

# CHAPTER 20

## INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES 20

This chapter relates, how that there was an assembly of the children of Israel at Mizpeh, upon what had happened to the concubine of the Levite, where he appeared and related the whole affair to them, (<sup><0710></sup>Judges 20:1-7) upon which they unanimously agreed to chastise the inhabitants of Gibeah for what they had done, (<sup><0718></sup>Judges 20:8-11), and in order to do that sent to the tribe of Benjamin to deliver the guilty, but instead of that they took to their arms, and prepared for battle in defence of them, (<sup><0712></sup>Judges 20:12-17) and two battles ensued on this, in which the Israelites, who were on the right side of the question, were worsted, (<sup><0718></sup>Judges 20:18-25) but upon their seeking the Lord again, and their humiliation before him, they engaged a third time in battle, and got an entire victory over the Benjaminites, and destroyed them all excepting six hundred men, (<sup><0716></sup>Judges 20:26-48).

**Ver. 1.** *Then all the children of Israel went out*, etc.] Of their tribes, cities, habitations, not every individual of them, but some of the chief of them, with a select company with them:

*and the congregation was gathered together as one man*; with as much unanimity and ease met together in one place, at the same time, as if only one man had been pitched upon and deputed for that purpose:

*from Dan even to Beersheba*, from the city Dan, lately built, which was in the most northern parts of the land of Canaan, to Beersheba, a city in the most southern part, which included all the tribes in the land of Canaan, who all, excepting Benjamin, assembled:

*with the land of Gilead*; which lay on the other side Jordan, inhabited by the two tribes of Reuben and Dan, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who also came on this occasion:

*unto the Lord in Mizpeh*; a city which lay upon the borders of Judah and Benjamin, and is therefore assigned to them both, (<sup><0658></sup>Joshua 15:38 18:26) for this was not Mizpeh in the land of Gilead, but a city near to Shiloh; and,

according to Fuller<sup>f409</sup>, eight miles from Gibeah, and so was a convenient place to meet at: it is not to be thought the tribes met here, by a secret impulse upon their minds, but by a summons of some principal persons in one of the tribes, very probably in the tribe of Ephraim, where the Levite dwelt, and in which was the tabernacle of the Lord, and of which the last supreme magistrate was, namely, Joshua; and all having notice of the occasion of it, met very readily; and because they assembled in the name and fear of God, and it was in the cause of God, and as a solemn assembly, a judicial one, in which God was usually present, they are said to be gathered unto him, and the rather, as they sought for direction and counsel from him in the affair before them.

**Ver. 2.** *And the chief of all the people*, etc.] The princes of the tribes and heads of families, rulers of thousands, and hundreds, and fifties, and tens; or the “corners”<sup>f410</sup>, who were like the corner stones in a building, which are not only the most valuable and ornamental, but the strength of the building, which cement it, and support it, and hold it together; though Abarbinel thinks this intends the division and separation of each tribe, which encamped in a separate corner and side by itself: but the former sense seems best, and the meaning is, that the principal men of them, *even of all the tribes of Israel*; excepting the tribe of Benjamin:

*presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God*; now gathered together: which assembly consisted, besides the heads of them, of

*four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword*; or were armed men; there were 600,000 or more in Israel able to bear arms; but as now the wars in Canaan were pretty much at an end, the militia of the nation was not so regularly kept up, and many were employed in tilling the ground, and dressing the vines, and the like; and besides, as there were none of the tribe of Benjamin present, it need not be wondered at there should be no more, but rather that so many should be gathered together on such an occasion.

**Ver. 3.** *Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel were gone up to Mizpeh*, etc.] Having no doubt the same notice the rest of the tribes had; but the thing complained of being done in their tribe, and by some of it, they might be willing to screen the delinquents, or were careless about and indifferent to the case, and secure and easy, as imagining their

brethren would never go to war with them about it; or were proud and haughty, and would pay no regard to the summons given them:

*then said the children of Israel, tell us, how was this wickedness?*

proclamation was made in the assembly, that if any person there knew anything of this shocking affair, and horrid iniquity, which was the occasion of their meeting together, that they would rise up and declare what was the cause of it, how it came about, and by whom it was done; or they addressed themselves particularly to the Levite, and his host, and his servant, who might all be upon the spot to bear witness in this case, as it is certain the former of them was, who upon this stood up, and spoke as follows.

