
This expanded electronic edition of the J-F-B Commentary is in the public domain.

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)
[\[Previous\]](#) [\[Next\]](#)

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown
Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)

THE
BOOK OF JOSHUA.
Commentary by ROBERT JAMIESON

[\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#) [\[6\]](#) [\[7\]](#) [\[8\]](#) [\[9\]](#) [\[10\]](#) [\[11\]](#) [\[12\]](#) [\[13\]](#)
[\[14\]](#) [\[15\]](#) [\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#) [\[18\]](#) [\[19\]](#) [\[20\]](#) [\[21\]](#) [\[22\]](#) [\[23\]](#) [\[24\]](#)

CHAPTER 1

[Jos 1:1-18](#). THE LORD APPOINTS JOSHUA TO SUCCEED MOSES.

1. Now after the death of Moses--Joshua, having been already appointed and designated leader of Israel ([Nu 27:18-23](#)), in all probability assumed the reins of government *immediately* "after the death of Moses."

the servant of the Lord--This was the official title of Moses as invested with a special mission to make known the will of God; and it conferred great honor and authority.

the Lord spake unto Joshua--probably during the period of public mourning, and either by a direct revelation to the mind of Joshua, or by means of Urim and Thummim ([Nu 27:21](#)). This first communication gave a pledge that the divine instructions which, according to the provisions of the theocracy, had been imparted to Moses, would be continued to the new leader, though God might not perhaps speak to him "mouth to mouth" ([Nu 12:8](#)).

Joshua--The original name, Oshea, ([Nu 13:8](#)), which had been, according to Eastern usage, changed like those of Abram and Sarai ([Ge 17:5-15](#)) into Jehoshua or Joshua (that is, "God's salvation") was significant of the services he was to render, and typified those of a greater Saviour ([Heb 4:8](#)).

Moses' minister--that is, his official attendant, who, from being constantly employed in important services and early initiated into the principles of the government, would be well trained for undertaking the leadership of Israel.

2-9. now therefore arise, go over this Jordan--Joshua's mission was that of a military leader. This passage records his call to begin the work, and the address contains a literal repetition of the promise made to Moses ([De 11:24, 25; 31:6-8, 23](#)).

3, 4. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon that have I given you--meaning, of course, not universal dominion, but only the territory comprised within the boundaries here specified (see on [De 19:8](#)).

4. all the land of the Hittites--These occupied the southern extremities and were the dominant tribe of Canaan. Their superior power and the extent of their dominions are attested by

the mention of them under the name of Khita, on the Assyrian inscriptions, and still more frequently on the Egyptian inscriptions of the eighteenth and nineteenth Dynasties. What life and encouragement must have been imparted to Joshua by the assurance that his people, who had been overwhelmed with fear of that gigantic race, were to possess "all the land of the Hittites"!

5-9. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee--Canaan was theirs by a divine grant; and the renewed confirmation of that grant to Joshua when about to lead the people into it, intimated not only a certain but an easy conquest. It is remarkable, however, that his courage and hope of victory were made to depend (see on [De 17:18](#)) on his firm and inflexible adherence to the law of God, not only that regarding the extirpation of the Canaanites, but the whole divine code.

10-18. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people--These were the Shoterim (see on [Ex 5:6](#); [De 20:5](#)).

11-13. command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals--not manna, which, though it still fell, would not keep; but corn, sheep, and articles of food procurable in the conquered countries.

for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan--that is, the third day, according to *Hebrew* idiom--the time allotted for getting ready before the encampment in Abel-Shittim broke up and they removed to the desert bank of the river where no victuals were available. At the same time Joshua himself convened the two and a half tribes which had settled east of Jordan, to remind them of their promise ([Nu 32:1-42](#)) to assist their brethren in the conquest of western Canaan. Their readiness to redeem their pledge and the terms in which they answered the appeal of Joshua displayed to great advantage their patriotic and pious feelings at so interesting a crisis.

14. ye shall pass . . . armed--that is, officered or marshalled under five leaders in the old and approved caravan order (see on [Ex 13:18](#)).

all the mighty men of valour--The words are not to be interpreted strictly as meaning the whole, but only the flower or choice of the fighting men (see on [Jos 4:12](#)).

CHAPTER 2

[Jos 2:1-7](#). RAHAB RECEIVES AND CONCEALS THE TWO SPIES.

1. Joshua . . . sent . . . two men to spy secretly--Faith is manifested by an active, persevering use of means ([Jas 2:22](#)); and accordingly Joshua, while confident in the accomplishment of the divine promise ([Jos 1:3](#)), adopted every precaution which a skilful general could think of to render his first attempt in the invasion of Canaan successful. Two spies were despatched to reconnoitre the country, particularly in the neighborhood of Jericho; for in the prospect of investing that place, it was desirable to obtain full information as to its site, its approaches, the character, and resources of its inhabitants. This mission required the strictest privacy, and it seems to have been studiously concealed from the knowledge of the Israelites themselves, lest any unfavorable or exaggerated report, publicly circulated, might have dispirited the people, as that of the spies did in the days of Moses.

Jericho--Some derive this name from a word signifying "*new moon*," in reference to the

crescent-like plain in which it stood, formed by an amphitheater of hills; others from a word signifying "*its scent*," on account of the fragrance of the balsam and palm trees in which it was embosomed. Its site was long supposed to be represented by the small mud-walled hamlet Er-Riha; but recent researches have fixed on a spot about half an hour's journey westward, where large ruins exist about six or eight miles distant from the Jordan. It was for that age a strongly fortified town, the key of the eastern pass through the deep ravine, now called Wady-Kelt, into the interior of Palestine.

they . . . came into an harlot's house--Many expositors, desirous of removing the stigma of this name from an ancestress of the Saviour ([Mt 1:5](#)), have called her a hostess or tavern keeper. But Scriptural usage ([Le 21:7-14](#); [De 23:18](#); [Jud 11:1](#); [1Ki 3:16](#)), the authority of the *Septuagint*, followed by the apostles ([Heb 11:31](#); [Jas 2:25](#)), and the immemorial style of Eastern khans, which are never kept by women, establish the propriety of the term employed in our version. Her house was probably recommended to the spies by the convenience of its situation, without any knowledge of the character of the inmates. But a divine influence directed them in the choice of that lodging-place.

2, 3. it was told the king--by the sentinels who at such a time of threatened invasion would be posted on the eastern frontier and whose duty required them to make a strict report to headquarters of the arrival of all strangers.

4-6. the woman took the two men, and hid them--literally, "him," that is, each of them in separate places, of course previous to the appearance of the royal messengers and in anticipation of a speedy search after her guests. According to Eastern manners, which pay an almost superstitious respect to a woman's apartment, the royal messengers did not demand admittance to search but asked her to bring the foreigners out.

5. the time of shutting of the gates--The gates of all Oriental cities are closed at sunset, after which there is no possibility either of admission or egress.

the men went out--This was a palpable deception. But, as lying is a common vice among heathen people, Rahab was probably unconscious of its moral guilt, especially as she resorted to it as a means for screening her guests; and she might deem herself bound to do it by the laws of Eastern hospitality, which make it a point of honor to preserve the greatest enemy, if he has once eaten one's salt. Judged by the divine law, her answer was a sinful expedient; but her infirmity being united with faith, she was graciously pardoned and her service accepted ([Jas 2:25](#)).

6. she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax--Flax, with other vegetable productions, is at a certain season spread out on the flat roofs of Eastern houses to be dried in the sun; and, after lying awhile, it is piled up in numerous little stacks, which, from the luxuriant growth of the flax, rise to a height of three or four feet. Behind some of these stacks Rahab concealed the spies.

7. the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords--That river is crossed at several well-known fords. The first and second immediately below the sea of Galilee; the third and fourth immediately above and below the pilgrims' bathing-place, opposite Jericho.

as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate--This precaution was to ensure the capture of the spies, should they have been lurking in the city.

[Jos 2:8-21](#). THE COVENANT BETWEEN HER AND THEM.

8-13. she came up unto them upon the roof and said--Rahab's dialogue is full of interest, as showing the universal panic and consternation of the Canaanites on the one hand ([Jos 24:11; De 2:25](#)), and her strong convictions on the other, founded on a knowledge of the divine promise, and the stupendous miracles that had opened the way of the Israelites to the confines of the promised land. She was convinced of the supremacy of Jehovah, and her earnest stipulations for the preservation of her relatives amid the perils of the approaching invasion, attest the sincerity and strength of her faith.

14. the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business--This was a solemn pledge--a virtual oath, though the name of God is not mentioned; and the words were added, not as a condition of their fidelity, but as necessary for her safety, which might be endangered if the private agreement was divulged.

15. her house was upon the town wall--In many Oriental cities houses are built on the walls with overhanging windows; in others the town wall forms the back wall of the house, so that the window opens into the country. Rahab's was probably of this latter description, and the cord or rope sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a man.

16-21. she said--rather "she had said," for what follows must have been part of the previous conversation.

Get you to the mountain--A range of white limestone hills extends on the north, called Quarantania (now Jebel Karantu), rising to a height of from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred feet, and the sides of which are perforated with caves. Some one peak adjoining was familiarly known to the inhabitants as "the mountain." The prudence and propriety of the advice to flee in that direction rather than to the ford, were made apparent by the sequel.

21. she bound the scarlet line in the window--probably soon after the departure of the spies. It was not formed, as some suppose, into network, as a lattice, but simply to hang down the wall. Its red color made it conspicuous, and it was thus a sign and pledge of safety to Rahab's house, as the bloody mark on the lintels of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt to that people.

CHAPTER 3

[Jos 3:1-6](#). JOSHUA COMES TO JORDAN.

1. Joshua rose early in the morning--On the day following that on which the spies had returned with their encouraging report. The camp was broken up in "Shittim" (the acacia groves), and removed to the eastern bank of the Jordan. The duration of their stay is indicated ([Jos 3:2](#)), being, according to *Hebrew* reckoning, only one entire day, including the evening of arrival and the morning of the passage; and such a time would be absolutely necessary for so motley an assemblage of men, women, and children, with all their gear and cattle to make ready for going into an enemy's country.

2-4. the officers went through the host; And they commanded the people--The instructions given at this time and in this place were different from those described ([Jos 1:11](#)).

3, 4. When ye see the ark . . . , and the priests the Levites bearing it--The usual position of the ark, when at rest, was in the center of the camp; and, during a march, in the middle of the procession. On this occasion it was to occupy the van, and be borne, not by the Kohathite Levites, but the priests, as on all solemn and extraordinary occasions (compare [Nu 4:15](#); [Jos 6:6](#); [1Ki 8:3-6](#)).

then ye shall . . . go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it--These instructions refer exclusively to the advance into the river. The distance which the people were to keep in the rear of the ark was nearly a mile. Had they crowded too near the ark, the view would have been intercepted, and this intervening space, therefore, was ordered, that the chest containing the sacred symbols might be distinctly visible to all parts of the camp, and be recognized as their guide in the untrodden way.

5. Joshua said unto the people--rather "had said," for as he speaks of "to-morrow," the address must have been made previous to the day of crossing, and the sanctification was in all probability the same as Moses had commanded before the giving of the law, consisting of an outward cleansing ([Ex 19:10-15](#)) preparatory to that serious and devout state of mind with which so great a manifestation should be witnessed.

6. Joshua spake unto the priests--This order to the priests would be given privately, and involving as it did an important change in the established order of march, it must be considered as announced in the name and by the authority of God. Moreover, as soon as the priests stepped into the waters of Jordan, they were to stand still. The ark was to accomplish what had been done by the rod of Moses.

[Jos 3:7, 8](#). THE LORD ENCOURAGES JOSHUA.

7, 8. the Lord said to Joshua, This day will I . . . magnify thee in the sight of all Israel--Joshua had already received distinguished honors ([Ex 24:13](#); [De 31:7](#)). But a higher token of the divine favor was now to be publicly bestowed on him, and evidence given in the same unmistakable manner that his mission and authority were from God as was that of Moses ([Ex 14:31](#)).

[Jos 3:9-13](#). JOSHUA ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE.

9-13. Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord--It seems that the Israelites had no intimation how they were to cross the river till shortly before the event. The premonitory address of Joshua, taken in connection with the miraculous result exactly as he had described it, would tend to increase and confirm their faith in the God of their fathers as not a dull, senseless, inanimate thing like the idols of the nations, but a Being of life, power, and activity to defend them and work for them.

[Jos 3:14-17](#). THE WATERS OF JORDAN ARE DIVIDED.

14-16. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, &c.--To understand the scene described we must imagine the band of priests with the ark on their shoulders, standing on the depressed edge of the river, while the mass of the people were at a mile's distance. Suddenly the whole bed of the river was dried up; a spectacle the more extraordinary in that it took place in the time of harvest, corresponding to our April or May--when "the Jordan overfloweth all its banks." The original words may be more properly rendered "fills all its banks." Its channel, snow-fed from Lebanon, was at its greatest height--brimful; a translation which gives the only true description of the state of Jordan in harvest as observed by modern travellers. The river about Jericho is, in ordinary appearance, about fifty or sixty yards in breadth. But as seen in harvest, it is twice as broad; and in ancient times, when the hills on the right and left were much more drenched with rain and snow than since the forests have disappeared, the river must, from a greater accession of water, have been broader still than at harvest-time in the present day.

