

## Introduction to Judges

### Contents and Character, Origin and Sources, of the Book of Judges.

The book of Judges, headed *Shophetim* in the Hebrew Bibles, and Κριταί in the Alexandrian version, and called *liber Judicum* in the Vulgate, contains the history of the Israelitish theocracy for a period of about 350 years, from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson, or to the time of the prophet Samuel. It may be divided according to its contents into three parts: (1) an introduction (Judges 1–3:6); (2) the history of the several judges (Judges 3:7–16:31); and (3) a twofold appendix (Judges 17–21). In the *Introduction* the prophetic author of the book first of all takes a general survey of those facts which exhibited most clearly the behaviour of the Israelites to the Canaanites who were left in the land after the death of Joshua, and closes his survey with the reproof of their behaviour by the angel of the Lord (Judges 1:1–2:5). He then describes in a general manner the attitude of Israel to the Lord its God and that of the Lord to His people during the time of the judges, and represents this period as a constant alternation of humiliation through hostile oppression, when the nation fell away from its God, and deliverance out of the power of its enemies by judges whom God raised up and endowed with the power of His Spirit, whenever the people returned to the Lord (Judges 2:6–3:6). This is followed in the *body of the work* (Judges 3:7–16:31) by the history of the several oppressions of Israel on the part of foreign nations, with the deliverance effected by the judges who were raised up by God, and whose deeds are for the most part elaborately described in chronological order, and introduced by the standing formula, “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord,” etc.; or, “And the children of Israel again did evil (added to do evil),” etc. They are arranged in six historical groups: (1) the oppression by the Mesopotamian king, Chushan-rishathaim, with the deliverance from this oppression through *Othniel* the judge (Judges 3:7–11); (2) the oppression by the Moabitish king Eglon, with the deliverance effected through *Ehud* the judge

(Judges 3:12–30), and the victory achieved by *Shamgar* over the Philistines (Judges 3:31); (3) the subjugation of Israel by the Canaanitish king Jabin, and the deliverance effected through the prophetess *Deborah* and *Barak* the judge (Judges 4), with *Deborah’s* song of victory (Judges 5); (4) the oppression by the Midianites, and the deliverance from these enemies through the judge *Gideon*, who was called to be the deliverer of Israel through an appearance of the angel of the Lord (Judges 6–8), with the history of the three years’ reign of his son *Abimelech* (Judges 9), and brief notices of the two judges *Tola* and *Jair* (Judges 10:1–5); (5) the giving up of the Israelites into the power of the Ammonites and Philistines, and their deliverance from the Ammonitish oppression by *Jephthah* (Judges 10:6–12:7), with brief notices of the three judges *Ibzan*, *Elon*, and *Abdon* (Judges 12:8–15); (6) the oppression by the Philistines, with the account of the life and deeds of *Samson* the judge, who began to deliver Israel out of the power of these foes (Judges 13–16). To this there are added two *appendices* in Judges 17–21: viz., (1) the account of the worship of images by the Ephraimite *Micah*, and the transportation of that worship by the Danites to *Laish-Dan* (Judges 17–18); and (2) the infamous conduct of the inhabitants of *Gibeah*, and the war of revenge which was waged by the congregation of Israel against the tribe of Benjamin as a punishment for the crime (Judges 19–21). Both these events occurred in the earliest part of the period of the judges, as we may gather, in the case of the first, from a comparison of Judges 18:1 with Judges 1:34, and in that of the second from a comparison of Judges 20:28 with Josh. 22:13 and 24:33; and they are merely placed at the end of the book in the form of *appendices*, because they could not well be introduced into the six complete historical *tableaux*; although, so far as the facts themselves are concerned, they are intimately connected with the contents and aim of the book of Judges, inasmuch as they depict the religious and moral circumstances of the times in the most striking manner in two pictures drawn from life. The relation in which

the three parts stand to one another, therefore, is this: the introduction depicts the basis on which the deeds of the judges were founded, and the appendices furnish confirmatory evidence of the spirit of the age as manifested in those deeds. The whole book, however, is pervaded and ruled by the idea distinctly expressed in the introduction (Judges 2:1-3, 11-22), that the Lord left those Canaanites who had not been exterminated by Joshua still in the land, to prove to Israel through them whether it would obey His commandments, and that He chastised and punished His people through them for their disobedience and idolatry; but that as soon as they recognised His chastening hand in the punishment, and returned to Him with penitence and implored His help, He had compassion upon them again in His gracious love, and helped them to victory over their foes, so that, notwithstanding the repeated acts of faithlessness on the part of His people, the Lord remained ever faithful in His deeds, and steadfastly maintained His covenant.

