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KEDESH-NAPHTALI AND TA'ANACH

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PRACTICALLY all Biblical scholars are agreed that Judges 4 is merely a prose account of the victory of the tribes of Israel over the Canaanites, which is described in older, poetic form in Judges 5. They base their conclusion upon the fact that Deborah and Barak, Jael and Sisera play practically the same rôles in Judges 4 as in Judges 5, and that in both chapters the battle results in an overwhelming victory for Israel. They argue that, since prose generally, if not invariably, represents a later stage of literary evolution than poetry, and since, moreover, ch. 4 describes the battle as taking place on the banks of the Kishon, near the foot of Mount Tabor, it furnishes merely a later, rationalized version of the great Battle of Ta'anach, in that it ascribes the victory in the main to the prowess of Barak and his men, and speaks of divine intervention only in the most general and non-committal manner. Of a similar rationalistic nature is the version of ch. 4, that Jael killed Sisera while he slept rather than, as in ch. 5, while he bent his head, unsuspectingly, to drink the milk she had brought.

Furthermore, these scholars maintain the altogether passive and insignificant figure of Jabin, King of Haşor, whose general Sisera was, according to the version of ch. 4, was borrowed from Joshua 11, where he is repre-

sented as the leader of a federation of northern Canaanite city-states conquered by Joshua. With this, almost without exception, they let the matter rest.

Yet there are differences between the two versions, quite as significant as the points of resemblance. In Judges 5 Sisera is king of a powerful Canaanite city-state in the Kishon Valley, presumably, since these are the only cities mentioned by name in the entire poem, either Ta'anach or Megiddo. He is also the leader of a powerful coalition of Canaanite city-states, apparently all situated in this same valley, against an equally powerful league of neighbouring Israelite tribes. In Judges 4, however, he is merely the general-in-chief of Jabin, King of Haşor, an important Canaanite city-state, located probably a little south-west of the Waters of Merom, some forty miles or more from the Kishon Valley, and separated from there by a southern spur of the Lebanon Mountains. Sisera's camp¹ is located at Ḥarosheth-Haggoim, an unidentified place, presumably situated in the mountains about midway between Haşor and Mount Tabor, on the northern edge of the Kishon Valley.² This is an unfavourable and rather improbable site for such a camp. Why the version of ch. 4 located it there will become clear shortly.

According to 4. 4-6, Barak hails from Kēdesh-Naphtali and Deborah from the country of Ephraim. She is associated with the well-known 'palm of Deborah', situated between Ramah and Bethel, apparently the same tree

¹ It is nowhere implied in ch. 4 that Ḥarosheth-Haggoim was the capital of Sisera, as Moore states (*Judges*, 110), or anything but his camp.

² Moore (*op. cit.*, 119) hesitatingly accepts the identification of Ḥarosheth-Haggoim with Tell Harothieh, at the western end of the Kishon Valley, and suggests that in ch. 5 Sisera may have been king of this Canaanite city-state, even though it is not mentioned there.

which was called *'allon-bachuth* because another Deborah, the nurse of Rachel, was, according to tradition, buried beneath it.³ According to Judges 5. 15, Deborah seems to have been of the tribe of Issachar, while Barak was either of Issachar, or, as it should most probably be emended, of Naphthali.⁴

Moreover, in ch. 4 Deborah is a prophetess and a judge, and to her the tribes resort to receive justice, or, as is more likely implied in the words ויעלו למשפט, to consult the oracle and receive oracular decisions and laws. But in ch. 5 she is none of these. At the most she is only an אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (ver. 7), if that term had, perhaps, some specific designation. Actually she plays not at all the rôle of a prophetess, but only the simpler and far more primitive rôle of the battle-maiden, somewhat similar to that of Aysha at the Battle of the Camel,⁵ who accompanied the tribes into battle, chanting a song of warfare and triumph to spur the warriors on to victory. Apparently, as the tribes of Israel advanced in culture and civilization, the old tribal nomad methods of warfare were outgrown and forgotten, and the rôle of Deborah, no longer understood, was changed to that of a prophetess and co-leader of the tribes with Barak.