16. the waters which came down from above--that is, the Sea of Galilee **stood and rose up upon a heap--**"in a heap," a firm, compact barrier ([Ex 15:8](#); [Ps 78:13](#)); **very far--**high up the stream; **from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan--**near mount Sartabeh, in the northern part of the Ghor ([1Ki 7:46](#)); that is, a distance of thirty miles from the Israelitish encampment; and **those that came down toward the sea of the desert--**the Dead Sea--were cut off ([Ps 114:2, 3](#)). The river was thus dried up as far as the eye could reach. This was a stupendous miracle; Jordan takes its name, "the Descender," from the force of its current, which, after passing the Sea of Galilee, becomes greatly increased as it plunges through twenty-seven "horrible rapids and cascades," besides a great many lesser through a fall of a thousand feet, averaging from four to five miles an hour [LYNCH]. When swollen "in time of harvest," it flows with a vastly accelerated current.

the people passed over right against Jericho--The exact spot is unknown; but it cannot be that fixed by Greek tradition--the pilgrims' bathing-place--both because it is too much to the north, and the eastern banks are there sheer precipices ten or fifteen feet high.

17. the priests . . . and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground--the river about Jericho has a firm pebbly bottom, on which the host might pass, without inconvenience when the water was cleared off.

CHAPTER 4

[Jos 4:1-8](#). TWELVE STONES TAKEN FOR A MEMORIAL OUT OF JORDAN.

1-3. the Lord spake unto Joshua, Take you twelve men--each representing a tribe. They had been previously chosen for this service ([Jos 3:12](#)), and the repetition of the command is made here solely to introduce the account of its execution. Though Joshua had been divinely instructed to erect a commemorative pile, the representatives were not apprised of the work they were to do till the time of the passage.

4, 5. Joshua called the twelve men--They had probably, from a feeling of reverence, kept back, and were standing on the eastern bank. They were now ordered to advance. Picking up

each a stone, probably as large as he could carry, from around the spot "where the priests stood," they pass over before the ark and deposit the stones in the place of next encampment ([Jos 4:19, 20](#)), namely, Gilgal.

6, 7. That this may be a sign among you--The erection of cairns, or huge piles of stones, as monuments of remarkable incidents has been common among all people, especially in the early and rude periods of their history. They are the established means of perpetuating the memory of important transactions, especially among the nomadic people of the East. Although there be no inscription engraved on them, the history and object of such simple monuments are traditionally preserved from age to age. Similar was the purpose contemplated by the conveyance of the twelve stones to Gilgal: it was that they might be a standing record to posterity of the miraculous passage of the Jordan.

8. the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded--that is, it was done by their twelve representatives.

[Jos 4:9](#). TWELVE STONES SET UP IN THE MIDST OF JORDAN.

9. Joshua set up twelve stones . . . in the place where the feet of the priests . . . stood--In addition to the memorial just described, there was another memento of the miraculous event, a duplicate of the former, set up in the river itself, on the very spot where the ark had rested. This heap of stones might have been a large and compactly built one and visible in the ordinary state of the river. As nothing is said where these stones were obtained, some have imagined that they might have been gathered in the adjoining fields and deposited by the people as they passed the appointed spot.

they are there unto this day--at least twenty years after the event, if we reckon by the date of this history ([Jos 24:26](#)), and much later, if the words in the latter clause were inserted by Samuel or Ezra.

[Jos 4:10-13](#). THE PEOPLE PASS OVER.

10. the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan--This position was well calculated to animate the people, who probably crossed *below* the ark, as well as to facilitate Joshua's execution of the minutest instructions respecting the passage ([Nu 27:21-23](#)). The unfaltering confidence of the priests contrasts strikingly with the conduct of the people, who "hasted and passed over." Their faith, like that of many of God's people, was, through the weakness of nature, blended with fears. But perhaps their "haste" may be viewed in a more favorable light, as indicating the alacrity of their obedience, or it might have been enjoined in order that the the whole multitude might pass in one day.

11. the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people--The ark is mentioned as the efficient cause; it had been the first to move--it was the last to leave--and its movements arrested the deep attention of the people, who probably stood on the opposite bank, wrapt in admiration and awe of this closing scene. It was a great miracle, greater even than the passage of the Red Sea in this respect: that, admitting the fact, there is no possibility of

rationalistic insinuations as to the influence of natural causes in producing it, as have been made in the former case.

12, 13. the children of Reuben . . . passed over armed before the children of Israel--

There is no precedency to the other tribes indicated here; for there is no reason to suppose that the usual order of march was departed from; but these are honorably mentioned to show that, in pursuance of their promise ([Jos 1:16-18](#)), they had sent a complement of fighting men to accompany their brethren in the war of invasion.

13. to the plains of Jericho--That part of the Arabah or Ghor, on the west, is about seven miles broad from the Jordan to the mountain entrance at Wady-Kelt. Though now desert, this valley was in ancient times richly covered with wood. An immense palm forest, seven miles long, surrounded Jericho.

[Jos 4:14-24](#). GOD MAGNIFIES JOSHUA.

14-17. On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel--It appeared clear from the chief part he acted, that he was the divinely appointed leader; for even the priests did not enter the river or quit their position, except at his command; and thenceforward his authority was as firmly established as that of his predecessor.

18. it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark . . . were come out of the midst of Jordan . . . that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place--Their crossing, which was the final act, completed the evidence of the miracle; for then, and not till then, the suspended laws of nature were restored, the waters returned to their place, and the river flowed with as full a current as before.

19. the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month--that is, the month Nisan, four days before the passover, and the very day when the paschal lamb required to be set apart, the providence of God having arranged that the entrance into the promised land should be at the feast.

and encamped in Gilgal--The name is here given by anticipation (see on [Jos 5:9](#)). It was a tract of land, according to JOSEPHUS, fifty stadia (six and one-half miles) from Jordan, and ten stadia (one and one-fourth miles) from Jericho, at the eastern outskirts of the palm forest, now supposed to be the spot occupied by the village Riha.

20-24. those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal--Probably to render them more conspicuous, they might be raised on a foundation of earth or turf. The pile was designed to serve a double purpose--that of impressing the heathen with a sense of the omnipotence of God, while at the same time it would teach an important lesson in religion to the young and rising Israelites in after ages.

CHAPTER 5

[Jos 5:1](#). THE CANAANITES AFRAID.

1. the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea--Under the former designation were included the people who inhabited the mountainous region, and under the latter those who were on the seacoast of Palestine.

heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan . . . that their heart melted--They had probably reckoned on the swollen river interposing for a time a sure barrier of defense. But seeing it had been completely dried up, they were completely paralyzed by so incontestable a proof that God was on the side of the invaders. In fact, the conquest had already begun in the total prostration of spirit among the native chiefs. "Their heart melted," but unhappily not into faith and penitent submission.

[Jos 5:2-12](#). CIRCUMCISION IS RENEWED.

2. At that time--on the encampment being made after the passage.

the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives--Stone knives, collect and make them ready. Flints have been used in the early times of all people; and although the use of iron was known to the Hebrews in the days of Joshua, probably the want of a sufficient number of metallic implements dictated the employment of flints on this occasion (compare [Ex 4:25](#)).

circumcise again the children of Israel the second time--literally, "return and circumcise." The command did not require him to repeat the operation on those who had undergone it, but to resume the observance of the rite, which had been long discontinued. The language, however, evidently points to a general circumcising on some previous occasion, which, though unrecorded, must have been made before the celebration of the passover at Sinai (compare [Ex 12:48](#); [Nu 9:5](#)), as a mixed multitude accompanied the camp. "The second time" of general circumcising was at the entrance into Canaan.

3. at the hill--probably one of the argillaceous hills that form the highest terrace of the Jordan, on a rising ground at the palm forest.

4-7. this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise--The omission to circumcise the children born in the wilderness might have been owing to the incessant movements of the people; but it is most generally thought that the true cause was a temporary suspension of the covenant with the unbelieving race who, being rejected of the Lord, were doomed to perish in the wilderness, and whose children had to bear the iniquity of their fathers ([Nu 14:33](#)), though, as the latter were to be brought into the promised land, the covenant would be renewed with them.

8. when they had done circumcising all the people--As the number of those born in the wilderness and uncircumcised must have been immense, a difficulty is apt to be felt how the rite could have been performed on such a multitude in so short a time. But it has been calculated that the proportion between those already circumcised (under twenty when the doom was pronounced) and those to be circumcised, was one to four, and consequently the whole ceremony could easily have been performed in a day. Circumcision being the sign and seal of the covenant, its performance was virtually an investment in the promised land, and its being delayed till their actual entrance into the country was a wise and gracious act on the part of God, who postponed this trying duty till the hearts of the people, animated by the recent astonishing miracle, were prepared to obey the divine will.

they abode in their places . . . till they were whole--It is calculated that, of those who did not need to be circumcised, more than fifty thousand were left to defend the camp if an attack had been then made upon it.

9. the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt--The taunts industriously cast by that people upon Israel as *nationally* rejected by God by the cessation of circumcision and the renewal of that rite was a practical announcement of the restoration of the covenant [KEIL].

Gilgal--No trace either of the name or site is now to be found; but it was about two miles from Jericho [JOSEPHUS], and well suited for an encampment by the advantages of shade and water. It was the first place pronounced "holy" in the Holy Land ([Jos 5:15](#)).

10. kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even--The time fixed by the law (see on [Ex 12:17](#); [Le 23:5](#); [Nu 28:16](#)). Thus the national existence was commenced by a solemn act of religious dedication.

11, 12. And they did eat of the old corn of the land--found in storehouses of the inhabitants who had fled into Jericho.

parched corn--new grain (see on [Le 23:10](#)), probably lying in the fields. Roasted--a simple and primitive preparation, much liked in the East. This abundance of food led to the discontinuance of the manna; and the fact of its then ceasing, viewed in connection with its seasonable appearance in the barren wilderness, is a striking proof of its miraculous origin.

[Jos 5:13-15](#). AN ANGEL APPEARS TO JOSHUA.

13. when Joshua was by Jericho--in the immediate vicinity of that city, probably engaged in surveying the fortifications, and in meditating the best plan of a siege.

there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn--It is evident from the strain of the context that this was not a mere vision, but an actual appearance; the suddenness of which surprised, but did not daunt, the intrepid leader.

14. the host of the Lord--either the Israelitish people ([Ex 7:4](#); [12:41](#); [Isa 55:4](#)), or the angels ([Ps 148:2](#)), or both included, and the Captain of it was the angel of the covenant, whose visible manifestations were varied according to the occasion. His attitude of equipment betokened his approval of, and interest in, the war of invasion.

Joshua fell on his face . . . , and did worship--The adoption by Joshua of this absolute form of prostration demonstrates the sentiments of profound reverence with which the language and majestic bearing of the stranger inspired him. The real character of this personage was disclosed by His accepting the homage of worship (compare [Ac 10:25, 26](#); [Re 19:10](#)), and still further in the command, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot" ([Ex 3:5](#)).

CHAPTER 6

[Jos 6:1-7](#). JERICHO SHUT UP.

1. Now Jericho was straitly shut up--This verse is a parenthesis introduced to prepare the way for the directions given by the Captain of the Lord's host.

2. See, I have given into thine hand Jericho--The language intimates that a purpose already formed was about to be carried into immediate execution; and that, although the king and inhabitants of Jericho were fierce and experienced warriors, who would make a stout and determined resistance, the Lord promised a certain and easy victory over them.

3-5. ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war. . . . Thus shalt thou do six days, &c.--Directions are here given as to the mode of procedure. *Hebrew*, "horns of jubilee"; that is, the bent or crooked trumpets with which the jubilee was proclaimed. It is probable that the horns of this animal were used at first; and that afterwards, when metallic trumpets were introduced, the primitive name, as well as form of them, was traditionally continued. The design of this whole proceeding was obviously to impress the Canaanites with a sense of the divine omnipotence, to teach the Israelites a memorable lesson of faith and confidence in God's promises, and to inspire sentiments of respect and reverence for the ark as the symbol of His presence. The length of time during which those circuits were made tended the more intensely to arrest the attention, and to deepen the impressions, both of the Israelites and the enemy. The number seven was among the Israelites the symbolic seal of the covenant between God and their nation [KEIL, HENGSTENBERG].

6, 7. Joshua . . . called the priests--The pious leader, whatever military preparations he had made, surrendered all his own views, at once and unreservedly, to the declared will of God.

[Jos 6:8-19](#). THE CITY COMPASSED SIX DAYS.

