

SAINT JEROME

COMMENTARY ON THE CANTICLE
OF DEBORAH

Commentarius in Canticum Debborae

SABBATISMUS

Saint Jerome (347–420)
Commentarius in Canticum Debborae · Commentary on the Canticle of Deborah

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COMMENTARIUS IN CANTICUM DEBBORAE. (G)

(Jud. V.---Vers. 1.) Cecineruntque Debbora et Barac filius Abinoem. Barac vir Debborae prophetidis fuisse traditur. Ipse etiam Baracin praecedentibus Lapidoth vocatur. Lapidoth enim interpretatur, fulgur: Barac quoque, fulmen. Fulgur idcirco, quia antequam ulcisceretur Israel de Chananaeis, quasi fulgur splendebat in populo, meritis scilicet et praerogativis operum: postquam vero ultus est Israel de Chananaeis, fulmen, id est, percutiens vocatus est.

(Vers. 4, 5.) Domine, cum exires de Seir, et transtres per regiones Edom, terra mota est, coeli ac nubes stillaverunt aquis. Exisse Dominus dicitur de Seir, et transisse per Edom, eo quod Idumaeis legem suam recipere nolentibus, in monte Sinai legem Israel dederit. Terra mota est, coeli ac nubes stillaverunt aquis. Terraemotus montis Sina describitur. Et quod dicit: Coeli ac nubes stillaverunt aquis, ad praesentiam Domini, coeli quasi quodam pavore sudores emittentes, aquis stillavisse dicuntur. Similiter et montes fluxerunt a facie Domini. Quod vero sequitur, Sinai a facie Domini Dei Israel, subaudiendum est, contremuit et fumavit.

(Vers. 6.) In diebus Sangar filii Anath, in diebus Jahel quieverunt semitae, et qui ingrediebantur per eas, ambulaverunt per calles devios. Quievisse dicuntur semitae, quia tempore Sangar Ducis Israel, praecoccupatae erant semitae ab inimicis Israel, et non audebant in domum Domini libere orandi gratia ascendere; sed qui ingrediebantur per eas, timore inimicorum latenter, et per calles devios ascendebant. De quibus inimicis non plene eos liberasse Sangar scribitur (Jud. III, 31). Quod vero interponitur paulo superius, in diebus Jahel, intelligendum est, quia interempto Sisara a Jahel, apertae sunt viae, et absque ullo timore ibant in domum Domini, qui antea per calles devios illuc gradiebantur. Et quod Jahel ante Debboram hic ponitur, humilitatis causa hoc Debbora fecisse dicitur, eo quod Jahel uxor Aber Cinaei Sisaram interfecerit.

Cessaverunt autem, fortes in Israel quieverunt, donec surgeret Debbora, mater in Israel. Fortes hic doctores et praedicatores legis dicit, qui quievisse, id est, non fuisse dicuntur, donec surgeret quae Israel et praedicatione, et exhortatione doceret, et consilio ab hostibus liberaret. Hos etiam fortes in superioribus ad Dominum secum benedicendum eadem Debbora verbis his provocat, dicens: Qui sponte obtulistis de Israel animas vestras ad periculum, benedicite Domino (Vers. 2).

COMMENTARY ON THE SONG OF DEBORAH. (G)

(Jud. V.---Vers. 1.) And Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang. Barak is said to have been the husband of Deborah the prophetess. He is also called Lapidoth in the preceding passages. For Lapidoth is interpreted as "lightning flash" (fulgur); Barak likewise as "thunderbolt" (fulmen). A lightning flash, therefore, because before he took vengeance for Israel upon the Canaanites, he shone like lightning among the people, namely by the merits and prerogatives of his works; but after Israel was avenged upon the Canaanites, he was called a thunderbolt, that is, one who strikes.

(Vers. 4, 5.) Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, and passedst through the regions of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens and the clouds dropped water. The Lord is said to have gone out from Seir and passed through Edom because, when the Edomites were unwilling to receive His law, He gave the law to Israel on Mount Sinai. The earth trembled, the heavens and the clouds dropped water. The earthquake of Mount Sinai is described. And when it says: The heavens and the clouds dropped water, at the presence of the Lord, the heavens, as if emitting sweat from a certain fear, are said to have dropped with water. Similarly, the mountains flowed from the face of the Lord. But as for what follows, Sinai from the face of the Lord God of Israel, it must be understood that it trembled and smoked.