Furthermore, ch. 4 is quite confused in its account of the actual site of the battle. In fact it contains two distinct and contradictory accounts of the battle-field. According to vers. 6 and 12, Barak mustered his army at Mount Tabor, while Sisera drew up his army along the Kishon (vers. 7 and 13). After his defeat Sisera fled north-eastward through

³ Gen. 35. 8; cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁴ See Moore, *op. cit.*, 151.

⁵ Cf. Damiri, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*, trans. Jayakar, 434 ff.

the mountains, hotly pursued by Barak. He passed by his permanent camp site at Ḥarosheth-Haggoiim, and even past Haṣor, the capital of Jabin, and finally lost his life in the tent of Jael at Ṣa'annaim near Ḳedesh. On the other hand, vers. 9 and 10 state explicitly that Barak mustered his men at Ḳedesh-Naphtali. The two sites cannot possibly be identified. Between them there cannot be the least doubt which was the correct historical battle site. Joshua 11 tells of the defeat of Jabin of Haṣor at the Waters of Merom, just as Judges 4 tells of the defeat of the army of this same Jabin of Haṣor under Sisera at Ḳedesh-Naphtali, just west, or a little north-west of the Waters of Merom. Unquestionably Ḳedesh-Naphtali is a more exact determination of the actual site of this battle, and the event is the same as that referred to in Joshua 11.

The version which locates the battle on the banks of the Kishon, just below Mount Tabor, is manifestly the result of an attempt to harmonize the account of the Battle of Ta'anach of Judges 5 with the Battle of Ḳedesh-Naphtali of Judges 4 and Joshua 11, and to make them seem one battle. Apparently the authors of this version were none too well acquainted with the topography of the Kishon Valley. For Mount Tabor is fully eight miles from the Kishon at its nearest point, and is separated from the stream by Jebel ed-Duḥy or Little Hermon. Furthermore, to have fled northward from the banks of the Kishon below Mount Tabor, Sisera would have had to cut his way through the entire army of Israel coming down from the north, and to pass by the camp of Israel on Tabor. These facts suffice to prove the harmonistic character of the version of ch. 4. Moreover, 5. 19 seems to indicate that the victory

over Sisera's army was gained on the banks of the Kishon in the vicinity of Ta'anach and Megiddo, rather than near Mount Tabor.

In the harmonized account of the two battles in Judges 4, the battle had to be fought on the banks of the Kishon. For the rôle played by this stream in the Battle of Ta'anach was so essential that, while the authors of Judges 4 might not be specific about it, they could not entirely ignore it. On the other hand, the site of the battle could not be too far removed from Ḳedesh-Naphtali to lose the connexion with that city and territory, and make it impossible for Sisera to flee thither from the battle-field. Therefore this single composite battle was located at the seemingly favourable site of Mount Tabor, in the author's mind not far removed from the Kishon, and also accessible to Ḳedesh-Naphtali by a fairly easy road over the mountains. And to further this process of harmonization and identification, the camp of Sisera was located at Ḥarosheth-Haggoiim, between Tabor and Ḳedesh-Naphtali.

These considerations make it probable that Judges 4 is not merely a prose account of the same great battle and victory of the tribes of Israel over the Canaanites, that is described in the older poetic version of Judges 5, but is rather a composite, harmonistic narrative of two distinct battles—that of Ḳedesh-Naphtali and that of Ta'anach.⁶ This is confirmed by one further and most significant consideration. Judges 5 tells that a call was sent to all the then related tribes of Israel.⁷ Of these, Ephraim, Machir, Benjamin, Issachar, Zebulun, and

⁶ This conclusion had been previously reached by Budde (33), Moore (109), and Nowack (31).

⁷ Judah, Levi, Simon, Caleb, and other southern tribes are not mentioned.

Naphtali⁸ answered the call and participated in the battle, while Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher refused to obey the summons. On the other hand, Judges 4, 6, and 10 state expressly that only Zebulun and Naphtali participated in the Battle of K̄edesh-Naphtali.