**Ver. 4.** *And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered, and said,* etc.] He rose up, and, in answer to their request, declared the whole affair as follows: and none so proper as he, who was upon the spot when it was done, and so near a relation of the deceased, and had a right to demand justice to be done; for from hence it appears that she was his lawful wife, though called a concubine:

*I came into Gibeah, that belongeth to Benjamin;* which he so particularly describes, to distinguish it from another of the same name in the tribe of Judah, lest any mistake should be made, and an innocent people should suffer in their reputation, or otherwise; and which also would account for the tribe of Benjamin not being present at this convention:

*I and my concubine, to lodge;* thither they came, not with an intention to stay, to sojourn there, and much less to do them any injury, or to infringe any of their rights and privileges; nor in the least to be burdensome to them, having brought all necessary provisions with them for themselves, servants, and cattle, only to get a night's lodging with them.

**Ver. 5.** *And the men of Gibeah rose against me,* etc.] Not all of them, but some that dwelt in that city; he forbears giving them the character they justly deserved, sons of Belial. These came in a tumultuous and violent manner,

*and beset the house round about upon me by night;* that he might not make his escape, resolving if possible to get him into their hands, and do with him according to their will:

*and thought to have slain me*; their first intention was to commit the unnatural sin on him, and, if he resisted, to slay him; but this he modestly conceals, as being a sin not to be named in an assembly of saints; and besides he might say this, because he himself chose rather to be slain than to submit to their lust, which he knew must be the case upon his refusal and resistance; and even if he had yielded, being overpowered, this would have been the consequence, that he should have been abused even unto death, as his wife was:

*and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead*; or “afflicted”, or “humbled”<sup>f411</sup> her; which is a modest expression for carnal knowledge of her, and which they had to such excess that she died through it.

**Ver. 6.** *And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces*, etc.] Lest it should be thought that these barbarous creatures, after they had used her in such a manner that occasioned her death, that they had committed this fact also; the Levite takes it to himself, and owns that he did that:

*and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel*; to alarm them, and excite their attention to what had passed, and to raise their indignation against it:

*for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel*; being guilty of adultery and murder, and would have committed the unnatural crime, if they could have had an opportunity of doing it.

**Ver. 7.** *Behold, ye are all children of Israel*, etc.] The descendants of one man that feared the Lord; were of one nation, and of one religion, men professing godliness, and therefore ought to bear testimony against sin and wickedness of every sort, and especially such crying abominations as these:

*give your advice and counsel*: in this place, being assembled together on this occasion; consult what is best to be done, and let every man speak his mind freely what step he thinks should be taken for the glory of God, and honour of religion, and to bring such persons to justice who had committed so foul a fact.

**Ver. 8.** *And all the people arose as one man*, etc.] Either the heads of the people assembled in council, all agreed unanimously in one vote or resolution, or all the 400,000 men were of the same mind, when the case was reported to them:

*saying, we will not any of us go to his tent, neither will we any of us turn into his house*; that is, they would not return home, to take one night's rest in their houses, or attend to the business of their callings or to any affair of life, however urgent, till satisfaction was made for the evil committed.

**Ver. 9.** *But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah*, etc.] Where the fact was done; what follows was proposed by some, and unanimously agreed to by all:

*we will go up by lot against it*; cast lots who shall go up to it and demand satisfaction for the offence committed; and if denied, to act in an hostile manner against it.

**Ver. 10.** *And we will take ten men of an hundred, throughout all the tribes of Israel*, etc.] Excepting that of Benjamin which was not with them, not any of them:

*and a hundred out of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand*; in all 40,000, out of the 400,000:

*to fetch victual for the people*; ten men were to provide food for ninety, and one hundred men for nine hundred, and 1000 men for 9000, in all 40,000, for 360,000; these were either to go to their own tribes and habitations, or to the towns and cities adjacent, to procure food for this large army; for they came from their homes without any provision, not knowing that the affair would keep them long; but perceiving that it would require time before it could be determined, they judged it the wisest method for some to be appointed to take care of provision for the army, that it might not be scattered about on that account, but pursue the war with vigour till satisfaction was obtained:

*that they might do, when they came to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel*; punish with death the delinquents, and chastise the inhabitants, and especially the magistrates, for their connivance at such wicked persons among them, and negligence of doing their duty.