We must not look to the book of Judges, therefore, for a complete history of the period of the judges, or one which throws light upon the development of the Israelites on every side. The character of the book, as shown in its contents and the arrangement of the materials, corresponds entirely to the character of the times over which it extends. The time of the judges did not form a new stage in the development of the nation of God. It was not till the time of Samuel and David, when this period was ended, that a new stage began. It was rather a transition period, the time of free, unfettered development, in which the nation was to take root in the land presented to it by God as its inheritance, to familiarize itself with the theocratic constitution given to it by the Mosaic law, and by means of the peculiar powers and gifts conferred upon it by God to acquire for itself that independence and firm footing in Canaan, within the limits of the laws, ordinances, and rights of the covenant, which Jehovah had promised, and the way to which He had prepared through the revelations He had made to them. This task could be accomplished

without any ruler directly appointed by the Lord. The first thing which the tribes had to do was to root out such Canaanites as remained in the land, that they might not only establish themselves in the unrestricted and undisputed possession and enjoyment of the land and its productions, but also avert the danger which threatened them on the part of these tribes of being led away to idolatry and immorality. The Lord had promised them His help in this conflict, if they would only walk in His commandments. The maintenance of civil order and the administration of justice were in the hands of the heads of tribes, families, and households; and for the relation in which the congregation stood to the Lord its God, it possessed the necessary organs and media in the hereditary priesthood of the tribe of Levi, whose head could inquire the will of God in all cases of difficulty through the right of Urim, and make it known to the nation. Now as long as the generation, which had seen the wonderful works of the Lord in the time of Joshua, was still living, so long did the nation continue faithful to the covenant of its God, and the tribes maintain a successful conflict with the still remaining Canaanites (Judges 1:1-20, 22-25). But the very next generation, to which those mighty acts of the Lord were unknown, began to forget its God, to grow weary and lax in its conflicts with the Canaanites, to make peace with them, and to mix up the worship of Jehovah, the jealous and holy God, with the worship of Baal and Astarte, the Canaanitish deities of nature, and even to substitute the latter in its place. With the loss of love and fidelity to the Lord, the bond of unity which formed the tribes into *one* congregation of Jehovah was also broken. The different tribes began to follow their own separate interests (vid., Judges 5:15-17, 23; 8:5-8), and eventually even to oppose and make war upon one another; whilst Ephraim was bent upon securing to itself the headship of all the tribes, though without making any vigorous efforts to carry on the war with the oppressors of Israel (vid., Judges 8:1ff., 12:1-6). Consequently Israel suffered more and more from the oppression of heathen nations, to

which God gave it up as a chastisement for its idolatry; and it would have become altogether a prey to its foes, had not the faithful covenant God taken compassion upon it in its distress as often as it cried to Him, and sent deliverers

(מוֹשִׁיעִים, Judges 3:9, 15; cf. Neh. 9:27) in

those judges, after whom both the age in question and the book before us are called. There are twelve of these judges mentioned, or rather thirteen, as Deborah the prophetess also judges Israel (Judges 4:4); but there are only eight (Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson), who are described as performing acts by which Israel obtained deliverance from its oppressors. Of the other five (Tolah, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon) we are merely told that they judged Israel so many years. The reason for this we are not to seek in the fact that the report of the heroic deeds of these judges had not been handed down to the time when our book was written. It is to be found simply in the fact that these judges waged no wars and smote no foes.