(Vers. 6.) In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael the paths rested, and they that entered through them walked through devious paths. The paths are said to have rested because in the time of Shamgar, the leader of Israel, the paths had been occupied by the enemies of Israel, and they did not dare to go up freely to the house of the Lord for the sake of praying; but those who entered through them, out of fear of the enemies, went up secretly and through devious paths. Concerning these enemies, it is written that Shamgar did not fully deliver them (Jud. III, 31). But as for what is interposed a little above, in the days of Jael, it is to be understood that, after Sisera was slain by Jael, the ways were opened, and they went to the house of the Lord without any fear, who previously walked there through devious paths. And as for the fact that Jael is placed here before Deborah, Deborah is said to have done this for the sake of humility, because Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, slew Sisera.

The valiant men ceased in Israel and rested, until Deborah arose, a mother in Israel. By valiant men here he means the doctors and preachers of the law, who are said to have rested, that is, not to have existed, until she arose who would teach Israel by both preaching and exhortation, and deliver them from the enemies by her counsel. These same valiant men in the preceding parts Deborah provokes to bless the Lord with her in these words, saying: You who spontaneously offered your souls from Israel to danger, bless the Lord (Vers. 2).

Hi fortes, id est, doctores obtulisse dicuntur animas suas ad periculum, id est, legi Dei et servituti ejus se subdidisse, et die noctuque in meditationibus legis corpus animamque mactasse.

Nova bella elegit Dominus, et portas hostium ipse subvertit. Clypeus et hasta si apparuerunt in quadraginta millibus Israel. Quod dicit clypeus et hasta, intelligendum est hoc quasi jurejurando dixisse, quod in quadraginta millibus Israel nec clypeus, nec hasta inveniri posset. Idcirco Dominus nova bella elegisse dicitur, et portas hostium subvertisse, eo quod de inermibus fortes et victoriosos fecerit. Quod vero Israelitae armis exspoliati fuissent a Jabin rege Chanaan, in superioribus declaratur, ubi dicitur: Clamaveruntque filii Israel ad Dominum. Nongentos habebat falcatos currus, et per viginti annos vehementer oppressit eos (Jud. IV, 5). Vehementer et fortiter oppressit eos, quia armis exspoliasset dicitur: sicut in libro Samuelis scribitur: Cumque venisset dies praelii, non inventus est ensis et lancea in manu totius populi qui erant cum Saul et Jonathan, excepto Saul et Jonathan filio ejus (I Reg. XIII, 22).

(Vers. 9, 10.) Cor meum diligit principes Israel. Notandum quod in Hebraeo, non principes, sed doctores legitur. Hoc Debbora in persona Dei loquitur, quod Deus diligit doctores legi Dei studentes. De quibus sequitur: Qui propria voluntate obtulistis vos discrimini in populo, benedicite Domino. De quibus etiam jam superius dictum est in eo loco ubi ait: Qui sponte obtulistis de Israel animas vestras, etc. Qui ascendistis super nitentes asinos. In Hebraeo, asinas. Et sedetis in iudicio. In Hebraeo, sedentes super iudicium. Et ambulatis in via, loquimini ubi collisi sunt currus, et hostium suffocatus est exercitus, ibi narrentur justitiae Domini, clementiae fortis Israel. Ascensores asinarum populus Israel dicitur; asinae vero in quibus ascendunt, doctores tribus Israel dicuntur, super quorum doctrina reliquus populus quasi super asinas ascendere dicitur, id est, requiescere. Ex ipsi asinae dicuntur, hoc est, gradientes instar asinae in lege, sedentes super iudicium, id est, super legem. Quae etiam super iudicium sedere dicuntur, id est, super legem, et ambulare in via sub lege, eo quod viam legis nequaquam excederent. Populum itaque qui super has asinas, id est, super hos doctores requiescebant, provocat Debbora ad benedicendum Dominum, et ait: Loquimini, id est, laudate. Et quasi interrogassent: ubi et quando laudabimus Dominum? illa respondit: Ubi collisi sunt currus, et hostium suffocatus est exercitus, ibi narrentur justitiae Domini, clementiae fortis Israel; ac si diceret: Quamvis semper et ubique Deus laudandus sit; tamen modo laudandus a nobis potius et benedicendus est, qui inimicos nostros subvertit, sicut Aegyptios in mari Rubro.

These valiant men, that is, the doctors, are said to have offered their souls to danger, that is, to have subjected themselves to the law of God and His service, and to have sacrificed body and soul day and night in meditations upon the law.