**Ver. 11.** *So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city*, etc.] Of Gibeah, even 360,000 men:

*knit together as one man*; went heart and hand together, united in their sentiments and resolutions, determining to have justice done, or lose their

lives in this cause: according to the Jews <sup>f412</sup>, this was on the twenty third of Shebet, which answers to part of January and part of February, on which day a fast was kept on this account.

**Ver. 12.** *And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribes of Benjamin,* etc.] Meaning the families of Benjamin; for as sometimes a tribe is called a family, (<sup><0177></sup>Joshua 7:17) so a family is called a tribe; and there were ten families in the tribe of Benjamin, according to the number of his sons, the fathers of these families. (<sup><0421></sup>Genesis 46:21), which being numerous and powerful, and consisting of men of courage, and expert in war, thought themselves a match for the ten tribes of Israel now assembled, who sent one out of each tribe, very probably ten in all, upon this errand; for they judged it most advisable, before they went to war with them, to try to get the offenders, delivered up to justice, and so prevent the shedding of blood of either side; and the rather, as there were none of the tribe of Benjamin at this assembly, and which indeed might give them reason to suspect they meant not to join with them in an amicable manner in this affair: however, they were willing to try peaceable methods first:

*saying, what wickedness is this that is done among you?* not that they were sent to inquire what the crime was that was committed, that was fully known; but by putting the question in this manner, their design was to aggravate it, and to put the men of Benjamin on considering how great it was, what an enormous sin it was that was committed, and that among them; and therefore it lay upon them, either to punish the perpetrators of it themselves or deliver them up to them to be punished according to the common law of Israel.

**Ver. 13.** *Now, therefore, deliver us the men, the children of Belial, which are in Gibeah,* etc.] Those wicked men that were the authors of that abominable wickedness there committed:

*that we may put them to death;* as they deserved, since they were guilty both of adultery and murder; their meaning is, that they in conjunction with the tribe of Benjamin might condemn them to death and punish them with it, as their crime deserved:

*and put away evil from Israel;* prevent both the spread of such a sinful evil in the nation, encouraged by such examples, and the evil of punishment coming upon them from God, should they let such wickedness pass with impunity:

*but the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel;* they refused to give up the men of Gibeah, that had been guilty of such great wickedness; reckoning it a reproach, as Josephus <sup>f413</sup> says, to obey the commands of others, for fear of war, and unwilling to yield to any in arms, neither on account of multitude nor courage.

**Ver. 14.** *But the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah,* etc.] To protect and defend it against the other tribes, being a city of theirs and where the persons charged with the crime lived; these got together thither out of the several cities of the tribe of Benjamin, as many as could bear arms:

*to go out to battle against the children of Israel;* they neither denied the fact, nor attempted to palliate and excuse it, nor sought for peace but at once betook themselves to arms; which showed not only want of prudence but pride, passion and self-confidence, and that they were sadly depraved in their morals to rise up in defence of such wicked men; and a strange infatuation to expect success against such vastly superior numbers, and in so bad a cause.

**Ver. 15.** *And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities,* etc.] All that they could muster up, and gather together out of their several cities, were no more man than

*twenty and six thousand men that drew the sword* able bodied men fit for war, and expert in it:

*beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men* young, stout, and strong, and in all but 26,700; and what are these to an army of 400,000 men, or however 360,000 that came up against Gibeah, while 40,000 were employed in getting provisions for them? Josephus <sup>f414</sup> makes the number of the Benjaminites still less, no more than 25,600, led thereunto by an later account, that 25,000 Benjaminites were slain in the third and last battle, and only six hundred escaped to a rock for safety, not considering that 1000 men may well be supposed to be lost in the two first battles; for it would be strange indeed that they should lose none in two engagement with so large an army; the same error is committed in the Vulgate Latin version, which makes them no more than 25,000; with which agrees the Alexandrian copy of the

Septuagint version: though that, according to the Vatican exemplar, has but 23,000. The numbers in the Hebrew text are no doubt the right.