8-11. the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets . . . passed on before the Lord--before the ark, called "the ark of the covenant," for it contained the tables on which the covenant was inscribed. The procession was made in deep and solemn silence, conforming to the instructions given to the people by their leader at the outset, that they were to refrain from all acclamation and noise of any kind until he should give them a signal. It must have been a strange sight; no mound was raised, no sword drawn, no engine planted, no pioneers undermining--here were armed men, but no stroke given; they must walk and not fight. Doubtless the people of Jericho made themselves merry with the spectacle [BISHOP HALL].

12-14. Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord--The second day's procession seems to have taken place in the morning. In all other respects, down even to the smallest details, the arrangements of the first day continued to be the rule followed on the other six.

15. on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city . . . seven times--on account of the seven circuits they had to make that day. It is evident, however, that the militia only of the Israelites had been called to the march--for it is inconceivable that two millions of people could have gone so frequently round the city in a day.

16. it came to pass at the seventh time, . . . Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city--This delay brought out their faith and obedience in so remarkable a manner, that it is celebrated by the apostle ([Heb 11:30](#)).

17-19. And the city shall be accursed--(See on [Le 27:28](#)). The *cherem*, or "anathema," was a devotion to utter destruction ([De 7:2; 20:17; 1Sa 15:3](#)). When such a ban was pronounced against a hostile city, the men and animals were killed--no booty was allowed to be taken. The idols and all the precious ornaments on them were to be burned ([De 7:25; compare 1Ch 14:12](#)). Everything was either to be destroyed or consecrated to the sanctuary. Joshua pronounced this ban on Jericho, a great and wealthy city, evidently by divine direction. The severity of the doom, accordant with the requirements of a law which was holy, just, and good, was justified, not only by the fact of its inhabitants being part of a race who had filled up their iniquities, but by their resisting the light of the recent astonishing miracle at the Jordan. Besides, as Jericho seems to have been defended by reinforcements from all the country ([Jos 24:11](#)), its destruction would paralyze all the rest of the devoted people, and thus tend to facilitate the conquest of the land; showing, as so astounding a military miracle did, that it was done, not by man, but by the power and through the anger, of God.

18. and ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing--Generally they were at liberty to take the spoil of other cities that were captured ([De 2:35; 3:7; Jos 8:27](#)). But this, as the first fruits of Canaan, was made an exception; nothing was to be spared but Rahab and those in her house [[Jos 6:17](#)]. A violation of these stringent orders would not only render the guilty persons obnoxious to the curse, but entail distress and adversity upon all Israel, by provoking the divine displeasure. These were the instructions given, or repeated ([De 13:17; 7:26](#)), previous to the last act of the siege.

[Jos 6:20, 21](#). THE WALLS FALL DOWN.

20, 21. So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets--Towards the close of the seventh circuit, the signal was given by Joshua, and on the Israelites' raising their loud war cry, the walls fell down, doubtless burying multitudes of the inhabitants in the ruins, while the besiegers, rushing in, consigned everything animate and inanimate to indiscriminate destruction ([De 20:16, 17](#)). Jewish writers mention it as an immemorial tradition that the city fell on the Sabbath. It should be remembered that the Canaanites were incorrigible idolaters, addicted to the most horrible vices, and that the righteous judgment of God might sweep them away by the sword, as well as by famine or pestilence. There was mercy mingled with judgment in employing the sword as the instrument of punishing the guilty Canaanites, for while it was directed against one place, time was afforded for others to repent.

[Jos 6:22-25](#). RAHAB IS SAVED.

22, 23. Joshua had said . . . Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath--It is evident that the town walls were not demolished universally, at least all at once, for Rahab's house was allowed to stand until her relatives were rescued according to promise.

23. they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel--a temporary exclusion, in order that they might be cleansed from the defilement of their native idolatries and gradually trained for admission into the society of God's people.

24. burned the city . . . and all . . . therein--except the silver, gold, and other metals, which, as they would not burn, were added to the treasury of the sanctuary.

25. she--Rahab

dwelleth in Israel unto this day--a proof that this book was written not long after the events related.

[Jos 6:26, 27](#). THE REBUILDER OF JERICHO CURSED.

26. Joshua adjured them at that time--that is, imposed upon his countrymen a solemn oath, binding on themselves as well as their posterity, that they would never rebuild that city. Its destruction was designed by God to be a permanent memorial of His abhorrence of idolatry and its attendant vices.

Cursed be the man . . . that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho--that is, makes the daring attempt to build.

he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it--shall become childless--the first beginning being marked by the death of his oldest son, and his only surviving child dying at the time of its completion. This curse was accomplished five hundred fifty years after its denunciation (see on [1Ki 16:34](#)).

CHAPTER 7

[Jos 7:1](#). ACHAN'S TRESPASS.

1. the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing--There was one transgressor against the *cherem*, or ban, on Jericho, and his transgression brought the guilt and disgrace of sin upon the whole nation.

Achan--called afterwards "Achar" ("trouble") ([1Ch 2:7](#)).

Zabdi--or Zimri ([1Ch 2:6](#)).

Zerah--or Zarah, son of Judah and Tamar ([Ge 38:30](#)). His genealogy is given probably to show that from a parentage so infamous the descendants would not be carefully trained in the fear of God.

[Jos 7:2-26](#). THE ISRAELITES SMITTEN AT AI.

2. Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai--After the sacking of Jericho, the next step was to penetrate into the hills above. Accordingly, spies went up the mountain pass to view the country. The precise site of Ai, or Hai, is indicated with sufficient clearness ([Ge 12:8; 13:3](#)) and has been recently discovered in an isolated tell, called by the natives Tell-el-Hajar, "the mount of stones," at two miles', or thirty-five minutes' distance, east southeast from Beth-el [VAN DE VELDE].

Beth-aven--("house of vanity")--a name afterwards given derisively ([Ho 4:15; 5:8; 10:5](#)), on

account of its idolatries, to Beth-el, "house of God," but here referred to another place, about six miles east of Beth-el and three north of Ai.

3. Let not all the people go up, . . . for they are but few--As the population of Ai amounted to twelve thousand ([Jos 8:25](#)), it was a considerable town; though in the hasty and distant reconnoitre made by the spies, it probably appeared small in comparison to Jericho; and this may have been the reason for their proposing so small a detachment to capture it.

4, 5. they fled before the men of Ai--An unexpected resistance, and the loss of thirty-six of their number diffused a panic, which ended in an ignominious rout.

5. chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim--that is, unto the "breakings" or "fissures" at the opening of the passes.

and smote them in the going down--that is, the declivity or slope of the deep, rugged, adjoining wady.

wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water--It is evident that the troops engaged were a tumultuary, undisciplined band, no better skilled in military affairs than the Bedouin Arabs, who become disheartened and flee on the loss of ten or fifteen men. But the consternation of the Israelites arose from another cause--the evident displeasure of God, who withheld that aid on which they had confidently reckoned.

6-9. Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth . . . before the ark . . . he and the elders--It is evident, from those tokens of humiliation and sorrow, that a solemn fast was observed on this occasion. The language of Joshua's prayer is thought by many to savor of human infirmity and to be wanting in that reverence and submission he owed to God. But, although apparently breathing a spirit of bold remonstrance and complaint, it was in reality the effusion of a deeply humbled and afflicted mind, expressing his belief that God could not, after having so miraculously brought His people over Jordan into the promised land, intend to destroy them, to expose them to the insults of their triumphant enemies, and bring reproach upon His own name for inconstancy or unkindness to His people, or inability to resist their enemies. Unable to understand the cause of the present calamity, he owned the hand of God.

10-15. the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up--The answer of the divine oracle was to this effect: the crisis is owing not to unfaithfulness in Me, but sin in the people. The conditions of the covenant have been violated by the reservation of spoil from the doomed city; wickedness, emphatically called folly, has been committed in Israel ([Ps 14:1](#)), and dissimulation, with other aggravations of the crime, continues to be practised. The people are liable to destruction equally with the accursed nations of Canaan ([De 7:26](#)). Means must, without delay, be taken to discover and punish the perpetrator of this trespass that Israel may be released from the ban, and things be restored to their former state of prosperity.

16-18. So Joshua rose up early, and brought Israel by their tribes--that is, before the tabernacle. The lot being appealed to ([Pr 16:33](#)), he proceeded in the inquiry from heads of tribes to heads of families, and from heads of households in succession to one family, and to particular persons in that family, until the criminal was found to be Achan, who, on Joshua's admonition, confessed the fact of having secreted for his own use, in the floor of his tent, spoil both in

garments and money [[Jos 7:19-21](#)]. How dreadful must have been his feelings when he saw the slow but certain process of discovery! ([Nu 32:23](#)).

19. Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give . . . glory to God--a form of adjuration to tell the truth.

21. a goodly Babylonish garment--literally, "a mantle of Shinar." The plain of Shinar was in early times celebrated for its gorgeous robes, which were of brilliant and various colors, generally arranged in figured patterns, probably resembling those of modern Turkish carpets, and the colors were either interwoven in the loom or embroidered with the needle.

two hundred shekels of silver--equivalent to £22 10s. sterling, according to the old Mosaic shekel, or the half of that sum, reckoning by the common shekel.

a wedge of gold--literally, an ingot or bar in the shape of a *tongue*.

22, 23. Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent--from impatient eagerness not only to test the truth of the story, but to clear Israel from the imputation of guilt. Having discovered the stolen articles, they laid them out before the Lord, "as a token of their belonging to Him" on account of the ban.

24-26. Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan--He with his children and all his property, cattle as well as movables, were brought into one of the long broad ravines that open into the Ghor, and after being stoned to death ([Nu 15:30-35](#)), his corpse, with all belonging to him, was consumed to ashes by fire. "All Israel" was present, not only as spectators, but active agents, as many as possible, in inflicting the punishment--thus testifying their abhorrence of the sacrilege, and their intense solicitude to regain the divine favor. As the divine law expressly forbade the children to be put to death for their father's sins ([De 24:16](#)), the conveyance of Achan's "sons and daughters" to the place of execution might be only as spectators, that they might take warning by the parental fate; or, if they shared his punishment ([Jos 22:20](#)), they had probably been accomplices in his crime, and, indeed, he could scarcely have dug a hole within his tent without his family being aware of it.

26. they raised over him a great heap of stones--It is customary to raise cairns over the graves of criminals or infamous persons in the East still.

the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor--("trouble"),

unto this day--So painful an episode would give notoriety to the spot, and it is more than once noted by the sacred writers of a later age ([Isa 65:10](#); [Ho 2:15](#)).

CHAPTER 8

[Jos 8:1-28](#). GOD ENCOURAGES JOSHUA.

1, 2. The Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not--By the execution of justice on Achan, the divine wrath was averted, the Israelites were reassured, defeat was succeeded by victory; and thus the case of Ai affords a striking example of God's disciplinary government, in which chastisements for sin are often made to pave the way for the bestowment of those temporal benefits, which, on account of sin, have been withdrawn, or withheld for a time. Joshua, who had

been greatly dispirited, was encouraged by a special communication promising him (see [Jos 1:6; De 31:6-8](#)) success in the next attempt, which, however, was to be conducted on different principles.

take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai--The number of fighting men amounted to six hundred thousand, and the whole force was ordered on this occasion, partly because the spies, in their self-confidence, had said that a few were sufficient to attack the place ([Jos 7:3](#)), partly to dispel any misgivings which the memory of the late disaster might have created, and partly that the circumstance of the first spoil obtained in Canaan being shared among all, might operate both as a reward for obedience in refraining from the booty of Jericho, and as an incentive to future exertions ([De 6:10](#)). The rest of the people, including the women and children, remained in the camp at Gilgal. Being in the plains of Jericho, it was an ascent to Ai, which was on a hill.

I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land . . . lay thee an ambush for the city--God assured Joshua of Ai's capture, but allowed him to follow his own tactics in obtaining the possession.

3. So Joshua . . . chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valour--Joshua despatched thirty thousand men under cover of night, to station themselves at the place appointed for the ambuscade. Out of this number a detachment of five thousand was sent forward to conceal themselves in the immediate precincts of the town, in order to seize the first opportunity of throwing themselves into it [[Jos 8:12](#)].

4. behind the city--is rendered ([Jos 8:9](#)), "on the west side of Ai."

9. between Beth-el and Ai--Beth-el, though lying quite near in the direction of west by north, cannot be seen from Tell-el-hajar; two rocky heights rise between both places, in the wady El-Murogede, just as the laying of an ambush to the west of Ai would require [VAN DE VELDE; ROBINSON].

10. Joshua . . . numbered the people--that is, the detachment of liers-in-wait; he did this, to be furnished with clear evidence afterwards, that the work had been done without any loss of men, whereby the people's confidence in God would be strengthened and encouragement given them to prosecute the war of invasion with vigor.

he and the elders of Israel--the chief magistrates and rulers, whose presence and official authority were necessary to ensure that the cattle and spoil of the city might be equally divided between the combatants and the rest of the people ([Nu 31:27](#)) --a military rule in Israel, that would have been very liable to be infringed, if an excited soldiery, eager for booty, had been left to their own will.