The Lord chose new wars, and he himself subverted the gates of the enemies. If shield and spear appeared among forty thousand of Israel. Regarding what it says, shield and spear, it is to be understood that it said this as if by an oath, that in forty thousand of Israel neither shield nor spear could be found. Therefore the Lord is said to have chosen new wars and to have subverted the gates of the enemies, because from those without arms He made them valiant and victorious. But that the Israelites had been despoiled of arms by Jabin king of Canaan is declared in the preceding parts, where it is said: And the children of Israel cried to the Lord. He had nine hundred iron chariots, and for twenty years he vehemently oppressed them (Jud. IV, 5). He oppressed them vehemently and strongly because he is said to have despoiled them of arms; as it is written in the book of Samuel: And when the day of battle was come, there was not found sword and spear in the hand of all the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, except Saul and Jonathan his son (I Sam. XIII, 22).

(Vers. 9, 10.) My heart loveth the princes of Israel. It should be noted that in the Hebrew, not "princes," but "teachers" (doctores) is read. Deborah speaks this in the person of God, that God loves the teachers who study the law of God. Of whom follows: You who of your own will offered yourselves to danger among the people, bless the Lord. Concerning whom also it has already been said above in that place where it says: You who spontaneously offered your souls from Israel, etc. You who ascended upon sleek asses. In the Hebrew, she-asses. And you sit in judgment. In the Hebrew, sitting upon judgment. And you walk in the way, speak where the chariots were dashed together, and the army of the enemies was suffocated, there let the justices of the Lord be told, the clemencies of the valiant one of Israel. The people of Israel are called the riders of the she-asses; but the she-asses upon which they ascend are called the teachers of the tribes of Israel, upon whose doctrine the rest of the people are said to ascend as if upon she-asses, that is, to find rest. And the she-asses themselves are so called, that is, walking like a she-ass in the law, sitting upon judgment, that is, upon the law. Which are also said to sit upon judgment, that is, upon the law, and to walk in the way under the law, because they would by no means exceed the way of the law. Therefore Deborah provokes the people who rested upon these she-asses, that is, upon these teachers, to bless the Lord, and says: Speak, that is, praise. And as if they had asked: where and when shall we praise the Lord? she answered: Where the chariots were dashed together, and the army of the enemies was suffocated, there let the justices of the Lord be told, the clemencies of the valiant one of Israel; as if she were saying: Although God is to be praised always and everywhere; nevertheless now He is rather to be praised and blessed by us, who subverted our enemies, just as the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

(Vers. 11.) Tunc descendit populus Domini ad portas, et obtinuit principatum. Ad portas populus Domini descendit, id est, ad portas domus Domini, quia benedicto Domino et collaudato in loco victoriae, descenderunt in domum Domini, ut ibi etiam Dominum collaudarent, orationes et victimas ei offerentes. Quod vero de tribu Issachar doctores exterarum tribuum essent, monstratur ex libro Paralipomenon, ubi ait: De filiis quoque Issachar viri eruditi, qui norant singula tempora, ad praeciendum quid facere deberet Israel, principes ducenti: omnes autem reliquae tribus eorum consilium sequebantur (I Paral. XII, 32). Et quod iidem doctores asini nuncupentur, monstratur ex libro Genesis, ubi sequitur: Issachar asinus fortis accubans inter terminos, vidit requiem quod esset bona, et terram quod esset optima, et supposuit humerum suum ad portandum, factusque est tributo serviens (Gen. XLIX, 14, 15). Asinus in Libro Geneseos fortis dicitur, propter fortitudinem legis, eo quod in humero legem portaret, et caeteris tribubus tributum, id est doctrinam legis impenderet. In Libro vero Judicum asinae dicuntur, eo quod viribus fracti et humiliati, atque infirmi manerent, iugo scilicet gentium pressi atque humiliati, et sola tantum lege Dei contenti.

Surge, surge Debbora; surge, loquere Canticum. Notandum quod in Hebraeo exspergisce legatur, id est, exspergisce in spiritu prophetiae. Praefatorum itaque doctorum vocibus Debbora provocatur, ut exspergiscatur in spiritu prophetiae et laudis, et non cesset a laudibus Dei. Unde et sequitur: Loquere Canticum. Surge Barac, et apprehende captivos tuos, fili Abinoem. In Hebraeo dicitur: Praedare praedam, tuam fili Abinoem. Haec sententia vocibus eorundem etiam doctorum Barac admonet, ut depraedetur reliquias inimicorum suorum, et ad internecionem eos usque perducatur, et nomen sibi victoriae laudabiliter acquirat.

Tunc salvatae sunt reliquiae populi. Haec sententia ad intelligendum jungenda est sententiae superiori, qua dicitur: Ubi narrantur iustitiae Domini, clementiae fortis Israel; eo quod tunc salvatae sunt reliquiae populi. Dominus in fortibus dimicavit. In Hebraeo legitur: Dominus propter me in fortibus dimicavit. Et est vox totius populi Israel; dimicavit enim propter eos in Aegyptiis, et in caeteris inimicis Israel. Unde et sequitur.