**Ver. 16.** *Among all this people there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded*, etc.] According to Ben Gersom, these were the seven hundred men of Gibeah; but this does not appear from the text, but, on the contrary, that these were among all the people; or there were so many to be selected out of them all, who were lefthanded men; nor is it likely that all the inhabitants of one place should be such. Benjamin signifies a son of the right hand, yet this tribe had a great number of lefthanded men in it, (see ~~(7719)~~Judges 3:15). Josephus <sup>f415</sup> wrongly reduces the number to five hundred:

*everyone could sling stones at an hair's breadth, and not miss*: the mark they slung the stone at, so very expert were they at it; and perhaps their having such a number of skilful men in this art made them more confident of success, and emboldened them in this daring undertaking, to point to which this circumstance seems to be mentioned. There were a people that inhabited the islands, now called Majorca and Minorca, anciently Baleares, from their skilfulness in slinging stones, to which they brought up from their childhood, as it is related various writers, Strabo <sup>f416</sup>, Diodorus Siculus <sup>f417</sup>, Floras <sup>f418</sup> and others <sup>f419</sup>; that their mothers used to set their breakfast on a beam or post, or some such thing, at a distance, which they were not to have, unless they could strike it off; and the first of these writers says, that they exercised this art from the time that the Phoenicians held these islands; and, according to Pliny <sup>f420</sup>, the Phoenicians, the old inhabitants of Canaan, were the first inventors of slings, and from these the Benjaminites might learn it. The Indians are said <sup>f421</sup> to be very expert in slinging stones to an hair's breadth.

**Ver. 17.** *And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin*, etc.] Who did not join them in this affair, but opposed them,

*were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword*: see (~~(7719)~~Judges 20:9)

*all these were men of war*; inured to it, skilful and courageous.

**Ver. 18.** *And the children of Israel arose*, etc.] From Mizpeh, where they were assembled, having heard that the Benjaminites were gathered together to defend the men of Gibeah:

*and went up to the house of God*; to the tabernacle which was in Shiloh, (<sup><0783></sup>Judges 18:31), (see <sup><0681></sup>Joshua 18:1) though the Targum takes Bethel for the name of a place so called; and so do Ben Gersom and Josephus<sup>f422</sup>, which was near Shiloh, for Shiloh is said to be on the north side of Bethel, (<sup><0719></sup>Judges 21:19) but as there is no reason to believe the tabernacle was now removed from Shiloh thither, so it is not likely they would go to any other place but where the tabernacle ark, and high priest were:

*and asked counsel of God*; before Phinehas the high priest, according to the judgment of Urim and Thummim, (<sup><0723></sup>Judges 20:28)

*and said which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?* there being no supreme magistrate, judge, or general, to lead them; they did not ask whether they should go to war or no with their brethren; they made no doubt of that, taking it for granted they had sufficient reason for so doing, and that it was according to the will of God; nor did they inquire whether they should be victorious or not, they made no doubt of being victorious, both from their superior numbers, and the justness of their cause; they only inquire who should lead them on, having no general; and this they might do, to prevent any contentions among them about being precedence:

*and the Lord said, Judah shall go up first*: which tribe pitched their standard first about the tabernacle, and marched first in their journeys in the wilderness, and was ordered to go up first and fight the Canaanites, being a powerful and warlike tribe.

**Ver. 19.** *And the children of Israel rose up in the morning*, etc.] After they had had counsel at Shiloh, and which perhaps was by a deputation sent thither:

*and encamped against Gibeah*: formed a camp near Gibeah of 360,000 men, enough to have stormed and taken that city at once, one would think.

**Ver. 20.** *And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin*, etc.] From the place where they were encamped:

*and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah*; not only against the inhabitants of Gibeah, but the children of Benjamin, that came to the defence of them; they formed, themselves in a line of battle, and prepared for an action.

**Ver. 21.** *And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, etc.]* Which was their place of rendezvous, and which they came to defend; and in and about which they had stationed their whole army of 26,000 men:

*and destroyed down to the ground:* killed dead upon the spot:

*of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men;* wanting but 4000 of their whole number, excepting the men of Gibeah, which was such a rebuff the Israelites did not expect, being engaged in so just a cause, and having such a numerous army. Several Jewish writers<sup>f423</sup> think this was on account of their idolatry, that though they were very zealous to revenge corporeal adultery in the case of the Levite's concubine, and to remove such iniquity from Israel; yet were not zealous to revenge and put away spiritual adultery or idolatry in the case of the Danites, who had set up the image of Micah, and so had spread idolatry not only in their own tribe, but throughout Israel; and therefore God took this opportunity to avenge his own quarrel, and rebuke them for their sin; and now did Benjamin raven as a wolf, according to Jacob's prophecy, (<sup>(-01427)</sup>Genesis 49:27).

