when Conder points out that the south-western hill (which indeed has been called Zion from the fourth century of our era) "commanded the whole town, and was indeed the only hill on which a strong military situation could be found."<sup>3</sup> "A strong military situation" was not necessarily the most appropriate site for a "hold."

In 2 Samuel v. 6-9 there is no reference to a "citadel," and no description of the storming of a height. The important feature of the narrative is a parley between the Jebu

<sup>1</sup> Hastings, *D. B.*, "Jerusalem" (page 591).

<sup>2</sup> Italics my own.

<sup>3</sup> Hastings, as above.

sites and David. Of fighting nothing is said, unless the simple words, "*And David took the hold of Zion*" necessarily imply an armed struggle.<sup>1</sup> (The "*Nevertheless*" of A.V., R.V. is simply misleading.) The narrative states that the Jebusites said, "*Thou shalt not come in,*" so David simply took the hold and came in. There is no word in the Hebrew to suggest a great military exploit.

It may of course be conceded that the Chronicler believed the "*hold of Zion*" to have been a genuine citadel such as existed in his own day. By the end of the fourth century B.C. Jerusalem had a history of some centuries behind her as the City of the great King. Both Eastern and Western hills were well covered with houses or with the ruins of former buildings, and the Chronicler could think of Zion only as a part of a city which was the centre of the civilised life of Israel. A Zion of rock and forest concealing a natural place of refuge was for him unthinkable, but it is the picture suggested by the author of Samuel.

This discussion of the hold and of its capture might stop at this point, for we cannot proceed further without some emendation of the text. But it will no doubt be asked, What alternative view of the meaning of 2 Samuel v. 6-9 has the writer to offer? It is hoped that the close translation from the Hebrew which follows (together with some emendations and comments) will supply a sufficient answer. This translation, in spite of the emendations adopted, keeps at least as closely to the Massoretic text as does the Authorised Version. The passage is manifestly corrupt, and the only choice is between one emended form and another.

#### 2 SAMUEL v. 6-9.

6. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem to the

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the wording of 2 Samuel xii. 27, 29. "I have fought and I have taken"—"David fought against it and took it." See also 1 Kings x. 16; 2 Kings xii. 17.

Jebusite, the inhabitant of the land, and one<sup>1</sup> gave command concerning David to say:—

“Thou shalt not come in hither,  
But [the Baal]<sup>2</sup> of the blind and the lame  
Hath turned thee away, saying,  
*David shall not come in hither.*”

7. So David took the hold of Zion: that is the city of David.

8. And David said on that day:—

“Every one who smiteth a Jebusite  
And toucheth the *tsinnor*<sup>3</sup>  
{ Is hated of David's soul.  
{ But the blind and the lame<sup>4</sup>  
[Ye shall take alive,]<sup>5</sup>

The reference is to the elders of the Jebusites assembled in council, or else directly to the priest who gave the oracle which follows.

<sup>2</sup> The grammar demands some emendation here. The verb is in the singular, but the apparent subject (“the blind and the lame”) is in the plural. The Septuagint (*ἀνέστησαν*) makes the verb plural, while R.V. marg. goes one step further and imagines the plural of an imperfect (future) tense, “the blind and the lame shall turn thee away.” The merit of the proposal to read “Baal” here is that if it be adopted it explains the disturbance of the text. “Baal” was removed in accordance with Hosea ii. 16, 17. The mutilation of the name of Saul's son from *Esh-baal*, “man of Baal” (1 Chron. viii. 33) to *Ish-bosheth*, “man of shame” (2 Sam. ii. 8) will occur to students. It is quite possible that the Massoretes in refusing to point the verb as a plural were preserving a hint of a tradition that *Bosheth*, “shame,” was to be read here.

<sup>3</sup> For the construction (a participle followed by a finite verb), see Gesenius-Kautzsch, § 116z.