The natural tendency of Israelitish historiography was toward nationalization of ancient tribal traditions,⁹ towards representing an ever larger group of tribes as acting in concert for a common end. Finally, at some time after the evolution of the nation under David, all early pre-Davidic tribal traditions were completely nationalized. They now came to tell that from the very beginning Israel had consisted of only twelve tribes, always constituting one nation, acting in concert under one leader, and conquering the whole land of Canaan together and at one time. Manifestly the account in Joshua 11 of the victory of all Israel under Joshua over Jabin of Haṣor and his allies at the Waters of Merom, is only a nationalized version of the ancient tribal battle of K̄edesh-Naphtali against this same Canaanite enemy.

In view of this evident tendency of Israelitish historiography, it would be surprising indeed to find the older version in Judges 5 telling of the summons to battle being issued to ten tribes, and of six of these actually participating in the battle, and the later version telling that the call came to only two tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali, and that only these two tribes were actually engaged in the contest. The difficulty is obviated when we realize that

⁸ Substituting Naphtali for the second Issachar in ver. 15, and comparing ver. 18; cf. above, p. 361.

⁹ See my 'Foundations of Israel's History', in *Central Conference of American Rabbis. Yearbook*, XXV (1915), 256 ff.

we have to do, not with one, but with two distinct battles; in the Battle of Ta'anach six tribes participated, while in that of Kēdes̄h-Naphtali only Zebulun and Naphtali were engaged. And they were engaged for the obvious reason that their territory, or the territory which they sought to acquire, was contiguous to, and endangered by the powerful and hostile neighbouring Haṣor, Kēdes̄h, and other similar Canaanite city-states in the vicinity. These had to be conquered before the two tribes could feel themselves safely established. Community of danger and interest tended to unite them into a fast and enduring coalition. The intimate association of Zebulun and Issachar in Gen. 49. 13-15 and Deut. 33. 18 f. may indicate that at some not much later date Issachar, too, came to be regarded as a member of this coalition.

On the other hand, Judges 5 states that six tribes participated in the Battle of Ta'anach, while four refused to obey the summons. The reason is obvious. The territories of Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher were farthest removed from the Kishon Valley, and were consequently not immediately threatened by the Canaanite coalition, while the territories of Zebulun, Issachar, Machir or Manasseh, and seemingly also Ephraim, touched upon the Valley, and so were immediately endangered.

But, it may be asked, why, in such case, should Benjamin and Naphtali, whose territories were quite as far removed from the danger zone as those of Gilead, Dan, or Asher, have responded to the call? The answer is simple, and indicative of ancient tribal conditions in Israel. Naphtali responded undoubtedly because its league with Zebulun, and possibly also with Issachar, must have been by that time firmly established. And similarly,

Benjamin responded because, as is attested by abundant Biblical evidence, it felt itself closely related to, and was probably at that time united in a similar league with Ephraim and Manasseh. On the other hand, it would seem that in the early tribal history of Israel, Dan, Asher, Reuben, and Gilead constantly stood each by itself, alone and unsupported by other tribes. Manifestly none of these tribes had entered into coalition with other tribes, and their relations with the remaining tribes of Israel were only of the loosest. Certainly just this picture of tribal isolation is conveyed in regard to Gilead and Dan by the stories of Jephtha and of the overthrow and migration of Dan.

This consideration would imply the existence in ancient Israel of two federations, each consisting of three contiguous tribes, one north of the Kishon Valley, and one in central Palestine. These two groups of tribes had been held apart for a time by the Kishon Valley, which remained for a long, uninterrupted period in the possession of the powerful Canaanite city-states situated in the Valley. A common danger from this common enemy, apparently too powerful for either group alone to resist successfully, impelled these two groups of tribes, six in all, to make common cause. Together they achieved a great victory, with momentous and far-reaching consequences. Had the Canaanites gained the victory instead of Israel, it is impossible to even imagine what the results might have been. Certainly Judaism would never have evolved; and without Judaism and its daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, the history of mankind would have been vastly different. Truly civilization was hanging in the balance at this moment, and the Battle of Ta'anach may well

be regarded as one of the most decisive battles of history.