**Ver. 22.** *And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, etc.]* That though they had lost a great number of men, yet still their forces were large and greatly superior to those of Benjamin, and above all their cause was good:

*and set their battle again in array* formed a line of battle again facing their enemy, inviting to another battle, and bidding defiance:

*and in the place where they put themselves in array the first day;* by which it seems they kept the field of battle; though they lost so many men, they did not flee before the children of Benjamin, but stood their ground; nor were they so superstitious as to fancy the place unlucky; nor was it a bad situation they were in, to which their want of success was owing, for then they would have changed it.

**Ver. 23.** *And the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until even, etc.]* The evening of the day in which the battle was fought; not that the whole army went up to Shiloh to the house of God there, but a deputation of them, who lamented their defeat, and the loss of so many lives, but not their sins and transgressions, and particularly the idolatry they had been guilty of:

*and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, shall we go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?* they seemed to have some doubt, by the loss they sustained, whether they were right in going to war with Benjamin, especially as he was their brother; and therefore the question now is, not who should go up first, which was already determined, but whether they should go at all; and still they do not ask any help of God in battle, nor success, but were depending on their numbers, and the justness of their cause, and therefore neither is promised to them, only they have an answer to their question:

*and the Lord said, go up against him;* for Benjamin was certainly in the wrong, and therefore the Israelites are directed to go against him, and they also were not sufficiently chastised, nor thoroughly humbled.

**Ver. 24.** *And the children of Israel came near,* etc.] To the city of Gibeah, drew nigh to battle:

*against the children of Benjamin the second day;* for the two battles were fought two days successively.

**Ver. 25.** *And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day,* etc.] Flushed with the victory they had obtained the day before:

*and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men, all these drew the sword,* were armed men; this, with the 22,000 slain the day preceding, made 40,000; the same number singled out from among them by lot to provide food for them, and is thought by some to be the case Deborah refers to, (<sup>QUB</sup>Judges 5:8) and is what is certainly intended in (<sup>300</sup>Hosea 10:9).

**Ver. 26.** *Then all the children of Israel and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God,* etc.] This looks as if the whole body of the army, with other people from parts adjacent, went up to the tabernacle of God in Shiloh:

*and wept and sat there before the Lord;* not only wept, but continued weeping, and that not merely for their defeat, but for their sins, since it follows:

*and fasted that day until even;* afflicted their bodies with fasting, which was a token of the humiliation of their souls for their sins:

*and offered burnt offering's and peace offerings before the Lord*, to make atonement for their sins, and to implore success on their arms.

**Ver. 27.** *And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord*, etc.] By the Word of the Lord, as the Targum, and which has the same expression in (<sup>4718</sup>Judges 20:18,23) for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days; in Shiloh, where the tabernacle was.

**Ver. 28.** *And Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days*, etc.] Before the ark, ministering before the Lord, which shows that this affair was long before the times of Samson, though placed after them; or otherwise Phinehas must have been more than three hundred years of age, which is not probable<sup>f424</sup>. Phinehas's standing before the ark was the posture of the priest when he inquired of the Lord for any by Urim and Thummim; the person that inquired stood before him that was inquired of, as Kimchi observes, and he that was inquired of stood before the Shechinah, or the presence of the divine Majesty, of which the ark was a symbol:

*saying, shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?* in which the question is put in somewhat different manner than before, not only desiring to know whether it was the will of God they should renew the battle or not, since Benjamin was their brother, but whether they should have success or not; intimating, that if the Lord would bless and help them, they were willing to go up, but if not they chose to desist; for they were fully convinced now they were wrong in depending on their numbers, or the justness of their cause; whereas success depended wholly on the will and pleasure of God, to which they desired to submit:

*and the Lord said, go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand;* now they are not only directed to go up to the battle, but are promised victory.

**Ver. 29.** *And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.*] For though they were assured of success and victory, yet they thought proper to make use of means: and though their numbers were very great, they had recourse to art and stratagem, and set an ambush in divers places, much in like manner as Israel did for the men of Ai; the two cases being pretty much similar; this ambush was set in the night, as Josephus says<sup>f425</sup>,

**Ver. 30.** *And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day,* etc.] Not the day following the second battle, since it would take more time to go to Shiloh, and fast and offer sacrifices there, but on the third day from the second battle:

*and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at other times;* as they had done on the first and second days of battle.