11-14. there was a valley between them and Ai--literally, "*the valley*."

13. Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley--The deep and steep-sided glen to the north of Tell-el-hajar, into which one looks down from the tell, fully agrees with this account [VAN DE VELDE]. Joshua himself took up his position on the north side of "the ravine"--the deep chasm of the wady El-Murogede; "*that night*"--means, while it was dark, probably after midnight, or very early in the morning ([Joh 20:1](#)). The king of Ai, in the early dawn, rouses his

slumbering subjects and makes a hasty sally with all his people who were capable of bearing arms, once more to surprise and annihilate them.

14. at a time appointed--either an hour concocted between the king and people of Ai and those of Beth-el, who were confederates in this enterprise, or perhaps they had fixed on the same time of day, as they had fought successfully against Israel on the former occasion, deeming it a lucky hour ([Jud 20:38](#)).

but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city--It is evident that this king and his subjects were little experienced in war; otherwise they would have sent out scouts to reconnoitre the neighborhood; at all events, they would not have left their town wholly unprotected and open. Perhaps an ambuscade may have been a war stratagem hitherto unknown in that country, and among that people.

15-17. Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them--the pretended flight in the direction of the wilderness; that is, southeast, into the Ghor, the desert valley of the Jordan, decoyed all the inhabitants of Ai out of the city, while the people of Beth-el hastened to participate in the expected victory. It is supposed by some, from "the city," and not "cities," being spoken of, that the effective force of Beth-el had been concentrated in Ai, as the two places were closely contiguous, and Ai the larger of the two. (See [Jos 12:9](#)). It may be remarked, however, that the words, "or Beth-el," are not in the *Septuagint*, and are rejected by some eminent scholars, as an interpolation not found in the most ancient manuscripts.

18-25. Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city--The uplifted spear had probably a flag, or streamer on it, to render it the more conspicuous from the height where he stood. At the sight of this understood signal the ambush nearest the city, informed by their scouts, made a sudden rush and took possession of the city, telegraphing to their brethren by raising a smoke from the walls. Upon seeing this, the main body, who had been reigning a flight, turned round at the head of the pass upon their pursuers, while the twenty-five thousand issuing from their ambuscade, fell back upon their rear. The Ai-ites surprised, looked back, and found their situation now desperate.

23. the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua--to be reserved for a more ignominious death, as a greater criminal in God's sight than his subjects. In the mingled attack from before and behind, all the men were massacred.

24. all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword--the women, children, and old persons left behind, amounting, in all, to twelve thousand people [[Jos 8:25](#)].

26. Joshua drew not his hand back--Perhaps, from the long continuance of the posture, it might have been a means appointed by God, to animate the people, and kept up in the same devout spirit as Moses had shown, in lifting up his hands, until the work of slaughter had been completed--the ban executed. (See on [Ex 17:10](#)).

28. Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever--"For ever" often signifies "a long time" ([Ge 6:3](#)). One of the remarkable things with regard to the tell we have identified with Ai is its name--the tell of the heap of stones--a name which to this day remains [VAN DE VELDE].

[Jos 8:29](#). THE KING HANGED.

29. The king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide--that is, gibbeted. In ancient, and particularly Oriental wars, the chiefs, when taken prisoners, were usually executed. The Israelites were obliged, by the divine law, to put them to death. The execution of the king of Ai would tend to facilitate the conquest of the land, by striking terror into the other chiefs, and making it appear a judicial process, in which they were inflicting the vengeance of God upon His enemies.

take his carcass down . . . and raise thereon a great heap of stones--It was taken down at sunset, according to the divine command ([De 21:23](#)), and cast into a pit dug "at the entering of the gate," because that was the most public place. An immense cairn was raised over his grave--an ancient usage, still existing in the East, whereby is marked the sepulchre of persons whose memory is infamous.

[Jos 8:30, 31](#). JOSHUA BUILDS AN ALTAR.

30, 31. Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal--(See on [De 27:11](#)). This spot was little short of twenty miles from Ai. The march through a hostile country and the unmolested performance of the religious ceremonial observed at this mountain, would be greatly facilitated, through the blessing of God, by the disastrous fall of Ai. The solemn duty was to be attended to at the first convenient opportunity after the entrance into Canaan ([De 27:2](#)); and with this in view Joshua seems to have conducted the people through the mountainous region that intervened though no details of the journey have been recorded. Ebal was on the north, opposite to Gerizim, which was on the south side of the town Sichem (Nablous).

31. an altar of whole stones--according to the instructions given to Moses ([Ex 20:25](#); [De 27:5](#)).

over which no man hath lifted up any iron--that is, iron tool. The reason for this was that every altar of the true God ought properly to have been built of earth ([Ex 20:24](#)); and if it was constructed of stone, rough, unhewn stones were to be employed that it might retain both the appearance and nature of earth, since every bloody sacrifice was connected with sin and death, by which man, the creature of earth, is brought to earth again [KEIL].

they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings--This had been done when the covenant was established ([Ex 24:5](#)); and by the observance of these rites ([De 27:6](#)), the covenant was solemnly renewed--the people were reconciled to God by the burnt offering, and this feast accompanying the peace or thank offering, a happy communion with God was enjoyed by all the families in Israel.

32. he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses--(See on [De 27:2, 3, 5](#)); that is, the blessings and curses of the law. Some think that the stones which contained this inscription were the stones of the altar: but this verse seems rather to indicate that a number of stone pillars were erected alongside of the altar, and on which, after they were plastered, this duplicate of the law was inscribed.

33. all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side--One half of Israel was arranged on Gerizim, and the other half on Ebal--along the sides and base of each.

before the priests the Levites--in full view of them.

34. afterward he read all the words of the law--caused the priests or Levites to read it ([De 27:14](#)). Persons are often said in Scripture to do that which they only command to be done.

35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not--It appears that a much larger portion of the law was read on this occasion than the brief summary inscribed on the stones; and this must have been the essence of the law as contained in Deuteronomy ([De 4:44; 6:9; 27:8](#)). It was not written on the stones, but on the plaster. The immediate design of this rehearsal was attained by the performance of the act itself. It only related to posterity, in so far as the record of the event would be handed down in the Book of Joshua, or the documents which form the groundwork of it [HENGSTENBERG]. Thus faithfully did Joshua execute the instructions given by Moses. How awfully solemn must have been the assemblage and the occasion! The eye and the ear of the people being both addressed, it was calculated to leave an indelible impression; and with spirits elevated by their brilliant victories in the land of promise, memory would often revert to the striking scene on mounts Ebal and Gerizim, and in the vale of Sychar.

CHAPTER 9

[Jos 9:1-27](#). THE KINGS COMBINE AGAINST ISRAEL.

1. all the kings which were on this side--that is, the western side of Jordan.

in the hills, and in their valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea--This threefold distinction marks out very clearly a large portion of Canaan. The first designates the hill country, which belonged afterwards to the tribes of Judah and Ephraim: the second, all the low country from Carmel to Gaza; and the third, the shores of the Mediterranean, from the Isthmus of Tyre to the plain of Joppa. (As for the tribes mentioned, see on [Nu 13:29](#)).

heard thereof--that is, of the sacking of Jericho and Ai, as well as the rapid advance of the Israelites into the interior of the country.

2. they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord--Although divided by separate interests and often at war with each other, a sense of common danger prompted them to suspend their mutual animosities, that by their united forces they might prevent the land from falling into the hands of foreign masters.

[Jos 9:3-15](#). THE GIBEONITES OBTAIN A LEAGUE BY CRAFT.

3-15. when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard--This town, as its name imports, was situated on a rocky eminence, about six miles northwest from Jerusalem, where the modern village of El Jib now stands. It was the capital of the Hivites, and a large important city ([Jos 10:2](#)). It seems to have formed, in union with a few other towns in the neighborhood, a free independent state ([Jos 9:17](#)) and to have enjoyed a republican government ([Jos 9:11](#)).

4. They did work wily--They acted with dexterous policy, seeking the means of self-preservation, not by force, which they were convinced would be unavailing, but by artful diplomacy.

took old sacks upon their asses--Travellers in the East transport their luggage on beasts of burden; the poorer sort stow all their necessaries, food, clothes, utensils together, in a woollen or hair-cloth sack, laid across the shoulders of the beast they ride upon.

wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up--Goat-skins, which are better adapted for carrying liquor of any kind fresh and good, than either earthenware, which is porous, or metallic vessels, which are soon heated by the sun. These skin bottles are liable to be rent when old and much used; and there are various ways of mending them--by inserting a new piece of leather, or by gathering together the edges of the rent and sewing them in the form of a purse, or by putting a round flat splinter of wood into the hole.

5. old shoes and clouted--Those who have but one ass or mule for themselves and baggage frequently dismount and walk--a circumstance which may account for the worn shoes of the pretended travellers.

bread . . . dry and mouldy--This must have been that commonly used by travellers--a sort of biscuit made in the form of large rings, about an inch thick, and four or five inches in diameter. Not being so well baked as our biscuits, it becomes hard and mouldy from the moisture left in the dough. It is usually soaked in water previous to being used.

6-14. they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal--Arrived at the Israelitish headquarters, the strangers obtained an interview with Joshua and the elders, to whom they opened their business.

7. the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us--The answer of the Israelites implied that they had no discretion, that their orders were imperative, and that if the strangers belonged to any of the native tribes, the idea of an alliance with them was unlawful since God had forbidden it ([Ex 23:32; 34:12; De 7:2](#)).

9. From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God--They pretended to be actuated by religious motives in seeking to be allied with His people. But their studied address is worthy of notice in appealing to instances of God's miraculous doings at a distance, while they pass by those done in Canaan, as if the report of these had not yet reached their ears.

14, 15. the men took of their victuals and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord--The mouldy appearance of their bread was, after examination, accepted as guaranteeing the truth of the story. In this precipitate conclusion the Israelites were guilty of excessive credulity and culpable negligence, in not asking by the high priest's Urim and Thummim the mind of God, before entering into the alliance. It is not clear, however, that had they applied for divine direction they would have been forbidden to spare and connect themselves with any of the Canaanite tribes who renounced idolatry and embraced and worshipped the true God. At least, no fault was found with them for making a covenant with the Gibeonites; while, on the other hand, the violation of it was severely punished ([2Sa 21:1; and Jos 11:19, 20](#)).

16, 17. at the end of three days . . . they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them--This information was obtained in their further progress through the country; for as [Jos 9:17](#) should be rendered, "when the children of Israel journeyed, they came to their cities." Gibeon was about eighteen or twenty miles from Gilgal.

17. Chephirah-- ([Jos 18:26](#); [Ezr 2:25](#); [Ne 7:29](#)).

Beeroth-- ([2Sa 4:2](#)), now *El Berich*, about twenty minutes' distance from El Jib (Gibeon).

Kirjath-jearim--"the city of forests," now Kuryet-el-Enab [ROBINSON].

18-27. the children of Israel smote them not--The moral character of the Gibeonites' stratagem was bad. The princes of the congregation did not vindicate either the expediency or the lawfulness of the connection they had formed; but they felt the solemn obligations of their oath; and, although the popular clamor was loud against them, caused either by disappointment at losing the spoils of Gibeon, or by displeasure at the apparent breach of the divine commandment, they determined to adhere to their pledge, "because they had sworn by the Lord God of Israel." The Israelitish princes acted conscientiously; they felt themselves bound by their solemn promise; but to prevent the disastrous consequences of their imprudent haste, they resolved to degrade the Gibeonites to a servile condition as a means of preventing their people from being ensnared into idolatry, and thus acted up, as they thought, to the true spirit and end of the law.

27. hewers of wood and drawers of water--The menials who performed the lowest offices and drudgery in the sanctuary; whence they were called Nethinims ([1Ch 9:2](#); [Ezr 2:43](#); [8:20](#)); that is, given, appropriated. Their chastisement thus brought them into the possession of great religious privileges ([Ps 84:10](#)).

CHAPTER 10

[Jos 10:1-5](#). FIVE KINGS WAR AGAINST GIBEON.

1. Adoni-zedek--"lord of righteousness"--nearly synonymous with Melchizedek, "king of righteousness." These names were common titles of the Jebusite kings.

Jerusalem--The original name, "Salem" ([Ge 14:18](#); [Ps 76:2](#)), was superseded by that here given, which signifies "a peaceful possession," or "a vision of peace," in allusion, as some think, to the strikingly symbolic scene ([Ge 22:14](#)) represented on the mount whereon that city was afterwards built.

inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them--that is, the Israelites; had made an alliance with that people, and acknowledging their supremacy, were living on terms of friendly intercourse with them.

2. they feared greatly--The dread inspired by the rapid conquests of the Israelites had been immensely increased by the fact of a state so populous and so strong as Gibeon having found it expedient to submit to the power and the terms of the invaders.

as one of the royal cities--Although itself a republic ([Jos 9:3](#)), it was large and well-fortified, like those places in which the chiefs of the country usually established their residence.