The judges (*shopetim*) were men who procured justice or right for the people of Israel, not only by delivering them out of the power of their foes, but also by administering the laws and rights of the Lord (Judges 2:16–19). *Judging* in this sense was different from the administration of civil jurisprudence, and included the idea of government such as would be expected from a king. Thus in 1 Sam. 8:5, 6, the people are said to have asked Samuel to give them a king “to judge us,” to procure us right, i.e., to govern us; and in 2 Kings 15:5 Jotham is said to have *judged*, i.e., governed the nation during the illness of his father. The name given to these men (*shopetim*, judges) was evidently founded upon Deut. 17:9 and 19:17, where it is assumed that in after-times there would be a *shopet*, who would stand by the side of the high priest as the supreme judge or leader of the state in Israel. The judges themselves corresponded to the δικασταί of the Tyrians (*Josephus*, c. Ap. i. 21) and the *Suffetes* of the Carthaginians (*qui summus Paenis est magistratus*, *Liv. Hist.* xxvii. 37, and xxx. 7), with

this difference, however, that as a rule the judges of Israel were called directly by the Lord, and endowed with miraculous power for the conquest of the enemies of Israel; and if, after delivering the people from their oppressors, they continued to the time of their death to preside over the public affairs of the whole nation, or merely of several of its tribes, yet they did not follow one another in a continuous line and unbroken succession, because the ordinary administration of justice and government of the commonwealth still remained in the hands of the heads of the tribes and the elders of the people, whilst occasionally there were also prophets and high priests, such as Deborah, Eli, and Samuel (Judges 4:4; 1 Sam. 4:18; 7:15), in whom the government was vested. Thus “Othniel delivered the children of Israel,” and “judged Israel,” by going out to war, smiting Chushan-rishathaim, the Aramaean king, and giving the land rest for forty years (Judges 3:9–11); and the same with Ehud and several others. On the other hand, Shamgar (Judges 3:31) and Samson (Judges 13–16) are apparently called judges of Israel, simply as opponents and conquerors of the Philistines, without their having taken any part in the administration of justice. Others, again, nether engaged in war nor gained victories. No warlike deeds are recorded of Tola; and yet it is stated in Judges 10:1, that “he rose up after Abimelech to deliver Israel (לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל), and judged Israel twenty-three years;” whilst of his successor Jair nothing more is said, than that “he judged Israel twenty-two years.” Both of these had delivered and judged Israel, not by victories gained over enemies, but by placing themselves at the head of the tribes over whom Gideon had been judge, at the termination of the ephemeral reign of Abimelech, and by preventing the recurrence of hostile oppression, through the influence they exerted, as well as by what they did for the establishment of the nation in its fidelity to the Lord. This also applies to Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, who followed Jephthah in direct succession (Judges 12:8–15). Of these five

judges also, it is not stated that Jehovah raised them up or called them. In all probability they merely undertook the government at the wish of the tribes whose judges they were; whilst at the same time it is to be observed, that such cases as these did not occur until the desire for a king had begun to manifest itself throughout the nation (Judges 8:22, 23).

But if all the judges did not fight against outward enemies of Israel, it might appear strange that the book of Judges should close with the death of Samson, without mentioning Eli and Samuel, as both of them judged Israel, the one forty years, the other for the whole of his life (1 Sam. 4:18; 7:15). But Eli was really high priest, and what he did as judge was merely the natural result of his office of high priest; and Samuel was called to be the prophet of the Lord, and as such he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Philistines, not with the sword and by the might of his arm, like the judges before him, but by the power of the word, with which he converted Israel to the Lord, and by the might of his prayer, with which he sought and obtained the victory from the Lord (1 Sam. 7:3-10); so that his judicial activity not only sprang out of his prophetic office, but was continually sustained thereby. The line of actual judges terminated with Samson; and with his death the office of judge was carried to the grave. Samson was followed immediately by Samuel, whose prophetic labours formed the link between the period of the judges and the introduction of royalty into Israel. The forty years of oppression on the part of the Philistines, from which Samson began to deliver Israel (Judges 13:1, 5), were brought to a close by the victory which the Israelites gained through Samuel's prayer (1 Sam. 7), as will be readily seen when we have determined the chronology of the period of the judges, in the introductory remarks to the exposition of the body of the book. This victory was not gained by the Israelites till twenty years after Eli's death (comp. 1 Sam. 7:2 with 6:1 and 4:18). Consequently of the forty years during which Eli judged Israel as high priest, only the last twenty fell within the time of the Philistine

oppression, the first twenty before it. But both Samuel and Samson were born during the pontificate of Eli; for when Samson's birth was foretold, the Philistines were already ruling over Israel (Judges 13:5). The deeds of Samson fell for the most part within the last twenty years of the Philistine supremacy, i.e., not only in the interval between the capture of the ark and death of Eli and the victory which the Israelites achieved through Samuel over these foes, which victory, however, Samson did not live to see, but also in the time when Samuel had been accredited as a prophet of Jehovah, and Jehovah had manifested himself repeatedly to him by word at Shiloh (1 Sam. 3:20, 21). Consequently Samuel completed the deliverance of Israel out of the power of the Philistines, which Samson had commenced.