**Ver. 31.** *And the children of Benjamin went out against the people,* etc.] Sallied out of Gibeah upon them, where they had put themselves in array against them:

*and were drawn away from the city;* the Israelites retreating, and dissembling a flight, which drew the Benjaminites to pursue after them, by which means they were drawn off to a greater distance from the city of Gibeah:

*and they began to smite the people, and kill as at other times;* at the other two battles;

*in the highways;* where it seems two ways met:

*of which one goeth up to the house of God;* to Bethel, as the Targum<sup>f426</sup>; or rather to Shiloh, where the house or tabernacle of God was, and was two miles from Gibeah, as Bunting<sup>f427</sup> says:

*and the other to Gibeah in the field;* so called, to distinguish it from the other Gibeah situated on an hill:

*about thirty men of Israel;* which were killed in this running fight; and it seems as if one part of the army of Israel took one road, and the other the other road, and so divided the army of the Benjaminites that pursued after them.

**Ver. 32.** *And the children of Benjamin said, they are smitten down before us, as at first,* etc.] At the first battle, which gave them great spirit, and they concluded they should have victory, as before:

*but the children of Israel said, let us flee, and draw them from the city unto the highways;* pretending to be afraid of them, and not able to face them, and therefore made as if they fled through fear and cowardice, which inspired the Benjaminites with fresh ardour to pursue them closely, and so

were drawn from the city to the highways, as expressed in the preceding verse.

**Ver. 33.** *And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place*, etc.] The main body of the army, which fled before Benjamin, when they were come to a proper place, stopped, and rose up out of it, and stood in their own defence:

*and put themselves in array at Baaltamar*; drew up in a line of battle at that place, facing their enemies, in order to engage with them: this place the Targum calls the plains of Jericho, that being the city of palm trees, which Tamar signifies; and so Jarchi interprets it; but these are too far off; it must be some place near Gibeah. Jerom<sup>f428</sup> speaks of a little village in his time in those parts, called Bethamari, and may be thought to be this same place; perhaps in the times of the old Canaanites here was a grove of palm trees, in which Baal was worshipped, from whence it had its name:

*and the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their places, even out of the meadows of Gibeah*; or plain of Gibeah, as the Targum; for as the city was built on a hill, at the bottom of it were a plain and fine meadows of grass, and here an ambush was placed at some little distance from the city; and when the army of the Benjaminites were drawn off from it, in pursuit of Israel, these came forth and placed themselves between them and the city.

**Ver. 34.** *And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all Israel*, etc.] Which, according to Ben Gersom, were the liers in wait; and came from the south, as the Targum says:

*and the battle was sore*; not between those liers in wait, and the Benjaminites, but between those at Baaltamar, and them who set themselves in battle array against them, and they fought stoutly on both sides:

*but they knew not that evil was near them*; that there was an ambush laid, by which they were in great danger; they knew nothing of the 10,000 men that were now come out against Gibeah, and were between them and that.

**Ver. 35.** *And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel*, etc.] Gave Israel the victory over them at Baaltamar; for notwithstanding all the art and stratagem they used, their numbers and their valour, victory was of the Lord, and to him it is ascribed; for until now Benjamin, though fewer in

number, had been always victorious; and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjaminites that day 25,100; which is the total sum of all that were slain of them that day, the particulars of which are afterwards given:

*all these drew the sword*; were armed men.

**Ver. 36.** *So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten*, etc.] Their forces broken and worsted, many being killed:

*for the men of Israel gave place to the Benjaminites*; at first, and made as if they were afraid of them, and so fled before them, which was only to decoy them to a greater distance from the city Gibeah:

*because they trusted unto the liers in wait, which they had set beside Gibeah*; that these would not only enter the city, and burn it, but meet the Benjaminites fleeing back to it, when they should turn upon them and smite them, and so cut off all that remained of them.