3, 4. Wherefore Adoni-zedek . . . sent, . . . saying, Come up unto me, and help me--A combined attack was meditated on Gibeon, with a view not only to punish its people for their desertion of the native cause, but by its overthrow to interpose a barrier to the farther inroads of the Israelites. This confederacy among the mountaineers of Southern Palestine was formed and headed by the king of Jerusalem, because his territory was most exposed to danger, Gibeon being only six miles distant, and because he evidently possessed some degree of pre-eminence over his royal neighbors.

5. the five kings of the Amorites--The settlement of this powerful and warlike tribe lay within the confines of Moab; but having also acquired extensive possessions on the southwest of the Jordan, their name, as the ruling power, seems to have been given to the region generally ([2Sa 21:2](#)), although Hebron was inhabited by Hittites or Hivites ([Jos 11:19](#)), and Jerusalem by Jebusites ([Jos 15:63](#)).

[Jos 10:6-9](#). JOSHUA RESCUES IT.

6-8. the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua--Their appeal was urgent and their claim to protection irresistible, on the ground, not only of kindness and sympathy, but of justice. In attacking the Canaanites, Joshua had received from God a general assurance of success ([Jos 1:5](#)). But the intelligence of so formidable a combination among the native princes seems to have depressed his mind with the anxious and dispiriting idea that it was a chastisement for the hasty and inconsiderate alliance entered into with the Gibeonites. It was evidently to be a struggle of life and death, not only to Gibeon, but to the Israelites. And in this view the divine communication that was made to him was seasonable and animating. He seems to have asked the counsel of God and received an answer, before setting out on the expedition.

9. Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly--This is explained in the following clause, where he is described as having accomplished, by a forced march of picked men, in one night, a distance of twenty-six miles, which, according to the slow pace of Eastern armies and caravans, had formerly been a three days' journey ([Jos 9:17](#)).

[Jos 10:10, 11](#). GOD FIGHTS AGAINST THEM WITH HAILSTONES.

10, 11. the Lord discomfited them--*Hebrew*, "terrified," confounded the Amorite allies, probably by a fearful storm of lightning and thunder. So the word is usually employed ([1Sa 7:10](#); [Ps 18:13](#); [144:6](#)).

and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon--This refers to the attack of the Israelites upon the besiegers. It is evident that there had been much hard fighting around the heights of Gibeon, for the day was far spent before the enemy took to flight.

chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon--that is, "the House of Caves," of which there are still traces existing. There were two contiguous villages of that name, upper and nether. Upper Beth-horon was nearest Gibeon--about ten miles distant, and approached by a gradual ascent through a long and precipitous ravine. This was the first stage of the flight. The fugitives had crossed the high ridge of Upper Beth-horon, and were in full flight down the descent to Beth-horon the Nether. The road between the two places is so rocky and rugged that there is a path made by means of steps cut in the rock [ROBINSON]. Down this pass Joshua

continued his victorious rout. Here it was that the Lord interposed, assisting His people by means of a storm, which, having been probably gathering all day, burst with such irresistible fury, that "they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." The Oriental hailstorm is a terrific agent; the hailstones are masses of ice, large as walnuts, and sometimes as two fists; their prodigious size, and the violence with which they fall, make them always very injurious to property, and often fatal to life. The miraculous feature of *this* tempest, which fell on the Amorite army, was the entire preservation of the Israelites from its destructive ravages.

[Jos 10:12-15](#). THE SUN AND MOON STAND STILL AT THE WORD OF JOSHUA.

12-15. Then spake Joshua to the Lord . . . and . . . he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still . . . and thou, Moon--The inspired author here breaks off the thread of his history of this miraculous victory to introduce a quotation from an ancient poem, in which the mighty acts of that day were commemorated. The passage, which is parenthetical, contains a *poetical* description of the victory which was miraculously gained by the help of God, and forms an extract from "the book of Jasher," that is, "the upright"--an anthology, or collection of national songs, in honor of renowned and eminently pious heroes. The language of a poem is not to be literally interpreted; and therefore, when the sun and moon are personified, addressed as intelligent beings, and represented as standing still, the explanation is that the light of the sun and moon was supernaturally prolonged by the same laws of refraction and reflection that ordinarily cause the sun to appear above the horizon, when it is in reality below it [KEIL, BUSH]. Gibeon ("a hill") was now at the back of the Israelites, and the height would soon have intercepted the rays of the setting sun. The valley of Ajalon ("stags") was before them, and so near that it was sometimes called "the valley of Gibeon" ([Isa 28:21](#)). It would seem, from [Jos 10:14](#), that the command of Joshua was in reality a prayer to God for the performance of this miracle; and that, although the prayers of eminently good men like Moses often prevailed with God, never was there on any other occasion so astonishing a display of divine power made in behalf of His people, as in answer to the prayer of Joshua. [Jos 10:15](#) is the end of the quotation from Jasher; and it is necessary to notice this, as the fact described in it is recorded in due course, and the same words, by the sacred historian ([Jos 10:43](#)).

[Jos 10:16-27](#). THE FIVE KINGS HANGED.

16-27. these five kings . . . hid themselves in a cave--*Hebrew*, "the cave."

at Makkedah--The pursuit was continued, without interruption, to Makkedah at the foot of the western mountains, where Joshua seems to have halted with the main body of his troops while a detachment was sent forward to scour the country in pursuit of the remaining stragglers, a few of whom succeeded in reaching the neighboring cities. The last act, probably the next day, was the disposal of the prisoners, among whom the five kings were consigned to the infamous doom of being slain ([De 20:16, 17](#)); and then their corpses were suspended on five trees till the evening.

24. put your feet upon the necks of these kings--not as a barbarous insult, but a symbolical action, expressive of a complete victory ([De 33:29](#); [Ps 110:5](#); [Mal 4:3](#)).

[Jos 10:28-42](#). SEVEN MORE KINGS CONQUERED.

28-42. that day Joshua took Makkedah--In this and the following verses is described the rapid succession of victory and extermination which swept the whole of southern Palestine into the hands of Israel. "All these kings and their land did Joshua take *at one time*, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal."

CHAPTER 11

[Jos 11:1-9](#). DIVERS KINGS OVERCOME AT THE WATERS OF MEROM.

1-9. And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard those things--The scene of the sacred narrative is here shifted to the north of Canaan, where a still more extensive confederacy was formed among the ruling powers to oppose the further progress of the Israelites. Jabin ("the Intelligent"), which seems to have been a hereditary title ([Jud 4:2](#)), took the lead, from Hazor being the capital of the northern region ([Jos 11:10](#)). It was situated on the borders of lake Merom. The other cities mentioned must have been in the vicinity though their exact position is unknown.

2. the kings that were on the north of the mountains--the Anti-libanus district.

the plains south of Chinneroth--the northern part of the Arabah, or valley of the Jordan.

the valley--the low and level country, including the plain of Sharon.

borders of Dor on the west--the highlands of Dor, reaching to the town of Dor on the Mediterranean coast, below mount Carmel.

3. the Canaanites on the east and on the west--a particular branch of the Canaanitish population who occupied the western bank of the Jordan as far northward as the Sea of Galilee, and also the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

under Hermon--now Jebel-es-sheikh. It was the northern boundary of Canaan on the east of the Jordan.

land of Mizpeh--now Cælo-Syria.

4, 5. they went out, . . . as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude--The chiefs of these several tribes were summoned by Jabin, being all probably tributary to the kingdom of Hazor. Their combined forces, according to JOSEPHUS, amounted to three hundred thousand infantry, ten thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand war chariots.

with horses and chariots very many--The war chariots were probably like those of Egypt, made of wood, but nailed and tipped with iron. These appear for the first time in the Canaanite war, to aid this last determined struggle against the invaders; and "it was the use of these which seems to have fixed the place of rendezvous by the lake Merom (now Huleh), along whose level shores they could have full play for their force." A host so formidable in numbers, as well as in military equipments, was sure to alarm and dispirit the Israelites. Joshua, therefore, was favored with a renewal of the divine promise of victory ([Jos 11:6](#)), and thus encouraged, he, in the full confidence of faith, set out to face the enemy.

6-8. to-morrow, about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel--As it was impossible to have marched from Gilgal to Merom in one day, we must suppose Joshua already moving northward and within a day's distance of the Canaanite camp, when the Lord gave him this assurance of success. With characteristic energy he made a sudden advance, probably during the night, and fell upon them like a thunderbolt, when scattered along the rising grounds (*Septuagint*), before they had time to rally on the plain. In the sudden panic "the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them." The rout was complete; some went westward, over the mountains, above the gorge of the Leontes, to Sidon and Misrephothmaim ("glass-smelting houses"), in the neighborhood, and others eastward to the plain of Mizpeh.

8. they left none remaining--of those whom they overtook. All those who fell into their hands alive were slain.

9. Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him--(See [Jos 11:6](#)). Houghing the horses is done by cutting the sinews and arteries of their hinder legs, so that they not only become hopelessly lame, but bleed to death. The reasons for this special command were that the Lord designed to lead the Israelites to trust in Him, not in military resources ([Ps 20:7](#)); to show that in the land of promise there was no use of horses; and, finally, to discourage their travelling as they were to be an agricultural, not a trading, people.

11. he burnt Hazor with fire--calmly and deliberately, doubtless, according to divine direction.

13. as for the cities that stood still in their strength--literally, "on their heaps." It was a Phœnician custom to build cities on heights, natural or artificial [HENGSTENBERG].

16. So Joshua took all that land--Here follows a general view of the conquest. The division of the country there into five parts; namely, the hills, the land of Goshen, that is, a pastoral land near Gibeon ([Jos 10:41](#)); the valley, the plains and the mountains of Israel, *i. e.*, Carmel, rests upon a diversity of geographical positions, which is characteristic of the region.

17. from the mount Halak--*Hebrew*, "the smooth mountain."

that goeth up to Seir--an irregular line of white naked hills, about eighty feet high, and seven or eight geographical miles in length that cross the whole Ghor, eight miles south of the Dead Sea, probably "the ascent of Akrabbim" [ROBINSON].

unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon--the city or temple of the god of destiny, in Baalbec.

23. Joshua took the whole land--The battle of the take of Merom was to the north what the battle of Beth-horon was to the south; more briefly told and less complete in its consequences; but still the decisive conflict by which the whole northern region of Canaan fell into the hands of Israel [STANLEY].

[Jos 12:1-6](#). THE TWO KINGS WHOSE COUNTRIES MOSES TOOK AND DISPOSED OF.

1. Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan--This chapter contains a recapitulation of the conquests made in the promised land, with the additional mention of some places not formerly noted in the sacred history. The river Arnon on the south and mount Hermon on the north were the respective boundaries of the land acquired by the Israelites beyond Jordan (see [Nu 21:21-24](#); [De 2:36](#); [3:3-16](#) [and see on [De 2:24](#)]).

[Jos 12:7-24](#). THE ONE AND THIRTY KINGS ON THE WEST SIDE OF JORDAN, WHICH JOSHUA SMOTE.

7. Baal-gad . . . even unto . . . Halak--(See on [Jos 11:17](#)). A list of thirty-one chief towns is here given; and, as the whole land contained a superficial extent of only fifteen miles in length by fifty in breadth, it is evident that these capital cities belonged to petty and insignificant kingdoms. With a few exceptions, they were not the scenes of any important events recorded in the sacred history, and therefore do not require a particular notice.

CHAPTER 13

[Jos 13:1-33](#). BOUNDS OF THE LAND NOT YET CONQUERED.

1. Now Joshua was old and stricken in years--He was probably above a hundred years old; for the conquest and survey of the land occupied about seven years, the partition one; and he died at the age of one hundred ten years ([Jos 24:29](#)). The distribution, as well as the conquest of the land, was included in the mission of Joshua; and his advanced age supplied a special reason for entering on the immediate discharge of that duty; namely, of allocating Canaan among the tribes of Israel--not only the parts already won, but those also which were still to be conquered.

2-6. This is the land that yet remaineth--that is, to be acquired. This section forms a parenthesis, in which the historian briefly notices the districts yet unsubdued; namely, first, the whole country of the Philistines--a narrow tract stretching about sixty miles along the Mediterranean coast, and that of the Geshurites to the south of it ([1Sa 27:8](#)). Both included that portion of the country "from Sihor, which is before Egypt," a small brook near El-Arish, which on the east was the southern boundary of Canaan, to Ekron, the most northerly of the five chief lordships or principalities of the Philistines.

3, 4. also the Avites: From [on] the south--The two clauses are thus connected in the *Septuagint* and many other versions. On being driven out ([De 2:23](#)), they established themselves in the south of Philistia. The second division of the unconquered country comprised

4. all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah--("the cave")
that is beside the Sidonians--a mountainous region of Upper Galilee, remarkable for its caves and fastnesses.

unto Aphek--now Afka; eastward, in Lebanon.

to the borders of the Amorites--a portion of the northeastern territory that had belonged to Og. The third district that remained unsubdued:

5. all the land of the Giblites--Their capital was Gebal or Bylbos (*Greek*), on the Mediterranean, forty miles north of Sidon.

all Lebanon, toward the sunrising--that is, Anti-libanus; the eastern ridge, which has its proper termination in Hermon.

entering into Hamath--the valley of Baalbec.

