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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

The city was called Hormah - This appears to be the same transaction mentioned Numbers 21:1 (note), etc., where see the notes.

Verse 18

Judah took Gaza - and Askelon - and Ekron - There is a most remarkable variation here in the Septuagint; I shall set down the verse: *Ἰσραὴλ ἔλαβεν τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀσκαλὸν καὶ τὴν ἑκρόν καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀζότῳ καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀσκάλων καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἐκρόν καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀζότῳ καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀσκάλων καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἐκρόν καὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀζότῳ* But Judah Did Not possess Gaza, Nor the coast thereof; neither Askelon, nor the coasts thereof, neither Ekron, nor the coasts thereof; neither Azotus, nor its adjacent places: and the Lord was with Judah. This is the reading of the Vatican and other copies of the Septuagint: but the Alexandrian MS., and the text of the Complutensian and Antwerp Polyglots, agree more nearly with the Hebrew text. St. Augustine and Procopius read the same as, the Vatican MS.; and Josephus expressly says that the Israelites took only Askelon and Azotus, but did not take Gaza nor Ekron; and the whole history shows that these cities were not in the possession of the Israelites, but of the Philistines; and if the Israelites did take them at this time, as the Hebrew text states, they certainly lost them in a very short time after.

Verse 19

And the Lord was with Judah, and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron - Strange! were the iron chariots too strong for Omnipotence? The whole of this verse is improperly rendered. The first clause, The Lord was with Judah, should terminate the 18th verse, and this gives the reason for the success of this tribe: The Lord was with Judah, and therefore he slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, etc., etc. Here then is a complete period: the remaining part of the verse either refers to a different time, or to the rebellion of Judah against the Lord, which caused him to withdraw his support. Therefore the Lord was with Judah, and these were the effects of his protection; but afterwards, when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, etc., God was no longer with them, and their enemies were left to be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their side, as God himself had said. This is the turn given to the verse by Jonathan ben Uzziel, the Chaldee paraphrast: *And the Word of Jehovah was in the support of the house of Judah, and they extirpated the inhabitants of the mountains; but afterwards, When They Sinned, they were not able to extirpate the inhabitants of the plain country, because they had chariots of iron.* They were now left to their own strength, and their adversaries prevailed against them. From a work called the Dhunoor Veda, it appears that the ancient Hindoos had war chariots similar to those of the Canaanites. They are described as having many wheels, and to have contained a number of rooms. - Ward's Customs.

Verse 20

They gave Hebron unto Caleb - See this whole transaction explained Joshua 14:12 (note), etc.

Verse 21

The Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin - Jerusalem was situated partly in the tribe of Judah, and partly in the tribe of Benjamin, the northern part belonging to the latter tribe, the southern to the former. The Jebusites had their strongest position in the part that belonged to Benjamin, and from this place they were not wholly expelled till the days of David. See the notes on Judges 1:8. What is said here of Benjamin is said of Judah, Joshua 15:63. There must be an interchange of the names in one or other of these places.

Unto this day - As the Jebusites dwelt in Jerusalem till the days of David, by whom they were driven out, and the author of the book of Judges states them to have been in possession of Jerusalem when he wrote; therefore this book was written before the reign of David.

Verse 22

The house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel - That is, the tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh, who dwelt beyond Jordan. Beth-el was not taken by Joshua, though he took Ai, which was nigh to it. Instead of *בית יוסף* (beith Yoseph), the house of Joseph, ten of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. and six of De Rossi's have *בני יוסף* (beney Yoseph), the children of Joseph; and this is the reading of both the Septuagint and Arabic, as well as of two copies in the Hexapla of Origen.

Verse 23

Beth-el - the name of the city before was Luz - Concerning this city and its names, see the notes on Genesis 28:19.

Verse 24

Show us - the entrance into the city - Taken in whatever light we choose, the conduct of this man was execrable. He was a traitor to his country, and he was accessory to the destruction of the lives and property of his fellow citizens, which he most sinfully betrayed, in order to save his own. According to the rules and laws of war, the children of Judah might avail themselves of such men and their information; but this does not lessen, on the side of this traitor, the turpitude of the action.

Verse 26

The land of the Hittites - Probably some place beyond the land of Canaan, in Arabia, whither this people emigrated when expelled by Joshua. The man himself appears to have been a Hittite, and to perpetuate the name of his city he called the new one which he now founded Luz, this being the ancient name of Beth-el.

Verse 27

Beth-shean - Called by the Septuagint $\beta\eta\theta\epsilon\lambda$, Scythopolis, or the city of the Scythians. On these towns see the notes, Joshua 17:12-13 (note).

Verse 29

Neither did Ephraim - See the notes on the parallel passages, Joshua 16:5-10 (note).

Verse 30

Neither did Zebulun drive out - See on Joshua 19:10-15 (note).

Verse 31

Neither did Asher - See on Joshua 19:24-31 (note).

Accho - Supposed to be the city of Ptolemais, near to Mount Carmel.

Verse 33

Neither did Naphtali - See the notes on Joshua 19:32-39 (note).

Verse 34

The Amorites forced the children of Dan, etc. - Just as the ancient Britons were driven into the mountains of Wales by the Romans; and the native Indians driven back into the woods by the British settlers in America.

Verse 35

The Amorites would dwell in Mount Heres - They perhaps agreed to dwell in the mountainous country, being unable to maintain themselves on the plain, and yet were so powerful that the Danites could not totally expel them; they were, however, laid under tribute, and thus the house of Joseph had the sovereignty. The Septuagint have sought out a literal meaning for the names of several of these places, and they render the verse thus: $\alpha\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha$ And the Amorites began to dwell in the mount of Tiles, in which there are bears, and in which there are foxes. $\alpha\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha$ Thus they translate Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim.

Verse 36

Akrabbim - Of scorpions; probably so called from the number of those animals in that place.

From the rock, and upward - The Vulgate understands by $\sigma\epsilon\lambda\alpha$ (sela), a rock, the city Petra, which was the capital of Arabia Petraea.

The whole of this chapter appears to be designed as a sort of supplement to those places in the book of Joshua which are referred to in the notes and in the margin; nor is there any thing in it worthy of especial remark. We everywhere see the same fickle character in the Israelites, and the goodness and long-suffering of God towards them. An especial Providence guides their steps, and a fatherly hand chastises them for their transgressions. They are obliged to live in the midst of their enemies, often straitened, but never overcome so as to lose the land which God gave them as their portion. We should learn wisdom from what they have suffered, and confidence in the protection and providence of God from their support, because these things were written for our learning. Few can be persuaded that adversity is a blessing, but without it how little should we learn! He, who in the school of affliction has his mind turned towards God, $\alpha\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha$ Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in every thing. $\alpha\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\alpha\iota\alpha$