**Ver. 37.** *And the liers in wait hasted*, etc.] When the time was come agreed upon for them to rise out of their ambush:

*and rushed upon Gibeah*; at unawares, with great force and violence entered the city, and took possession of it; or “extended”<sup>f429</sup>, or spread themselves unto it; before they lay close in a narrow compass, but now they put themselves in a regular order, and marched rank and file, and reached from the meadows in which they were, (<sup>(QZRS)</sup>Judges 20:33), to the city:

*and the liers in wait drew themselves along*; along the city, in every part of it, spread themselves all over it, and made themselves masters of every corner of it; or “made a long sound”<sup>f430</sup> with a trumpet, protracted that to a great length, which was done to terrify the inhabitants, or to let the Israelites know they were possessed of the city:

*and smote all the city with the edge of the sword*; old men, women, and children, who were not able to bear arms.

**Ver. 38.** *Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and the liers in wait*, etc.] Or an appointed time<sup>f431</sup> as the Targum; so Kimchi and Abarbinel. There was a time fixed, at which the men of Israel proposed to be at Baaltamar, exactly when the Benjaminites would be drawn at a proper distance from the city, and then the liers in wait were to break forth, and rush upon it, and enter it:

*and that they should make a great flame with smoke to rise up out of the city;* set it on fire, and cause the fire to burn fiercely, that there might be a large ascent of flame and smoke to be seen afar off; which, when the men of Israel saw, they would know the city was taken.

**Ver. 39.** *And when the men of Israel retired in the battle,* etc.] Which is before expressed by their fleeing, and giving place to the Benjaminites, and was only an artifice of theirs, to draw them off from the city:

*Benjamin began to smite and kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons;* which was done in the highways leading to Shiloh and Gibeah in the field, (<sup><02B></sup>Judges 20:31)

*for they said, surely they are smitten down before us as in the first battle;* when the greater number of the Israelites were slain by them.

**Ver. 40.** *But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of smoke,* etc.] Fire being set to it by the liers in wait, who had entered it, and who made a large fire, which caused a vast pillar of flame and smoke to arise, which might be seen a great way off:

*the Benjaminites looked behind them;* perhaps at hearing the blowing of the trumpet, and the long sound of that:

*and, behold, the flame of the city ascended up to heaven;* went upwards, and reached to a great height.

**Ver. 41.** *And when the men of Israel turned again,* etc.] Turned their faces to the Benjaminites, on whom they had turned their backs; and which they did on hearing the sound of the trumpet, or seeing the flame of the city, or both, and that in order to fight the Benjaminites, and smite them, as now was their opportunity:

*the men of Benjamin were amazed;* at this strange and sudden change of things, at the sight of the flame of their city behind them, and at the Israelites turning back to fight them, when they thought themselves sure of victory, as at other times:

*for they saw that evil was come upon them;* that they were in the utmost danger, between two fires, as we usually say, liers in wait behind them, which had seized their city and burnt it, and the army of Israel turning upon them with great spirit and resolution.

**Ver. 42.** *Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel, etc.]*  
And fled from them:

*unto the way of the wilderness*; what wilderness is not certain, perhaps the wilderness of Judah; they did not turn directly back towards Gibeah, perceiving that was taken, and in the hands of a body of men that would meet them, and therefore they turned on one side towards the wilderness, if happily they could make their escape thither, and shelter themselves:

*but the battle overtook them*; that is, they that made war, as the Targum, the Israelites that were engaged in battle with them pursued them, and overtook them:

*and them which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them*; either the Israelites that came out of their cities to assist their brethren destroyed the Benjaminites as they fled, or the Benjaminites who came out of other cities to Gibeah, these were destroyed in the midst of it with the inhabitants, by the liers in wait, when they entered it.

**Ver. 43.** *Thus they enclosed the Benjaminites round about, etc.]*  
Surrounded them on all sides, the army of Israel being posted in different places, and people coming out of all the cities to their assistance. Josephus <sup>f432</sup> says, they were forced into, and cooped up, in a hollow place in a valley, so that they could not escape:

*and chased them*; or “caused to pursue” <sup>f433</sup>; calling after them a pursuit, crying to one another as they went along, saying, pursue them, pursue them; so Jarchi and Kimchi; which cry, as it inspired the pursuers with zeal, so they pursued with terror:

*and trod them down with ease*; they making no resistance, being quite dispirited; the Targim is,

“from the house of their rest,”

where they took up their rest, and designed to rest that night, but could not, being so closely pursued, and diligently sought after. Some take “menuchah”, rendered “ease”, to be the name of a place, from or unto which they were pursued and trodden down, (see <sup><432></sup>1 Chronicles 2:52 \*marg) and so the Septuagint seems to take it for the name of a place, rendering it, “from Noua”:

*over against Gibeah, towards the sunrising*; that is, as Jarchi interprets it, to the east of Gibeah, there was this overthrow and slaughter made.