6, 7. All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim--(See on [Jos 11:8](#)) --that is, "all the Sidonians and Phœnicians."

them will I drive out--The fulfilment of this promise was conditional. In the event of the Israelites proving unfaithful or disobedient, they would not subdue the districts now specified; and, in point of fact, the Israelites never possessed them though the inhabitants were subjected to the power of David and Solomon.

only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance--The parenthetic section being closed, the historian here resumes the main subject of this chapter--the order of God to Joshua to make an immediate allotment of the land. The method of distribution by lot was, in all respects, the best that could have been adopted, as it prevented all ground of discontent, as well as charges of arbitrary or partial conduct on the part of the leaders; and its announcement in the life of Moses ([Nu 33:54](#)), as the system according to which the allocations to each tribe should be made, was intended to lead the people to the acknowledgment of God as the proprietor of the land and as having the entire right to its disposal. Moreover, a solemn appeal to the lot showed it to be the dictate not of human, but divine, wisdom. It was used, however, only in determining the part of the country where a tribe was to be settled--the extent of the settlement was to be decided on a different principle ([Nu 26:54](#)). The overruling control of God is conclusively proved because each tribe received the possession predicted by Jacob ([Ge 49:3-28](#)) and by Moses ([De 33:6-25](#)).

8. With whom--*Hebrew*, "him." The antecedent is evidently to Manasseh, not, however, the half-tribe just mentioned, but the other half; for the historian, led, as it were, by the sound of the word, breaks off to describe the possessions beyond Jordan already assigned to Reuben, Gad, and the half of Manasseh (see on [Nu 32:1](#); [Nu 32:33](#); also see [De 3:8-17](#)). It may be proper to remark that it was wise to put these boundaries on record. In case of any misunderstanding or dispute arising about the exact limits of each district or property, an appeal could always be made to this authoritative document, and a full knowledge as well as grateful sense obtained of what they had received from God ([Ps 16:5, 6](#)).

CHAPTER 14

[Jos 14:1-5](#). THE NINE TRIBES AND A HALF TO HAVE THEIR INHERITANCE BY LOT.

1. these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan--This chapter forms the introduction to an account of the allocation of the land west of Jordan, or Canaan proper, to the nine tribes and a half. It was also made by lot in presence of a select number of superintendents, appointed according to divine directions given to Moses (see on [Nu](#)

[34:16](#)). In everything pertaining to civil government, and even the division of the land, Joshua was the acknowledged chief. But in a matter to be determined by lot, a solemn appeal was made to God, and hence Eleazar, as high priest, is named before Joshua.

4. The children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim--As two and a half tribes were settled on the east Jordan, and the Levites had no inheritance assigned them in land, there would have been only eight and a half tribes to provide for. But Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, had been constituted two tribes ([Ge 48:5](#)), and although Levi was excluded, the original number of the tribes of Israel was still preserved.

5. the children of Israel . . . divided the land--that is, they made the preliminary arrangements for the work. A considerable time was requisite for the survey and measurement.

[Jos 14:6-15](#). CALEB BY PRIVILEGE REQUESTS AND OBTAINS HEBRON.

6-11. Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb . . . said--This incident is recorded here because it occurred while the preparations were being made for casting the lots, which, it appears, were begun in Gilgal. The claim of Caleb to the mountains of Hebron as his personal and family possessions was founded on a solemn promise of Moses, forty-five years before ([Nu 14:24; De 1:36; Jos 14:10](#)), to give him that land on account of his fidelity. Being one of the nominees appointed to preside over the division of the country, he might have been charged with using his powers as a commissioner to his own advantage, had he urged his request in private; and therefore he took some of his brethren along with him as witness of the justice and propriety of his conduct.

12. give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day--this highland region.

for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there--The report of the spies, who tried to kindle the flame of sedition and discontent, related chiefly to the people and condition of this mountain district, and hence it was promised as the reward of Caleb's truth, piety, and faithfulness.

13, 14. Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb Hebron for an inheritance--Joshua, who was fully cognizant of all the circumstances, not only admitted the claim, but in a public and earnest manner prayed for the divine blessing to succor the efforts of Caleb in driving out the idolatrous occupiers.

15. Kirjath-arba--that is, the city of Arba, a warrior among the native race remarkable for strength and stature.

the land had rest from war--Most of the kings having been slain and the natives dispirited, there was no general or systematic attempt to resist the progress and settlement of the Israelites.

CHAPTER 15

[Jos 15:1-12](#). BORDERS OF THE LOT OF JUDAH.

1. This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah--In what manner the lot was drawn on this occasion the sacred historian does not say; but it is probable that the method adopted was similar to that described in [Jos 18:10](#). Though the general survey of the country had not been completed, some rough draft or delineation of the first conquered part must have been made, and satisfactory evidence obtained that it was large enough to furnish three cantons, before all the tribes cast lots for them; and they fell to Judah, Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The lot of Judah came first, in token of the pre-eminence of that tribe over all the others; and its destined superiority thus received the visible sanction of God. The territory, assigned to it as a possession, was large and extensive, being bounded on the south by the wilderness of Zin, and the southern extremity of the Salt Sea ([Nu 34:3-5](#)); on the east, by that sea, extending to the point where it receives the waters of the Jordan; on the north, by a line drawn nearly parallel to Jerusalem, across the country, from the northern extremity of the Salt Sea to the southern limits of the Philistine territory, and to the Mediterranean; and on the west this sea was its boundary, as far as Sihor (Wady El-Arish).

2. the bay--*Hebrew*, "tongue." It pushes its waters out in this form to a great distance [ROBINSON].

3. Maaleh-akrabbim--*Hebrew*, "the ascent of scorpions"; a pass in the "bald mountain" (see on [Jos 11:17](#)), probably much infested by these venomous reptiles.

5. the end--that is, the mouth of the Jordan.

6. Beth-hogla--now Ain Hajla, a fine spring of clear and sweet water, at the northern extremity of the Dead Sea, about two miles from the Jordan [ROBINSON].

Beth-arabah--"the house," or "place of solitude," in the desert of Judah ([Jos 15:61](#)).

stone of Bohan the son of Reuben--the sepulchral monument of a Reubenite leader, who had been distinguished for his bravery, and had fallen in the Canaanite war.

7. Achor--(see on [Jos 7:26](#)).

Adummim--a rising ground in the wilderness of Jericho, on the south of the little brook that flowed near Jericho ([Jos 16:1](#)).

En-shemesh--"the fountain of the sun"; "either the present well of the apostle, below Bethany, on the road to Jericho, or the fountain near to St. Saba" [ROBINSON].

En-rogel--"the fuller's fountain," on the southeast of Jerusalem, below the spot where the valleys of Jehoshaphat and Hinnom unite.

[Jos 15:13-15](#). CALEB'S PORTION AND CONQUEST.

13. unto Caleb he gave a part among the children of Judah--(See on [Jos 14:6](#)).

14. drove thence the three sons of Anak--rather three chiefs of the Anakim race. This exploit is recorded to the honor of Caleb, as the success of it was the reward of his trust in God.

15. Debir--"oracle." Its former name, Kirjath-sepher, signifies "city of the book," being probably a place where public registers were kept.

[Jos 15:16-20](#). OTHNIEL, FOR HIS VALOR, HAS ACHSAH TO WIFE.

16-20. He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher--This offer was made as an incentive to youthful bravery (see on [1Sa 17:25](#)); and the prize was won by Othniel, Caleb's *younger* brother ([Jud 1:13; 3:9](#)). This was the occasion of drawing out the latent energies of him who was destined to be the first judge in Israel.

18, 19. as she came unto him--that is, when about to remove from her father's to her husband's house. She suddenly alighted from her travelling equipage--a mark of respect to her father, and a sign of making some request. She had urged Othniel to broach the matter, but he not wishing to do what appeared like evincing a grasping disposition, she resolved herself to speak out. Taking advantage of the parting scene when a parent's heart was likely to be tender, she begged (as her marriage portion consisted of a field which, having a southern exposure, was comparatively an arid and barren waste) he would add the adjoining one, which abounded in excellent springs. The request being reasonable, it was granted; and the story conveys this important lesson in religion, that if earthly parents are ready to bestow on their children that which is good, much more will our heavenly Father give every necessary blessing to them who ask Him.

[Jos 15:21-63](#). CITIES OF JUDAH.

21-63. the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah--There is given a list of cities within the tribal territory of Judah, arranged in four divisions, corresponding to the districts of which it consisted--the cities in the southern part ([Jos 15:21-32](#)), those in the lowlands ([Jos 15:33-47](#)), those in the highlands ([Jos 15:48-60](#)), and those in the desert ([Jos 15:61, 62](#)). One gets the best idea of the relative situation of these cities by looking at the map.

CHAPTER 16

[Jos 16:1-4](#). THE GENERAL BORDERS OF THE SONS OF JOSEPH.

1. the lot of the children of Joseph fell--*Hebrew*, "went forth," referring either to the lot as drawn out of the urn, or to the tract of land thereby assigned. The first four verses describe the territory allotted to the family of Joseph in the rich domains of central Palestine. It was drawn in one lot, that the brethren might be contiguously situated; but it was afterwards divided. The southern boundary only is described here; that on the north being irregular and less defined ([Jos 17:10, 11](#)), is not mentioned.

water of Jericho-- ([2Ki 2:19](#)), at the joint of its junction with the Jordan.

mount Beth-el--the ridge south of Beth-el. Having described the position of Joseph's family generally the historian proceeds to define the territory; first, that of Ephraim.

[Jos 16:5-9](#). THE BORDERS OF THE INHERITANCE OF EPHRAIM.

5-9. the border of their inheritance . . . was Ataroth-addar--Ataroth-addar (now Atara), four miles south of Jetta [ROBINSON], is fixed on as a center, through which a line is drawn from

Upper Beth-horon to Michmethah, showing the western limit of their actual possessions. The tract beyond that to the sea was still unconquered.

6, 7. Michmethah on the north side--The northern boundary is traced from this point eastward to the Jordan.

8. from Tappuah westward unto the river Kanah--It is retraced from east to west, to describe the prospective and intended boundary, which was to reach to the sea. Kanah ("reedy") flows into the Mediterranean.

9. separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of Manasseh--([Jos 17:9](#)), because it was found that the tract allotted to Ephraim was too small in proportion to its population and power.

10. they drove not out the Canaanites . . . but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute--This is the first mention of the fatal policy of the Israelites, in neglecting the divine command ([De 20:16](#)) to exterminate the idolaters.

CHAPTER 17

[Jos 17:1-6](#). LOT OF MANASSEH.

1-6. There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh--Ephraim was mentioned, as the more numerous and powerful branch of the family of Joseph ([Ge 48:19, 20](#)); but Manasseh still retained the right of primogeniture and had a separate inheritance assigned.

Machir--his descendants.

the father of Gilead--Though he had a son of that name ([Nu 26:29; 27:1](#)), yet, as is evident from the use of the Hebrew article, reference is made, not to the person, but the province of Gilead. "Father" here means lord or possessor of Gilead. This view is confirmed by the fact that it was not Machir, but his descendants, who subdued Gilead and Bashan ([Nu 32:41; De 3:13-15](#)). These Machirites had their portion on the east side of Jordan. The western portion of land, allotted to the tribe of Manasseh, was divided into ten portions because the male descendants who had sons consisted of five families, to which, consequently, five shares were given; and the sixth family, namely, the posterity of Hephher, being all women, the five daughters of Zelophehad were, on application to the valuers, endowed each with an inheritance in land (see on [Nu 27:4](#)).

[Jos 17:7-11](#). THIS COAST.

7-11. the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah--The southern boundary is here traced from the east. Asher (now Yasir), the starting point, was a town fifteen Roman miles east of Shechem, and anciently a place of importance.

9. the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river--The line which separated the possessions of the two brothers from each other ran to the south of the stream. Thus the river was in the territory of Manasseh; but the cities which were upon the river, though all

were within the limits of Manasseh's possessions, were assigned partly to Ephraim, and partly to Manasseh; those on the south side being given to the former; those upon the north to the latter [KEIL]. It appears ([Jos 17:10](#)) that Manasseh was still further interlaced with other neighboring tribes.

11. Beth-shean and her towns--*Greek*, "Scythopolis" (now Beisan), in the valley of the Jordan, towards the east end of the plain of Jezreel. "Beth-shean" means "house of rest," so called from its being the halting place for caravans travelling between Syria or Midian, and Egypt, and the great station for the commerce between these countries for many centuries.

Ibleam and her towns--in the neighborhood of Megiddo ([2Ki 9:27](#)).

the inhabitants of Dor and her towns--(now Tantoura), anciently a strong fortress; a wall of wild precipitous rock defended the shore fortifications against attack from the land side.