<sup>4</sup> The transposition of these two clauses is undoubtedly a bold emendation. It may, however, be defended on three considerations: (a) some words are needed to complete the sense of the two preceding clauses; (b) the participle “hated of David's soul” (שנא) is corrupt and may be as easily emended into the singular (שנא) as into the plural; (c) we can give an excellent reason for the disturbance of the text, if it stood originally as proposed above. The slight change, consisting of the transposition of the words “lame” and “blind” to agree with ver. 8, is supported by the Peshitta, but need not be pressed; but if it be accepted, it makes the supposed omission of the following clause by *homœoteleuton* somewhat more probable (הפסחים תתפשו ימים or ימים).

<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to supply *some* verb to govern the accusative which is expressed in the phrase “the blind and the lame.” R.V. supplies “smiter,” but “take alive” constitutes a more noteworthy saying.

Seeing that <sup>1</sup> they say,  
 Even the blind and the lame,  
*He shall not come into the House.*" <sup>2</sup>

9. And David dwelt in the hold, and called it the City of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

According to this emended text the story of 2 Samuel v. 6-9 may be told as follows. In 2 Samuel v. 5 it is said that David reigned for thirty-three years in Jerusalem over all Israel. Ver. 6 explains the circumstances under which this reign began. David moved northward with his men to Jerusalem, a more central spot than Hebron for his government. But he was guided by other considerations beside geographical ones. The Jebusites as the ancient inhabitants held the ancient sanctuary of Zion. To this house of a god David as a new king wished to be admitted and to receive by this admission an acknowledgment of his kingship. So did Alexander the Great on his march southward after the battle of Issus in 333 B.C. demand entrance into Tyre that he might offer sacrifice to Melcart. Alexander was refused admission, and so was David. The Jebusites quoted an oracle of their god forbidding his entrance. The king came for recognition and received a blank refusal.

But who, it may be asked, are "the blind and the lame" ? A Jewish scholar, K. Kohler, thinks that the guardian spirits of the hold are meant.<sup>3</sup> More probably human ministers of the god are intended. The word "blind" may be a mocking substitution in the Hebrew text for "Seers," and "lame" may be a distortion of the name of the dancing

<sup>1</sup> עַל כֵּן is to be translated here (as in Ps. xlv. [2]) "seeing that"; cf. Gen. xviii. 5 (כִּי עַל כֵּן).

<sup>2</sup> The House, i.e., the sanctuary of the god of the Jebusites; cf. 2 Kings x. 21, 23, 26, 27.

<sup>3</sup> He proposes דַּמְיָי, "watchers," and פּוֹסְקֵי, "those who leap over the threshold." *A.J.Th.* i. 803.

priests.<sup>1</sup> The guardians of the Jebusite sanctuary claimed (I suppose) to be seers, and practised religious dances.

The blind and the lame, whoever they were, could not prevent David from carrying out his purpose. There is no sign of a struggle in the calm narrative of 2 Samuel. The Jebusite said, "David shall not come in hither. So <sup>2</sup> David took the hold of Zion: that is the city of David" (*vs.* 6, 7). Not being admitted as a guest he went in as a conqueror. His "men" knew by experience how to take possession of a hold.

The king's concern on this eventful day was not how to succeed in a military operation, but how to avoid blood-guiltiness of a most serious kind. Saul had brought guilt upon his house by slaying others of the ancient inhabitants, the Gibeonites (2 Sam. xxi. 1-6). David wished to avoid a guilt which was perhaps greater. The Jebusites, as the old-time guardians of an ancient sanctuary and oracle, were regarded as sacred persons. We may compare them with some of the guardians of the Grecian oracles. Thus, for example, "At Dodona the shrine seems to have been served by the *primitive and barbarous* tribe of the Selli (called by Homer *ἀνιπτόποδες χαμαιῶναι*)." <sup>3</sup> The Jebusites may certainly be described as "primitive," and as dwelling in a "hold" they might be called "barbarous." David in ordering his men to take possession of the place forbids them to defile the Jebusite sanctuary with Jebusite blood. That the blind and the lame were to be *spared* is clearly acknowledged by at least one ancient authority, for the Peshitta (according to the

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrews sometimes distorted the names of foreign gods, e.g., "Nego" for *Nebo* (Dan. iii. 12), and perhaps "Nisroch" for *Marduk* (2 Kings xix. 37). With לַמְּסֵחִים "lame" cf. וַיִּסְחָפוּ "and they leaped" (1 Kings xviii. 26) of the dancing of the priests of Baal.