**Ver. 44.** *And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men*, etc.] Just the number they had slain of Israel in the second battle. This is the number of them that were slain when Israel turned upon them, and by that time they got to the east of Gibeah; afterwards 5000 more were slain on the highways, and 2000 near Gidom, as after related:

*all these were men of valour*; as appears by three times facing and engaging with the army of Israel, so vastly superior to them, and twice beating them.

**Ver. 45.** *And they turned and fled toward the wilderness, unto the rock of Rimmon*, etc.] Which signifies pomegranate; perhaps it was in the form of one, and may be the same as in (<sup>494D</sup>1 Samuel 14:2) where Saul is said to be under a pomegranate tree, or under Rimmon, the rock Rimmon, for that is said to be near Gibeah, as this was. There was a village in the times of Jerom called Remmon, fifteen miles from Jerusalem to the north<sup>f434</sup>, but could not be near this rock to have its name from thence; hither the rest of the army fled for shelter:

*and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men*; who were scattered one from another, and as they were found in the highways, and picked up, they were slain one after another, just as ears of corn are gleaned one by one, after the harvest is got in, or as grapes in single berries, after the vintage is over:

*and pursued hard after them unto Gidom*; which perhaps had its name from the cutting off of the Benjaminites there:

*and slew two thousand men of them*; that is, 2000 more besides the 5000 before mentioned.

**Ver. 46.** *So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and thousand men*, etc.] It is before said 25,100 (<sup>472B</sup>Judges 20:35) here the one hundred are omitted, and the round number of thousands given, which is no unusual way of speaking and writing; the whole army of Benjamin consisted of 26,700 of which 18,000 were slain in the field of battle, 5000 in the highways, and 2000 at Gidom, in all 25,000; and we may suppose one hundred as they were straggling in the road, or found in by places, or are not mentioned with either of the thousands for the sake of a round

number, and six hundred fled to the rock Rimmon; as for the other 1000, it is highly probable, they fell in the two first battles, as Ben Gersom and Abarbinel rightly suppose; for it is not credible, that though they got such amazing victories, it was without the loss of men, and these are as few as well can be imagined. Jarchi thinks these thousand fled to the cities of Benjamin, and were slain when the Israelites entered them, as after related, (<sup>(1718)</sup>Judges 20:48) which is much more probable than a tradition they have, that they went into the land of Romania, and dwelt there. Now all those that were slain were men

*that drew the sword*; soldiers, not husbandmen, artificers, etc. but armed men:

*all these were men of valour*; even those that fled, who chose rather to lose their lives than ask for quarter.

**Ver. 47.** *But six hundred men*, etc.] Who were all that were left of 26,700

*turned and fled to the wilderness*; turned out of the highway or common road, and being swift of foot, got to a wilderness; what wilderness is not certain:

*unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months*; very probably in a cave of that rock, which might be large enough to hold such a number; Saul is said to have just the same number under it, and David had also a like number in a cave at Engedi, (<sup>(942)</sup>1 Samuel 14:2 23:13 24:3), and from hence these men might send out of their number to fetch in provision for them from parts adjacent, after the heat of the action was over, and the rage and fury of the Israelites subsided.

**Ver. 48.** *And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin*, etc.] After they had destroyed their army, the city of Gibeah, and the inhabitants of it: not content with this, in their wrath and fury, turned and went,

*and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of every city*; even men, women, and children, in every city of Benjamin, at least all that lay in their way; and which they might do to be avenged on them, for sending out their militia against them, which had made such a slaughter among them to the loss of 40,000 men, or to fulfil their oath, that such who came not to Mizpeh should be put to death; for which reason also the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead, as well as of the cities of Benjamin, were put to

death, men, women, and children, dealing in the same severity with them as with the Canaanitish nations, or as with a city given to idolatry:

*as the beast, and all that came to hand*; spared no living creature, herds and flocks:

*also they set on fire all the cities that they came unto*; which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, so exceedingly wroth were they with them, for protecting such that had been the authors of such abominable wickedness, and for the loss of the lives of so many valuable men.