(Vers. 11.) Then the people of the Lord descended to the gates, and obtained the principality. The people of the Lord descended to the gates, that is, to the gates of the house of the Lord, because after the Lord was blessed and praised in the place of victory, they descended into the house of the Lord, so that they might also praise the Lord there, offering prayers and victims to Him. But that the teachers of the foreign tribes were from the tribe of Issachar is shown from the book of Chronicles, where it says: Of the sons of Issachar also men of understanding, who knew all the times, to command what Israel ought to do, two hundred princes: and all the rest of the tribes followed their counsel (I Chron. XII, 32). And that these same teachers are called asses is shown from the book of Genesis, where it follows: Issachar is a strong ass lying down between the borders, he saw rest that it was good, and the land that it was best, and he submitted his shoulder to bear, and became a servant under tribute (Gen. XLIX, 14, 15). The ass in the Book of Genesis is called strong because of the strength of the law, because he bore the law on his shoulder, and bestowed the tribute, that is, the doctrine of the law, upon the other tribes. But in the Book of Judges they are called she-asses because they remained broken and humbled in strength, and weak, namely pressed and humbled by the yoke of the nations, and content only with the law of God.

Arise, arise Deborah; arise, speak a Song. It should be noted that in the Hebrew it is read awake (*exspergisce*), that is, awake in the spirit of prophecy. Therefore by the voices of the aforementioned teachers Deborah is provoked, that she may be awakened in the spirit of prophecy and praise, and not cease from the praises of God. Whence also follows: Speak a Song. Arise Barak, and apprehend thy captives, son of Abinoam. In the Hebrew it is said: Plunder the prey, thy prey, son of Abinoam. This sentence, by the voices of the same teachers, admonishes Barak that he should plunder the remains of his enemies, and lead them even to destruction, and laudably acquire for himself the name of victory.

Then the remains of the people were saved. This sentence is to be joined for understanding to the preceding sentence, by which it is said: Where the justices of the Lord are told, the clemencies of the valiant one of Israel; because then the remains of the people were saved. The Lord fought among the valiant. In the Hebrew is read: The Lord fought among the valiant for me. And it is the voice of the whole people of Israel; for He fought for them among the Egyptians, and among the rest of the enemies of Israel. Whence also follows.

(Vers. 14.) Ex Ephraim delevit eos in Amalec, id est, Josue existens ex tribu Ephraim delevit fortes, id est inimicos Israel in Amalec, sicut legitur in libro Exodi: Fugavitque Josue Amalec, et populum ejus in ore gladii, etc. (Exod. XVII, 13). Et quod idem Josue ex tribu Ephraim fuerit, monstratur ex libro Numerorum: ubi dicitur: De tribu Ephraim Osee filium Nun (Num. XIII, 9), quem et in consequentibus Josue vocat dicens: Vocavitque Moyses Osee filium Nun, Josue. Et post eum in populos tuos Amalec. Post eum, id est, Josue, ex tribu Benjamin existens Saul, populum Amalec, praecipiente Domino, delevit, quod in spiritu prophetiae Debbora de Saule futurum prophetavit. Et hoc secundum schema, quod vocatur prolepsis, dictum est, quod ipse esset deleturus Amalec, sicut in libro Samuelis habes (I Reg. XIV, 48). Sed et quod ait, o Amalec, in Hebraeo non legitur, sed Latinus interpret sensus gratia hoc addidit.

(Vers. 14.) De Machir principes descenderunt, et de Zabulon, qui exercitum ducerent ad bellandum. In Hebraeo legitur: De Machir, principes descenderunt, et subauditur, ad bellandum, id est, prosternendum Sisaram principem. Et de Zabulon, subauditur, descenderunt, qui exercitum ducerent. Et de tribu Levi, et de tribu Issachar, subauditur, ad bellandum, id est, ad Dominum collaudandum et exorandum. De quibus et sequitur.