The book of Judges, therefore, embraces the whole of the judicial epoch, and gives a faithful picture of the political development of the Israelitish theocracy during that time. The author writes throughout from a prophet's point of view. He applies the standard of the law to the spirit of the age by which the nation was influenced as a whole, and pronounces a stern and severe sentence upon all deviations from the path of rectitude set before it in the law. The unfaithfulness of Israel, which went a whoring again and again after Baal, and was punished for its apostasy from the Lord with oppression from foreign nations, and the faithfulness of the Lord, who sent help to the people whenever it returned to Him in its oppression, by raising up judges who conquered its enemies, are the two historical factors of those times, and the hinges upon which the history turns. In the case of all the judges, it is stated that they judged "Israel," or the "children of Israel;" although it is very obvious, from the accounts of the different deliverances effected, that most of the judges only delivered and judged those tribes who happened to be oppressed and subjugated by their enemies at a particular time. The other tribes, who were spared by this or the other hostile invasion, did not come into consideration in reference to the special design

of the historical account, namely, to describe the acts of the Lord in the government of His people, any more than the development of the religious and social life of individual members of the congregation in harmony with the law; inasmuch as the congregation, whether in whole or in part, was merely fulfilling its divinely appointed vocation, so long as it observed the law, and about this there was nothing special to be related (see the description given of the book of Judges in *Hengstenberg*, Diss. on the Pentateuch, vol. ii. pp. 16ff.).

Lastly, if we take a survey of the gradual development of Israel during the times of the judges, we may distinguish three stages in the attitude of the Lord to His constantly rebelling people, and also in the form assumed by the external and internal circumstances of the nation: viz., (1) the period from the commencement of the apostasy of the nation till its deliverance from the rule of the Canaanitish king Jabin, or the time of the judges Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, Deborah and Barak (Judges 3–5); (2) the time of the Midianitish oppression, with the deliverance effected by Gideon, and the government which followed, viz., of Abimelech and the judges Tola and Jair (Judges 6–10:5); (3) the time of the Ammonitish and Philistine supremacy over Israel, with the judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon on the one hand, and that of Samson on the other (Judges 10:6–16:31). Three times, for example, the Lord threatens His people with oppression and subjugation by foreign nations, as a punishment for their disobedience and apostasy from Him: viz., (1) at Bochim (Judges 2:1–4) through the angel of the Lord; (2) on the invasion of the Midianites (Judges 6:7–10) through the medium of a prophet; and (3) at the commencement of the Ammonitish and Philistine oppression (Judges 10:10–14). The first time He threatens, “the Canaanites shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you” (Judges 2:3); the second time, “I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you; I said unto you, I am Jehovah, your God; fear not

the gods of the Amorites: but ye have not hearkened to my voice” (Judges 6:9, 10); the third time, “Ye have forsaken me and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more; go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation” (Judges 10:13, 14). These threats were fulfilled upon the disobedient nation, not only in the fact that they fell deeper and deeper under the oppression of their foes, but by their also becoming disjointed and separated more and more internally. In the first stage, the oppressions from without lasted a tolerably long time: that of Chushan-rishathaim eight years; that of Eglon the Moabite, eighteen; and that of the Canaanitish king Jabin, as much as twenty years (Judges 3:8, 14; 4:3). But, on the other hand, after the first, the Israelites had forty years of peace; after the second, eighty; and after the third, again forty years (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31). Under Othniel and Ehud all Israel appears to have risen against its oppressors; but under Barak, Reuben and Gilead, Dan and Asher took no part in the conflict of the other tribes (Judges 5:15–17). In the second stage, the Midianitish oppression lasted, it is true, only seven years (Judges 6:1), and was followed by forty years of rest under Gideon (Judges 8:28); whilst the three years’ government of Abimelech was followed by forty-five years of peace under Tola and Jair (Judges 10:2, 3); but even under Gideon the jealousy of Ephraim was raised to such a pitch against the tribes who had joined in smiting the foe, that it almost led to a civil war (Judges 8:1–3), and the inhabitants of Succoth and Penuel refused all assistance to the victorious army, and that in so insolent a manner that they were severely punished by Gideon in consequence (Judges 8:4–9, 14–17); whilst in the election of Abimelech as king of Shechem, the internal decay of the congregation of Israel was brought still more clearly to light (Judges 9). Lastly, in the third stage, no doubt, Israel was delivered by Jephthah from the eighteen years’ bondage on the part of the Ammonites (Judges 11:8ff.), and the tribes to the east of the Jordan, as well as the northern tribes of the land on this side,