<sup>2</sup> "Nevertheless" (A.V., R.V.) is simply not admissible as a translation of *waw* consecutive.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Gardner, *Cambridge Companion to Greek Studies*, p. 339.

true text)<sup>1</sup> renders, "Whosoever shall smite a Jebusite and shall come near with shield to the blind and the lame, he hateth the soul of David."

In verse 8 the crux is of course the meaning of the *tsinnor*. "Watercourse" has been suggested, and appeal is made to Psalm xlii. 8 (7), where R.V. margin has "cataracts." More recently "tunnel" has been proposed, because there actually exists a passage cut in the rock "which ends at the top of the hill on which the original fortress of Zion must have been situated" (S. R. Driver, *Notes on Samuel*, p. 260, ed. 2). This tunnel, or some similar one not yet discovered, might well have been regarded by reason of its echoes as sacred to a god who gave oracles. The verb "touch" (LXX ἀπρέσθω) certainly suggests that some sacred object is meant. It is just possible that the reference may be to some hollow vessel (like the bronze caldrons of Dodona) which when struck emitted a sound which the priests interpreted, taking it as an utterance of the god. (A word supposed to be cognate to *tsinnor* is used in Zechariah iv. 12 (צִנְתָּרִית) to designate the *pipes* through which the seven-branched candlestick was fed.) David denounces the man who lays an impure hand on some object held sacred by the Jebusites.

If the original form of verse 8 was at all like that suggested above, we have an easy explanation of the confusion into which the text afterwards fell. David says that he will hate the man who kills a Jebusite, and he gives the definite order to *take alive* "the blind and the lame." How was such an attitude to be reconciled with the prescriptions of Deuteronomy, and specially with xx. 16, 17, "Thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth; but thou shalt utterly destroy them; the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and

<sup>1</sup> So the Urmi edition of 1900 (Nestorian) and the Codex Ambrosianus (ed. Ceriani).

the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the *Jebusite* ? A scribe who was persuaded that David attained to the Deuteronomic standard of religion would feel compelled to transfer the description "hated of David's soul" from the slayer of the Jebusite to the Jebusites themselves. In so doing he might well feel that he was emending a corrupted text. Again, when he came to the startling command, *Ye shall save the blind and the lame alive*, he might well doubt whether he had read the words aright. If in some copies, as apparently in the copy which lay before the Septuagint themselves, the words תתפשו היים were already omitted through *homœoteleuton*, the scribe we speak of would be confirmed in his belief that they formed no part of the true text.

To conclude. It has been shown, I think, that in the book of Samuel (*a*) the evidence is *against* the view that the "hold of Zion" was a formal fortress or citadel; (*b*) there is no statement that David stormed a fortified height. It has been shown further that (*c*) the evidence as to the fate of the Jebusites is slight and uncertain, and by the adoption of a defensible emendation can be made to tell in favour of their preservation. Finally an hypothesis, suggested by the language of the passage, has been stated which accounts for the mutilation of the Hebrew text. According to this hypothesis the main interest of the passage in its original form is religious, not military or political. We see David in contact with one of the old religions of Canaan. He takes possession of its sanctuary, but spares its priests. A later age impatient of heathen worship<sup>1</sup> has brought obscurity into the transaction, because it could not understand such forbearance on the part of a king so faithful to the worship of JEHOVAH as David.

W. EMERY BARNES.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the case of 2 Sam. v. 21. The statement that David's men *carried off* the images of the Philistines becomes in 1 Chron. xiv. 12, "David commanded and they were burnt with fire."