En-dor and her towns--situated on a rocky eminence, four Roman miles south of Tabor.

Taanach and . . . Megiddo--These were near to each other, and they are generally mentioned in Scripture together. They were both royal and strongly fortified places (see on [Jud 1:27](#)).

three countries--districts or provinces. It is computed that Manasseh possessed in Asher and Issachar portions of ground to the extent of more than two hundred square miles.

[Jos 17:12, 13](#). CANAANITES NOT DRIVEN OUT.

12, 13. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out those cities--probably due to indolence, a love of ease. Perhaps a mistaken humanity, arising from a disregard or forgetfulness of the divine command, and a decreasing principle of faith and zeal in the service of God, were the causes of their failure.

[Jos 17:14-18](#). THE CHILDREN OF JOSEPH ASK FOR ANOTHER LOT.

14-18. the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua--The two tribes join in laying a complaint before the leader, as to the narrow boundaries of their allotment and its insufficiency to be the residence of tribes so vastly increased. But Joshua's answer was full of wisdom as well as patriotism. Knowing their character, he treated them accordingly, and sarcastically turned all their arguments against themselves. Thus he rebuked their unbelief and cowardice.

15. mount Ephraim--called so here by anticipation. The Gilboa range between Beth-shean and the plain of Jezreel is meant, anciently covered with an extensive forest.

16. chariots of iron--unusually strengthened with that metal, and perhaps armed with projecting scythes.

CHAPTER 18

[Jos 18:1](#). THE TABERNACLE SET UP AT SHILOH.

1. the whole congregation . . . assembled together at Shiloh--The main body of the Israelites had been diminished by the separation of the three tribes, Judah, Ephraim, and

Manasseh into their respective allotments; and the country having been in a great measure subdued, the camp was removed to Shiloh (now Seilun). It was twenty or twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem, twelve north of Beth-el, and ten south of Shechem, and embosomed in a rugged and romantic glen. This sequestered spot in the heart of the country might have been recommended by the dictates of convenience. There the allotment of the territory could be most conveniently made, north, south, east, and west, to the different tribes. But "the tabernacle of the congregation was also set up there," and its removal therefore must have been made or sanctioned by divine intimation ([De 12:11](#)). It remained in Shiloh for more than three hundred years ([1Sa 4:1-11](#)).

[Jos 18:2-9](#). THE REMAINDER OF THE LAND DESCRIBED.

2. there remained . . . seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance--The selection of Shiloh for the seat of worship, together with the consequent removal of the camp thither, had necessarily interrupted the casting of lots, which was commenced by fixing localities for the tribes of Judah and Joseph. Various causes led to a long delay in resuming it. The satisfaction of the people with their change to so pleasant and fertile a district, their preference of a nomad life, a love of ease, and reluctance to renew the war, seem to have made them indifferent to the possession of a settled inheritance. But Joshua was too much alive to the duty laid on him by the Lord to let matters continue in that state; and accordingly, since a general conquest of the land had been made, he resolved to proceed immediately with the lot, believing that when each tribe should receive its inheritance, a new motive would arise to lead them to exert themselves in securing the full possession.

3. How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you--This reproof conveys an impression that the seven tribes were dilatory to a criminal extent.

4-9. Give out from among you three men for each tribe--Though the lot determined the part of the country where each tribe was to be located, it could not determine the extent of territory which might be required; and the dissatisfaction of the children of Joseph with the alleged smallness of their possession gave reason to fear that complaints might arise from other quarters, unless precautions were taken to make a proper distribution of the land. For this purpose a commission was given to twenty-one persons--three chosen from each of the seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance, to make an accurate survey of the country.

9. The men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities into seven parts in a book--dividing the land according to its value, and the worth of the cities which it contained, into seven equal portions. This was no light task to undertake. It required learning and intelligence which they or their instructors had, in all probability, brought with them out of Egypt. Accordingly, JOSEPHUS says that the survey was performed by men expert in geometry. And, in fact, the circumstantial account which is given of the boundaries of each tribe and its situation, well proves it to have been the work of no mean or incompetent hands.

[Jos 18:10](#). DIVIDED BY LOT.

10. Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord--before the tabernacle, where the divine presence was manifested, and which associated with the lot the idea of divine sanction.

11. the lot of . . . Benjamin came up--It has been supposed that there were two urns or vessels, from which the lots were drawn: one containing the names of the tribes, the other containing those of the seven portions; and that the two were drawn out simultaneously.

the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph--Thus the prophecy of Moses respecting the inheritance of Benjamin was remarkably accomplished. (See on [De 33:12](#)).

CHAPTER 19

[Jos 19:1-9](#). THE LOT OF SIMEON.

1. the second lot came forth to Simeon--The next lot that was drawn at Shiloh, gave the tribe of Simeon his inheritance within the territory, which had been assigned to that of Judah. The knowledge of Canaan possessed by the Israelites, when the division of the land commenced, was but very general, being derived from the rapid sweep they had made over it during the course of conquest; and it was on the ground of that rough survey alone that the distribution proceeded, by which Judah received an inheritance. Time showed that this territory was too large ([Jos 19:9](#)), either for their numbers, however great, to occupy and their arms to defend, or too large in proportion to the allotments of the other tribes. Justice therefore required (what kind and brotherly feeling readily dictated) a modification of their possession; and a part of it was appropriated to Simeon. By thus establishing it within the original domain of another tribe, the prophecy of Jacob in regard to Simeon was fulfilled ([Ge 49:7](#)); for from its boundaries being not traced, there is reason to conclude that its people were divided and dispersed among those of Judah; and though one group of its cities named ([Jos 19:2-6](#)), gives the idea of a compact district, as it is usually represented by map makers, the other group ([Jos 19:7, 8](#)) were situated, two in the south, and two elsewhere, with tracts of the country around them.

[Jos 19:10-16](#). OF ZEBULUN.

10-14. the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun--The boundaries of the possession assigned to them extended from the Lake of Chinnereth (Sea of Galilee) on the east, to the Mediterranean on the west. Although they do not seem at first to have touched on the western shore--a part of Manasseh running north into Asher ([Jos 17:10](#)) --they afterwards did, according to the prediction of Moses ([De 33:19](#)). The extent from north to south cannot be very exactly traced; the sites of many of the places through which the boundary line is drawn being unknown. Some of the cities were of note.

[Jos 19:17-23](#). OF ISSACHAR.

17-20. the fourth lot came out to Issachar--Instead of describing the boundaries of this tribe, the inspired historian gives a list of its principal cities. These cities are all in the eastern part of the plain of Esdraelon.

[Jos 19:24-31](#). OF ASHER.

24-31. the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher--The western boundary is traced from north to south through the cities mentioned; the site of them, however, is unknown.

26. to Carmel . . . and to Shihor-libnath--that is, the "black" or "muddy river"; probably the Nahr Belka, below Dor (Tantoura); for that town belonged to Asher ([Jos 17:10](#)). Thence the boundary line turned eastward to Beth-dagon, a town at the junction of Zebulun and Naphtali, and ran northwards as far as Cabul, with other towns, among which is mentioned ([Jos 19:28](#)) "great Zidon," so called on account of its being even then the flourishing metropolis of the Phœnicians. Though included in the inheritance of Asher, this town was never possessed by them ([Jud 1:31](#)).

29. and then the coast turneth to Ramah--now El-Hamra, which stood where the Leontes (Litany) ends its southern course and flows westward.

and to the strong city Tyre--The original city appears to have stood on the mainland, and was well-fortified. From Tyre the boundary ran to Hosah, an inland town; and then, passing the unconquered district of Achzib ([Jud 1:31](#)), terminated at the seacoast.

[Jos 19:32-39](#). OF NAPHTALI.

32-39. the sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali--Although the cities mentioned have not been discovered, it is evident, from Zaananim, which is by Kedesh, that is, on the northwest of Lake Merom ([Jud 4:11](#)), that the boundary described ([Jos 19:34](#)) ran from the southwest towards the northeast, up to the sources of the Jordan.

34. Aznoth-tabor--on the east of Tabor towards the Jordan, for the border ran thence to Hukkok, touching upon that of Zebulun; and as the territory of Zebulun did not extend as far as the Jordan, Aznoth-tabor and Hukkok must have been border towns on the line which separated Naphtali from Issachar.

to Judah upon Jordan toward the sunrising--The sixty cities, Havoth-jair, which were on the eastern side of the Jordan, opposite Naphtali, were reckoned as belonging to Judah, because Jair, their possessor, was a descendant of Judah ([1Ch 2:4-22](#)) [KEIL].

[Jos 19:40-48](#). OF DAN.

40-46. the seventh lot came out for the tribe . . . Dan--It lay on the west of Benjamin and consisted of portions surrendered by Judah and Ephraim. Its boundaries are not stated, as they were easily distinguishable from the relative position of Dan to the three adjoining tribes.

47. the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem--The Danites, finding their inheritance too small, decided to enlarge its boundaries by the sword; and, having conquered Leshem (Laish), they planted a colony there, calling the new settlement by the name of Dan (see on [Jud 18:7](#)).

[Jos 19:49-51](#). THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL GIVE AN INHERITANCE TO JOSHUA.

50. According to the word of the Lord they gave him the city which he asked--It was most proper that the great leader should receive an inheritance suited to his dignity, and as a reward for his public services. But the gift was not left to the spontaneous feelings of a grateful people. It was conferred "according to the word of the Lord"--probably an unrecorded promise, similar to what had been made to Caleb ([Jos 14:9](#)).

Timnath-serah--or Heres, on Mount Gaash ([Jud 2:9](#)). Joshua founded it, and was afterwards buried there ([Jos 24:30](#)).

51. These are the inheritances--This verse is the formal close of the section which narrates the history of the land distribution; and to stamp it with due importance, the names of the commissioners are repeated, as well as the spot where so memorable a transaction took place.

CHAPTER 20

[Jos 20:1-6](#). THE LORD COMMANDS THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

1-3. The Lord spake unto Joshua . . . Appoint out for you cities of refuge--(See [Nu 35:9-28](#); [De 19:1-13](#)). The command here recorded was given on their going to occupy their allotted settlements. The sanctuaries were not temples or altars, as in other countries, but inhabited cities; and the design was not to screen criminals, but only to afford the homicide protection from the vengeance of the deceased's relatives until it should have been ascertained whether the death had resulted from accident and momentary passion, or from premeditated malice. The institution of the cities of refuge, together with the rules prescribed for the guidance of those who sought an asylum within their walls, was an important provision, tending to secure the ends of justice as well as of mercy.

4. he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city--It was the place of public resort, and on arriving there he related his tale of distress to the elders, who were bound to give him shelter and the means of support, until the local authorities ([Jos 20:6](#)), having carefully investigated the case, should have pronounced the decision. If found guilty, the manslayer was surrendered to the blood-avenger; if extenuating circumstances appeared, he was to remain in the city of refuge, where he would be safe from the vindictive feelings of his pursuers; but he forfeited the privilege of immunity the moment he ventured beyond the walls.

6. until the death of the high priest--His death secured the complete deliverance of the manslayer from his sin, only because he had been anointed with the holy oil ([Nu 35:25](#)), the symbol of the Holy Ghost; and thus the death of the earthly high priest became a type of that of the heavenly one ([Heb 9:14, 15](#)).

[Jos 20:7-9](#). THE ISRAELITES APPOINT BY NAME THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

7-9. they appointed . . . cities--There were six; three on the west, and three on the east, of Jordan. In the first instance, they were a provision of the criminal law of the Hebrews, necessary

in the circumstances of that people (see on [Nu 35:11](#); [De 19:2](#)). At the same time they were designed also typically to point out the sinner's way to Christ ([Heb 6:18](#)).

CHAPTER 21

[Jos 21:1-8](#). EIGHT AND FORTY CITIES GIVEN BY LOT OUT OF THE OTHER TRIBES UNTO THE LEVITES.

1-3. Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites--The most venerable and distinguished members of the three Levitical families, on behalf of their tribe, applied for the special provision that had been promised them to be now awarded (see on [Nu 35:2](#)). Their inheritance lay within the territory of every tribe. It was assigned in the same place and manner, and by the same commissioners as the other allotments. While the people, knowing the important duties they were to perform, are described ([Jos 21:3](#)) as readily conceding this "peculiar" to them, it had most probably been specified and reserved for their use while the distribution of the land was in progress.

4-8. the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites--The Levites were divided into Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites. Among the former the family of Aaron were exclusively appointed to the priesthood, and all the rest were ranked in the common order of Levites. The first lot was drawn by the Kohathites; and the first of theirs again by the priests, to whom thirteen cities were granted, and ten to the rest of the Kohathites ([Jos 21:5](#)); thirteen to the Gershonites ([Jos 21:6](#)), and twelve to the Merarites ([Jos 21:7](#)).

[Jos 21:9-42](#). THE CITIES OF THE PRIESTS.

