

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

After the death of Joshua the Israelites purpose to attack the remaining Canaanites; and the tribe of Judah is directed to go up first, Judges 1:1, Judges 1:2. Judah and Simeon unite, attack the Canaanites and Perrizites, kill ten thousand of them, take Adoni-bezek prisoner, cut off his thumbs and great toes, and bring him to Jerusalem, where he dies, Judges 1:3-7. Jerusalem conquered, Judges 1:8. A new war with the Canaanites under the direction of Caleb, Judges 1:9-11. Kirjath-sepher taken by Othniel, on which he receives, as a reward, Achsah, the daughter of Caleb and with her a south land with springs of water, Judges 1:12-15. The Kenites dwell among the people, Judges 1:16. Judah and Simeon destroy the Canaanites in Zephath, Gaza, etc., Judges 1:17-19. Hebron is given to Caleb, Judges 1:20. Of the Benjamites, house of Joseph, tribe of Manasseh, etc., Judges 1:21-27. The Israelites put the Canaanites to tribute, Judges 1:28. Of the tribes of Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali, Judges 1:29-33. The Amorites force the children of Dan into the mountains, Judges 1:34-36.

## Verse 1

Now after the death of Joshua - How long after the death of Joshua this happened we cannot tell; it is probable that it was not long. The enemies of the Israelites, finding their champion dead, would naturally avail themselves of their unsettled state, and make incursions on the country.

Who shall go up - Joshua had left no successor, and every thing relative to the movements of this people must be determined either by caprice, or an especial direction of the Lord.

## Verse 2

The Lord said, Judah shall go up - They had inquired of the Lord by Phinehas the high priest; and he had communicated to them the Divine counsel.

## Verse 3

Come up with me into my lot - It appears that the portions of Judah and Simeon had not been cleared of the Canaanites, or that these were the parts which were now particularly invaded.

## Verse 5

And they found Adoni-bezek - The word מַצָּא (matsa), "he found," is used to express a hostile encounter between two parties; to attack, surprise, etc. This is probably its meaning here. Adoni-bezek is literally the lord of Bezek. It is very probable that the different Canaanitish tribes were governed by a sort of chieftains, similar to those among the clans of the ancient Scottish Highlanders. Bezek is said by some to have been in the tribe of Judah. Eusebius and St. Jerome mention two villages of this name, not in the tribe of Judah, but about seventeen miles from Shechem.

## Verse 6

Cut off his thumbs - That he might never be able to draw his bow or handle his sword, and great toes, that he might never be able to pursue or escape from an adversary.

## Verse 7

Threescore and ten kinds - Chieftains, heads of tribes, or military officers. For the word king cannot be taken here in its proper and usual sense.

Having their thumbs and their great toes cut off - That this was an ancient mode of treating enemies we learn from Aelian, who tells us, Var. Hist. l. ii., c. 9, that "the Athenians, at the instigation of Cleon, son of Cleaenetus, made a decree that all the inhabitants of the island of Aegina should have the thumb cut off from the right hand, so that they might ever after be disabled from holding a spear, yet might handle an oar." This is considered by Aelian an act of great cruelty; and he wishes to Minerva, the guardian of the city, to Jupiter Eleutherius, and all the gods of Greece, that the Athenians had never done such things. It was a custom among those Romans who did not like a military life, to cut off their own thumbs, that they might not be capable of serving in the army. Sometimes the parents cut off the thumbs of their children, that they might not be called into the army. According to Suetonius, in Vit. August., c. 24, a Roman knight, who had cut off the thumbs of his two sons to prevent them from being called to a military life was, by the order of Augustus, publicly sold, both he and his property. These are the words of Suetonius: Equitem Romanum, quod duobus filis adolescentibus, causa detractandi sacramenti, pollices amputasset, ipsum bonaque subjecit hastae. Calmet remarks that the Italian language has preserved a term, poltrone, which signifies one whose thumb is cut off, to designate a

soldier destitute of courage and valor. We use poltroon to signify a dastardly fellow, without considering the import of the original. There have been found frequent instances of persons maiming themselves, that they might be incapacitated for military duty. I have heard an instance in which a knavish soldier discharged his gun through his hand, that he might be discharged from his regiment. The cutting off of the thumbs was probably designed for a double purpose:

1. To incapacitate them for war; and,

2. To brand them as cowards.

Gathered their meat under my table - I think this was a proverbial mode of expression, to signify reduction to the meanest servitude; for it is not at all likely that seventy kings, many of whom must have been contemporaries, were placed under the table of the king of Bezek, and there fed; as in the houses of poor persons the dogs are fed with crumbs and offal, under the table of their owners.

So God hath requited me - The king of Bezek seems to have had the knowledge of the true God, and a proper notion of a Divine providence. He now feels himself reduced to that state to which he had cruelly reduced others. Those acts in him were acts of tyrannous cruelty; the act towards him was an act of retributive justice.

And there he died - He continued at Jerusalem in a servile and degraded condition till the day of his death. How long he lived after his disgrace we know not.

#### Verse 8

Had fought against Jerusalem - We read this verse in a parenthesis, because we suppose that it refers to the taking of this city by Joshua; for as he had conquered its armies and slew its king, Joshua 10:26, it is probable that he took the city: yet we find that the Jebusites still dwelt in it, Joshua 15:63; and that the men of Judah could not drive them out, which probably refers to the strong hold or fortress on Mount Zion, which the Jebusites held till the days of David, who took it, and totally destroyed the Jebusites. See 2 Samuel 5:6-9, and 1 Chronicles 11:4-8. It is possible that the Jebusites who had been discomfited by Joshua, had again become sufficiently strong to possess themselves of Jerusalem; and that they were now defeated, and the city itself set on fire: but that they still were able to keep possession of their strong fort on Mount Zion, which appears to have been the citadel of Jerusalem.

#### Verse 9

The Canaanites, that dwelt to the mountain - The territories of the tribe of Judah lay in the most southern part of the promised land, which was very mountainous, though towards the west it had many fine plains. In some of these the Canaanites had dwelt; and the expedition marked here was for the purpose of finally expelling them. But probably this is a recapitulation of what is related Joshua 10:36; Joshua 11:21; Joshua 15:13.

#### Verses 12-15

And Caleb, etc. - See this whole account, which is placed here by way of recapitulation, in Joshua 15:13-19 (note), and the explanatory notes there.

#### Verse 16

The children of the Kenite, Moses's father-in-law - For an account of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, see Exodus 18:1-27 (note); Numbers 10:29 (note), etc.

The city of palm trees - This seems to have been some place near Jericho, which city is expressly called the city of palm trees, Deuteronomy 34:3; and though destroyed by Joshua, it might have some suburbs remaining where these harmless people had taken up their residence. The Kenites, the descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, were always attached to the Israelites: they remained with them, says Calmet, during their wanderings in the wilderness, and accompanied them to the promised land. They received there a lot with the tribe of Judah, and remained in the city of palm trees during the life of Joshua; but after his death, not contented with their portion, or molested by the original inhabitants, they united with the tribe of Judah, and went with them to attack Arad. After the conquest of that country, the Kenites established themselves there, and remained in it till the days of Saul, mingled with the Amalekites. When this king received a commandment from God to destroy the Amalekites, he sent a message to the Kenites to depart from among them, as God would not destroy them with the Amalekites. From them came Hemath, who was the father of the house of Rechab, 1 Chronicles 2:55, and the Rechabites, of whom we have a remarkable account Jeremiah 35:1, etc.

#### Verse 17