enjoyed rest under the judges Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon for thirty-one years (Judges 12:7, 9, 11, 14); but the Philistine oppression lasted till after Samson's death (Judges 13:5; 15:20), and the internal decay increased so much under this hostile pressure, that whilst the Ephraimites, on the one hand, commenced a war against Jephthah, and sustained a terrible defeat at the hands of the tribes on the east of the Jordan (Judges 12:1-6), on the other hand, the tribes who were enslaved by the Philistines had so little appreciation of the deliverance which God had sent them through Samson, that the men of Judah endeavoured to give up their deliverer to the Philistines (Judges 15:9-14). Nevertheless the Lord not only helped the nation again, both in its distress and out of its distress, but came nearer and nearer to it with His aid, that it might learn that its help was to be found in God alone. The first deliverers and judges He stirred up by His Spirit, which came upon Othniel and Ehud, and filled them with courage and strength for the conquest of their foes. Barak was summoned to the war by the prophetess Deborah, and inspired by her with the courage to undertake it. Gideon was called to be the deliverer of Israel out of the severe oppression of the Midianites by the appearance of the angel of the Lord, and the victory over the innumerable army of the foe was given by the Lord, not to the whole of the army which Gideon summoned to the battle, but only to a small company of 300 men, that Israel might not "vaunt themselves against the Lord," and magnify their own power. Lastly, Jephthah and Samson were raised up as deliverers out of the power of the Ammonites and Philistines; and whilst Jephthah was called by the elders of Gilead to be the leader in the war with the Midianites, and sought through a vow to ensure the assistance of God in gaining a victory over them, Samson was set apart from his mother's womb, through the appearance of the angel of the Lord, as the Nazarite who was to begin to deliver Israel out of the power of the Philistines. At the same time there was given to the nation in the person of Samuel, the son for whom the pious Hannah prayed to the Lord, a Nazarite

and prophet, who was not only to complete the deliverance from the power of the Philistines which Samson had begun, but to ensure the full conversion of Israel to the Lord its God.

With regard to the *origin* of the book of Judges, it is evident from the repeated remark, "In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25; cf. Judges 18:1; 19:1), that it was composed at a time when Israel was already rejoicing in the benefits connected with the kingdom. It is true this remark is only to be found in the appendices, and would have no force so far as the date of composition is concerned, if the view held by different critics were well-founded, viz., that these appendices were added by a later hand. But the arguments adduced against the unity of authorship in all three parts, the introduction, the body of the work, and the appendices, will not bear examination. Without the introduction (Judges 1:1-3:6) the historical narrative contained in the book would want a foundation, which is absolutely necessary to make it intelligible; and the two appendices supply two supplements of the greatest importance in relation to the development of the tribes of Israel in the time of the judges, and most intimately connected with the design and plan of the rest of the book. It is true that in Judges 1, as well as in the two appendices, the prophetic view of the history which prevails in the rest of the book, from Judges 2:11 to Judges 16:31, is not distinctly apparent; but this difference may be fully explained from the contents of the two portions, which neither furnish the occasion nor supply the materials for any such view,—like the account of the royal supremacy of Abimelech in Judges 9, in which the so-called "theocratical pragmatism" is also wanting. But, on the other hand, all these portions are just as rich in allusions to the Mosaic law and the legal worship as the other parts of the book, so that both in their contents and their form they would be unintelligible apart from the supremacy of the law in Israel. The discrepancies which some fancy they have discovered between Judges 1:8 and Judges 1:21,

and also between Judges 1:19 and Judges 3:3, vanish completely on a correct interpretation of the passages themselves. And no such differences can be pointed out in language or style as would overthrow the unity of authorship, or even render it questionable. Even *Stähelin* observes (*spez. Einl.* p. 77): "I cannot find in Judges 17–21 the (special) author of Judges 1–2:5; and the arguments adduced by *Bertheau* in favour of this, from modes of expression to be found in the two sections, appear to me to be anything but conclusive, simply because the very same

modes of expression occur elsewhere: יִנְאֹל

לְשֵׁבֶת in Ex. 2:21; חֲתָן in Num. 10:29; נָתַן

בְּיָד, Josh. 10:30; 11:8, Judges 6:1; 11:21; נָתַן

לְאִשָּׁה, Gen. 29:28; 30:4, 9; 34:8, etc.; הִכָּה

לְפִי חֶרֶב, Num. 21:24, Deut. 13:16, Josh. 8:24;