About a century and a half later history repeated itself, but upon a larger scale. A third federation of Israelite tribes, this time in the extreme south, had come into existence, chiefly through the organizing genius of one man—David. This southern federation was almost entirely cut off from free relations with the northern groups of tribes by Canaanite possession of a stretch of land extending from Jerusalem on the east to Gezer on the west. Through this territory all the high roads connecting Judah with the north country passed, and were completely controlled by the Canaanites. Common danger from the Philistines now compelled the northern group of tribes, though somewhat against their will, to make common cause with the new southern tribal federation. But before he could offer united, systematic resistance to Philistine aggression, David had to join the two parts of his kingdom in fact as well as in name. Accordingly, disregarding the Philistines for the moment, David attacked and conquered Jerusalem, and thus obtained control of the lines of communication between north and south. The conquest of the Philistines followed. A common interest and a common danger from a common enemy had once more united two federated groups of tribes. The nation of Israel was the result. The key to the appreciation of these successive steps in the evolution of the nation of Israel out of originally separate, independent tribes or small tribal groups, is furnished by a correct differentiation between the battles of Ḳedesh-Naphtali and Ta'anach, and an understanding of their antecedent conditions and their consequences.

Unquestionably the Battle of Ḳedesh-Naphtali preceded

that of Ta'anach, though by how long a period it is impossible to determine. For not only was the natural and logical trend of tribal federation from a small group of two tribes to a larger group of six, but also, had Ta'anach preceded Kedesh-Naphtali, we certainly would have reason to expect that not merely two, but at least six, tribes would have participated in the Battle of Kedesh-Naphtali¹⁰. Certainly Deborah, Barak, Jael, and Sisera are integral figures in the ancient poem in Judges 5, and consequently in the Battle of Ta'anach which it describes. Equally certainly, the leader of the Canaanite forces at the Battle of Kedesh-Naphtali was Jabin of Hasor. Who the Israelite leader in this battle was cannot be determined, other than that he must have been a member of one of the two participating tribes, Zebulun or Naphtali. Nor can anything be determined as to the details of the battle, other than that it resulted in a complete victory for the two Israelite tribes, broke the power of the Canaanite city-states in the

¹⁰ That the Battle of Kedesh-Naphtali preceded the Battle of Ta'anach may perhaps be inferred also from the fact that Joshua 11 ascribes this victory to Joshua, implying thereby that it was won in the early period of the sojourn of the tribes in Canaan. That the Battle of Ta'anach, far more important, so far as the consequences were concerned, was not in similar manner also ascribed to Joshua, was probably because it happened too late, and was still too definitely remembered at the time when national traditions as to the early tribal period were shaping themselves.

The strange and seemingly superfluous second reference to Zebulun and Naphtali in Judges 5. 18, after both tribes had apparently been sufficiently referred to in vers. 14 f., may possibly be due to an even earlier attempt to identify the two battles than that in Judges 4 (cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, 156 f.). The expression מְרוֹמֵי שָׂדֵה, the heights of the field, of Judges 5. 18, would describe the topography of the site of the Battle of Kedesh-Naphtali at whatever spot in the tableland of Naphtali it may have been fought, much better than the site of the Battle of Ta'anach in the low-lying Kishon Valley.

Galilean highlands completely, and permanently established Zebulun and Naphtali in that district.

Similarly, the great victory at Ta'anach broke the Canaanite power in the Kishon Valley. The capture of Jerusalem by David caused the greater part of the southern Canaanite strip to pass into Israelite hands, although Gezer, on the western edge, held out until the reign of Solomon.¹¹ Shechem and Gibeon, other Canaanite strongholds, were apparently absorbed gradually in Israel.¹² In this way, it would seem, the greater part of Canaan passed finally into Israelite possession.¹³

¹¹ 1 Kings 9. 15.

¹² Joshua 9; Judges 9; 1 Sam. 21.

¹³ In passing, I cannot refrain from referring to Professor Haupt's interesting and stimulating presidential address before the American Oriental Society, 'Armageddon' (*JAOS.*, 34, 412-27). While I find myself in agreement with a number of his conclusions, and particularly with that, that the several references to Jahwe in Judges 5 were not parts of the original poem, I cannot subscribe to all his conclusions, and especially not to that, that מרוח of Judges 5. 23 and מרום of Joshua 11. 5, 7 are corruptions of מנרד. Largely as a result of this identification, Haupt concludes that Joshua 11 and Judges 4 and 5 are merely three different versions of one single battle. That I cannot follow him in this, this paper of course shows.