9-40. they gave . . . these cities which are here mentioned by name--It was overruled by the unerring providence of the Divine Lawgiver that the cities of the priests lay within the territories of Judah and Benjamin. This was a provision, the admirable wisdom and propriety of which were fully manifested on the schism that took place in the reign of Rehoboam.

41. All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs--This may appear too great a proportion compared with those of the other tribes. But it must be borne in mind that the list given here contains the names of every Levitical city (see on [1Ch 6:39-66](#)); whereas only those cities of the other tribes are mentioned which lay on the frontier or along the boundary line. Besides, the Levites were not the exclusive inhabitants of those forty-eight cities; for there must have been also a considerable number of people kept there to cultivate the glebe lands and tend the cattle. Still further, the Levitical cities had nothing but "their suburbs round about them" [[Jos 21:42](#)]; whereas the other cities in Israel possessed a group of independent villages (see [Jos 17:1-19:51](#)).

[Jos 21:43-45](#). GOD GAVE THEM REST.

43-45. the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers--This is a general winding up of the history from the thirteenth chapter, which narrates the occupation of the land by the Israelites. All the promises made, whether to the people or to

Joshua ([Jos 1:5](#)), had been, or were in the course of being fulfilled; and the recorded experience of the Israelites ([Jos 21:45](#)), is a ground of hope and confidence to the people of God in every age, that all other promises made to the Church will, in due time, be accomplished.

CHAPTER 22

[Jos 22:1-9](#). JOSHUA DISMISSES THE TWO TRIBES AND A HALF, WITH A BLESSING.

1. Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh-- The general war of invasion being ended and the enemy being in so dispirited and isolated a condition that each tribe, by its own resources or with the aid of its neighboring tribe, was able to repress any renewed hostilities, the auxiliary Israelites from the eastern side of the Jordan were now discharged from service. Joshua dismissed them with high commendations for their fidelity and earnest admonitions to cultivate perpetual piety in life. The redundancy of the language is remarkable [[Jos 22:2-5](#)]. It shows how important, in the judgment of the venerable leader, a steadfast observance of the divine law was to personal happiness, as well as national prosperity.

3. Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day--for the space of seven years.

4-7. get you unto your tents--that is, home; for their families had been left in fortified towns ([Nu 32:17](#)).

8. he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches--in cattle, clothes, and precious metals.

divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren--(See on [Nu 31:25-39](#)).

[Jos 22:10](#). THEY BUILD THE ALTAR OF TESTIMONY ON THEIR JOURNEY.

10. when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben . . . built there an altar by Jordan--This altar was probably an immense pile of stones and earth. The generality of our translators supposes that it was reared on the banks of the Jordan, within the limits of Canaan proper. But a little closer examination seems to make the conclusion irresistible that its position was on the eastern side of the river, for these two reasons; first, because it is said ([Jos 22:11](#)) to have been built "over against," or in the sight of the land of Canaan--not within it; and secondly, because the declared motive of the trans-jordanic Israelites in erecting it was to prevent their brethren in Canaan ever saying, "in time to come, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you," &c. [[Jos 22:24, 25](#)]. Such a taunt would be obviously prevented or confuted by the two tribes and a half having on the eastern side of Jordan, within their own land, a facsimile of the altar at Shiloh, as a witness that they acknowledged the same God and practised the same rites of worship as the brethren in Canaan.

[Jos 22:11-29](#). CONTENTION THEREUPON.

11-29. and the children of Israel heard say--Fame speedily spread intelligence of what the trans-jordanic tribes had done. The act being suspected of some idolatrous design, the tribes rose in a mass, and repairing to the tabernacle at Shiloh, resolved to declare war against the two tribes and a half as apostates from God. On calmer and more mature consideration, however, they determined, in the first instance, to send a deputation consisting of the son of the high priest, and ten eminent persons from each tribe, to make inquiry into this rumored rebellion against God ([De 13:13-15](#)). The quality of the deputies evinced the deep solicitude that was felt on the occasion to maintain the purity of the divine worship throughout Israel. In the presumptive belief that the two tribes and a half had really built an altar, the deputies expressed astonishment at their so soon falling into such a heinous crime as that of violating the unity of divine worship ([Ex 20:24; Leviticus 17:8, 9; De 12:5-13](#)). They reminded their eastern brethren of the disastrous consequences that were entailed on the nation at large by the apostasy at Peor and by the sin of Achan, and finally exhorted them, if they felt the want of the tabernacle and altar and repented of their rash choice in preferring worldly advantages to religious privileges, to remove to the western side of the Jordan, where all the tribes would form a united and obedient community of worshippers.

21. Then the children of Reuben . . . answered--repudiating, in the strongest terms, the alleged crime, and deponing that so far from entertaining the intention imputed to them, their only object was to perpetuate the memory of their alliance with Israel [[Jos 22:24, 25](#)], and their adherence to the worship of Israel's God [[Jos 22:26, 27](#)].

[Jos 22:30-34](#). THE DEPUTIES SATISFIED.

33, 34. the thing pleased the children of Israel--The explanation not only gave perfect satisfaction to the deputies, but elicited from them expressions of unbounded joy and thankfulness. "This day we perceive that the Lord is among us" [[Jos 22:31](#)], that is, by His gracious presence and preventing goodness, which has kept you from falling into the suspected sin and rescued the nation from the calamity of a fratricidal war or providential judgments. This episode reflects honor upon all parties and shows that piety and zeal for the honor and worship of God animated the people that entered Canaan to an extent far beyond what was exemplified in many other periods of the history of Israel.

CHAPTER 23

[Jos 23:1, 2](#). JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION BEFORE HIS DEATH.

1. a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies--about fourteen years after the conquest of Canaan, and seven after the distribution of that country among the tribes.

2. Joshua called for all Israel--The clause which follows seems to restrict this general expression as applicable only to the officers and representatives of the people. The place of assembly was most probably Shiloh. The occasion of convening it was the extreme age and approaching death of the venerable leader; and the purport of this solemn address was to animate

the chosen people and their posterity to a faithful and unswerving continuance in the faith and worship of the God of Israel.

[Jos 23:3](#). BY FORMER BENEFITS.

3. ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you--The modesty and humility of Joshua are remarkably displayed at the commencement of this address. Dismissing all thoughts of his personal services, he ascribed the subjugation and occupation of Canaan entirely to the favoring presence and aid of God; and in doing so, he spoke not more piously than truly. This had been promised ([De 1:30; 3:22](#)); and the reality of the divine aid was seen in the rapid overthrow of the Canaanites, which had already led to the division of the whole land among the tribes [[Jos 23:4](#)].

[Jos 23:5-11](#). BY PROMISES.

5-11. the Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you, as the Lord your God hath promised you, &c.--The actual possessions which God had given were a pledge of the complete fulfilment of His promise in giving them the parts of the country still unconquered. But the accomplishment of the divine promise depended on their inviolable fidelity to God's law--on their keeping resolutely aloof from all familiar intercourse and intimate connections with the Canaanites, or in any way partaking of their idolatrous sins. In the event of their continuing in steadfast adherence to the cause of God, as happily distinguished the nation at that time, His blessing would secure them a course of brilliant and easy victories ([Le 26:7; De 28:7; 32:30](#)).

11. Take good heed, therefore, that ye love the Lord your God--The sum of his exhortation is comprised in the love of God, which is the end or fulfilment of the law ([De 6:5; 11:13; Mt 22:37](#)).

[Jos 23:12](#). BY THREATENINGS IN CASE OF DISOBEDIENCE.

12, 13. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations--As marriage connections with the idolatrous Canaanites would present many and strong temptations to transgress it, these were strictly prohibited ([Ex 34:12-16; De 7:3](#)). With his eye, as it were, upon those prohibitions, Joshua threatens them with the certain withdrawal of the divine aid in the further expulsion of the Canaanites (a threat founded [Ex 23:33; Nu 33:55; De 7:16](#)).

CHAPTER 24

[Jos 24:1](#). JOSHUA ASSEMBLING THE TRIBES.

1. Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem--Another and final opportunity of dissuading the people against idolatry is here described as taken by the aged leader, whose solicitude on this account arose from his knowledge of the extreme readiness of the people to conform to the manners of the surrounding nations. This address was made to the representatives of the people convened at Shechem, and which had already been the scene of a solemn renewal of the covenant ([Jos 8:30, 35](#)). The transaction now to be entered upon being in principle and

object the same, it was desirable to give it all the solemn impressiveness which might be derived from the memory of the former ceremonial, as well as from other sacred associations of the place ([Ge 12:6, 7; 33:18-20; 35:2-4](#)).

they presented themselves before God--It is generally assumed that the ark of the covenant had been transferred on this occasion to Shechem; as on extraordinary emergencies it was for a time removed ([Jud 20:1-18; 1Sa 4:3; 2Sa 15:24](#)). But the statement, not necessarily implying this, may be viewed as expressing only the religious character of the ceremony [HENGSTENBERG].

[Jos 24:2-13](#). RELATES GOD'S BENEFITS.

2. Joshua said unto all the people--His address briefly recapitulated the principal proofs of the divine goodness to Israel from the call of Abraham to their happy establishment in the land of promise; it showed them that they were indebted for their national existence as well as their peculiar privileges, not to any merits of their own, but to the free grace of God.

Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood--The Euphrates, namely, at Ur.

Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor--(see [Ge 11:27](#)). Though Terah had three sons, Nahor only is mentioned with Abraham, as the Israelites were descended from him on the mother's side through Rebekah and her nieces, Leah and Rachel.

served other gods--conjoining, like Laban, the traditional knowledge of the true God with the domestic use of material images ([Ge 31:19, 34](#)).

3. I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan--It was an irresistible impulse of divine grace which led the patriarch to leave his country and relatives, to migrate to Canaan, and live a "stranger and pilgrim" in that land.

4. I gave unto Esau mount Seir--(See on [Ge 36:8](#)). In order that he might be no obstacle to Jacob and his posterity being the exclusive heirs of Canaan.

12. I sent the hornet before you--a particular species of wasp which swarms in warm countries and sometimes assumes the scourging character of a plague; or, as many think, it is a figurative expression for uncontrollable terror (see on [Ex 23:28](#)).

14-28. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth--After having enumerated so many grounds for national gratitude, Joshua calls on them to declare, in a public and solemn manner, whether they will be faithful and obedient to the God of Israel. He avowed this to be his own unalterable resolution, and urged them, if they were sincere in making a similar avowal, "to put away the strange gods that were among them"--a requirement which seems to imply that some were suspected of a strong hankering for, or concealed practice of, the idolatry, whether in the form of Zabaism, the fire-worship of their Chaldean ancestors, or the grosser superstitions of the Canaanites.

26. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God--registered the engagements of that solemn covenant in the book of sacred history.

took a great stone--according to the usage of ancient times to erect stone pillars as

monuments of public transactions.

set it up there under an oak--or terebinth, in all likelihood, the same as that at the root of which Jacob buried the idols and charms found in his family.

that was by the sanctuary of the Lord--either the spot where the ark had stood, or else the place around, so called from that religious meeting, as Jacob named Beth-el the house of God.

[Jos 24:29, 30](#). HIS AGE AND DEATH.

29, 30. Joshua . . . died--LIGHTFOOT computes that he lived seventeen, others twenty-seven years, after the entrance into Canaan. He was buried, according to the Jewish practice, within the limits of his own inheritance. The eminent public services he had long rendered to Israel and the great amount of domestic comfort and national prosperity he had been instrumental in diffusing among the several tribes, were deeply felt, were universally acknowledged; and a testimonial in the form of a statue or obelisk would have been immediately raised to his honor, in all parts of the land, had such been the fashion of the times. The brief but noble epitaph by the historian is, Joshua, "the servant of the Lord."

31. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua--The high and commanding character of this eminent leader had given so decided a tone to the sentiments and manners of his contemporaries and the memory of his fervent piety and many virtues continued so vividly impressed on the memories of the people, that the sacred historian has recorded it to his immortal honor. "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua."

32. the bones of Joseph--They had carried these venerable relics with them in all their migrations through the desert, and deferred the burial, according to the dying charge of Joseph himself, till they arrived in the promised land. The sarcophagus, in which his mummied body had been put, was brought thither by the Israelites, and probably buried when the tribe of Ephraim had obtained their settlement, or at the solemn convocation described in this chapter.

in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought . . . for an hundred pieces of silver--*Kestitah* translated, "piece of silver," is supposed to mean "a lamb," the weights being in the form of lambs or kids, which were, in all probability, the earliest standard of value among pastoral people. The tomb that now covers the spot is a Mohammedan *Welce*, but there is no reason to doubt that the precious deposit of Joseph's remains may be concealed there at the present time.

33. Eleazar the son of Aaron died, and they buried him in . . . mount Ephraim--The sepulchre is at the modern village Awertah, which, according to Jewish travellers, contains the graves also of Ithamar, the brother of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar [VAN DE VELDE].

[\[Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[Previous\]](#) [\[Next\]](#)

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown
Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)

Send Addenda, Corrigenda, and Sententiae to [the editor](#)