10:28, 30, 32, etc. Undoubtedly שָׁאֵל בִּי only occurs in Judges 1:1 and the appendix, and never earlier; but there is a similar expression in Num. 27:21 and Josh 9:14, and the first passage shows how the mode of expression could be so abbreviated. I find no preterites

with ׀, used in the place of the future with ׀ in Judges 1; for it is evident from the construction that the preterite must be used in vv. 8, 16, 25, etc.; and thus the only thing left that could

strike us at all is the idiom שֶׁלַח בְּאִשׁ, which is common to both sections, but which is too isolated, and occurs again moreover in 2 Kings 8:12 and Ps. 74:7." But even the "peculiar phrases belonging to a later age," which *Stähelin* and *Bertheau* discover in Judges 17–21 do not furnish any tenable proof of this assertion. The phrase "from Dan to Beersheba," in Judges 20:1, was formed after the settlement of the Danites in Laish-Dan, which took place at the commencement of the time of the judges.

נָשָׂא נָשִׁים, in Judges 21:23, is also to be found

in Ruth 1:4; and the others either occur again in the books of Samuel, or have been wrongly interpreted.

We have a firm *datum* for determining more minutely the time when the book of Judges was written, in the statement in Judges 1:21, that the Jebusites in Jerusalem had not been rooted out by the Israelites, but dwelt there with the children of Benjamin "unto this day." The Jebusites remained in possession of Jerusalem, or of the citadel Zion, or the upper town of Jerusalem, until the time when David went against Jerusalem after the twelve tribes had acknowledged him as king, took the fortress of Zion, and made it the capital of his kingdom under the name of the city of David (2 Sam. 5:6–9; 1 Chron. 11:4–9). Consequently the book was written before this event, either during the first seven years of the reign of David at Hebron, or during the reign of Saul, under whom the Israelites already enjoyed the benefits of a monarchical government, since Saul not only fought with bravery against all the enemies of Israel, and "delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them" (1 Sam. 14:47, 48), but exerted himself to restore the authority of the law of God in his kingdom, as is evident from the fact that he banished the wizards and necromancers out of the land (1 Sam. 28:9). The talmudical statement therefore in *Bava-bathra* (f. 14*b* and 15*a*), to the effect that Samuel was the author of the book, may be so far correct, that if it was not written by Samuel himself towards the close of his life, it was written at his instigation by a younger prophet of his school. More than this it is impossible to decide. So much, however, is at all events certain, that the book does not contain traces of a later age either in its contents or its language, and that Judges 18:30 does not refer to the time of the captivity (see the commentary on this passage). With regard to the *sources* of which the author made use, unless we are prepared to accept untenable hypotheses as having all the validity of historical facts, it is impossible to establish anything more than that he drew his materials not only from oral tradition, but also from written documents. This is obvious from the

exactness of the historical and chronological accounts, and still more so from the abundance of characteristic and original traits and expressions that meet the reader in the historical pictures, some of which are very elaborate. The historical fidelity, exactness, and vividness of description apparent in every part of the book are only to be explained in a work which embraces a period of 350 years, on the supposition that the author made use of trustworthy records, or the testimony of persons who were living when the events occurred. This stands out so clearly in every part of the book, that it is admitted even by critics who are compelled by their own dogmatical assumptions to deny the actual truth or reality of the miraculous parts of the history. With regard to the nature of these sources, however, we can only conjecture that Judges 1 and 17–21 were founded upon written accounts, with which the author of the book of Joshua was also acquainted; and that the accounts of Deborah and Barak, of Gideon, and the life of Samson, were taken from different writing, inasmuch as these sections are distinguished from one another by many peculiarities. (Further remarks on this subject will be found in the exposition itself.)

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