

**HANDBOOKS FOR
BIBLE CLASSES; THE
BOOK OF JUDGES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649479863

Handbooks for Bible Classes; The Book of Judges by George C. M. Douglas

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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GEORGE C. M. DOUGLAS

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Handbooks for Bible Classes.

EDITED BY

REV. MARCUS DODS, D.D.,

AND

REV. ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.



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EDINBURGH:
T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.
1881.

PRINTED BY MORRISON AND GIBB,

FOR

T. & T. CLARK, EDINBURGH.

LONDON, HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

DUBLIN, ROBERTSON AND CO.

NEW YORK, SCRIBNER, WELFORD, AND ARMSTRONG.

THE
BOOK OF JUDGES.

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1881.

101. i. 647.

NOTE.

OUR knowledge of the geography of Scripture has received marvellous additions through the 'Palestine Exploration Fund;' and use has been made of these as far as possible. But changes of opinion are occasionally avowed by the most practised explorers; and differences of opinion also exist among men well entitled to deference.

Thus Lieutenant Conder now thinks it probable that *Besek*, i. 4, is the ruin *Beskah*, south of *Lydda* (*Ludd*). Again, he very naturally lays stress on the statement in *Ps.* lxxxiii. 9, 10, that *Sisera* and *Jabin* perished at *Endor*, three and half miles south of *Mount Tabor*, as proof that the battle, *iv.* 15-17, took place on the plain south-west of that mountain; and he brings this into connection with his view that *Jael's* tent was at *Besanaim* (*Bessûm*), nearly half-way from *Mount Tabor* to *Tiberias*. Once more, he now adopts the view of *Mr. Merrill*, the *American Explorer*, that *Succoth*, viii. 5, is *Tell Der'ala* on the east side of the *Jordan*, in the great plain north of the river *Jabbok*, about one mile from the river, and three miles from where it leaves the hills. And *Mr. Birch* believes that the name *Seirath*, iii. 26, survives in *Umm Sirah* and *Wady Umm Sirah*, about three miles north-west of *Ayin es Sultân*, the fountain of *Elisha* at *Jericho*.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Book of Judges gives the history of the people of God from the time that they had been settled by Joshua in the land of Canaan until the increasing disorders in the Hebrew commonwealth called for changes in the constitution, whose introduction is narrated in the Books of Samuel. The recent critical speculations which at present excite controversy are less intimately or directly concerned with this book than with most others; though the study of it must exert an influence on one's mind, and, as I think, must contribute to their decision.

The materials are scanty indeed out of which to construct a reply to the questions, At what time was the book written? and, Who was its author? The mention of 'the captivity of the land,' ch. xviii. 30, is held by some to prove that it was not composed before the Babylonian exile, or at all events before the fall of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes: my own opinion is that this refers to the catastrophe in the time of Eli, 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22, the date being the same in the two verses, 30 and 31, viz., the end of the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. Apart from this, there is nothing said which hints at any time later than the rise of the kingdom; yet there is emphasis put on the fact of there being no king in Israel at the time that certain disorders appeared, ch. xvii. 6, xviii. 1, xix. 1, xxi. 25—a circumstance which might indicate that the hopeful feelings associated with the great revolution which introduced the kingdom were shared by the writer.

Whatever hypothesis may be preferred as to the authorship and date of composition, most readers will be impressed by the naturalness of the writing, as if by one with full and accurate knowledge of the facts which he relates. It is supposed by some that he made a compilation, at one time from copious materials, at another from a dry brief chronicle. I believe, on the contrary, that in this as in other