(Vers. 15.) Duces Issachar fuere cum Debbora. In Hebraeo: Principes, id est, doctores Legis fuerunt cum Debbora ad collaudandum Dominum, et Barac vestigia sunt seculi. Intelligendum est, quia pars quaedam illorum cum Debbora ad laudandum Dominum remansit, et pars Barac vestigia sunt secuti ad populum exhortandum et debellandum Sisaram. Qui quasi in praeceptis ad barathrum se discrimini dedit. Barac scilicet credens verba Domini, se dedit discrimini, praecipitans se in torrentem Cison, persequens et debellans exercitum Sisarae. Barathrum enim in hoc loco torrens Cison intelligitur. Diviso contra se Ruben, magnanimatorum reperta contentio est. In Hebraeo non legitur contra se. Vox enim Debborae est, increpans tribum Ephraim, eo quod imperio Domini non obtemperans, cum fratribus suis contra inimicos Domini debellandos non iverit: sed timore perterritus, et verbis Domini incredulus ab eis se dividerit, et pro eo magnanimus, id est, superbus repertus exstiterit. Unde et sequitur eorum increpatio in spiritu prophetiae dicens:

(Vers. 14.) From Ephraim he destroyed them in Amalek, that is, Joshua, being from the tribe of Ephraim, destroyed the valiant, that is, the enemies of Israel in Amalek, as is read in the book of Exodus: And Joshua put Amalek and his people to flight by the edge of the sword, etc. (Exod. XVII, 13). And that the same Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim is shown from the book of Numbers: where it is said: Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun (Num. XIII, 9), whom also in the following parts he calls Joshua, saying: And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua. And after him in thy peoples Amalek. After him, that is, after Joshua, Saul, being from the tribe of Benjamin, destroyed the people of Amalek at the Lord's command, which Deborah in the spirit of prophecy prophesied would be regarding Saul. And this was said according to the figure which is called prolepsis, that he himself was to destroy Amalek, as you have in the book of Samuel (I Sam. XIV, 48). But as for what it says, O Amalek, it is not read in the Hebrew, but the Latin interpreter added this for the sake of the sense.

(Vers. 14.) From Machir the princes descended, and from Zebulun, those who would lead the army to fight. In the Hebrew is read: From Machir, the princes descended, and it is understood, to fight, that is, to prostrate the prince Sisera. And from Zebulun, it is understood, they descended, who would lead the army. And from the tribe of Levi, and from the tribe of Issachar, it is understood, to fight, that is, to praise and pray to the Lord. Concerning whom also follows.

(Vers. 15.) The leaders of Issachar were with Deborah. In the Hebrew: The princes, that is, the teachers of the Law were with Deborah to praise the Lord, and followed the footsteps of Barak into the world. It is to be understood that a certain part of them remained with Deborah to praise the Lord, and a part followed the footsteps of Barak to exhort the people and to fight Sisera. Who as if headlong into the abyss gave himself to danger. Barak namely, believing the words of the Lord, gave himself to danger, precipitating himself into the torrent Kishon, pursuing and fighting the army of Sisera. For the abyss (*barathrum*) in this place is understood as the torrent Kishon. Reuben being divided against himself, a contention of the magnanimous was found. In the Hebrew against himself is not read. For it is the voice of Deborah, rebuking the tribe of Ephraim, because not obeying the command of the Lord, it did not go with its brothers to fight the enemies of the Lord: but terrified by fear, and incredulous of the words of the Lord, it divided itself from them, and instead of it, a magnanimous, that is, proud one was found to stand out. Whence also follows their rebuke in the spirit of prophecy, saying:

(Vers. 16.) Quare habitas inter duos terminos, ut audias sibilos gregum? In Hebraeo non legitur, duos, sed inter terminos tuos, scilicet vicinarum tribuum tuarum, ut audias sibilos gregum; ac si diceret: Greges quibus abundas servare cupis, et eos amittere vereris, eorumque sibilos audire potius delectaris, quam cum fratribus tuis ad debellandos hostes Israel progredi niteris. Et quia hoc facis, imperio Domini superbus resistis. Unde et sequitur idipsum quod et supra: Diviso Ruben, magnanimatorum reperta contentio est: eo quod male fecerit, imperium Domini parvipendens et superbus existens.

(Vers. 17.) Gad trans Jordanem quiescebat. Et hoc increpando ponitur, eo quod remanente Ruben, cum eo Gad pari consilio remansit. Et Dan vacabat navibus. Quia videns quod tribus Ruben et tribus Gad non irent cum fratribus suis ad bellandum, timore perterritus, navibus vacando, fugam arripuit. Aser habitabat in littore maris, et in portibus morabatur. Similiter hoc increpando ponitur, eo quod et Aser in littore maris habitans, in portibus moratus sit, fugam potius arrepturus, quam fratribus combellaturus.

(Vers. 18.) Zabulon et Nephthalim obtulerunt animas suas morti, in regione Morome. In Hebraeo, super regionem Morome. Et est sensus, Quia caeteris tribubus ire nolentibus, hae duae tribus animas suas morti dederunt. Super regionem Morome. Morome enim interpretatur excelsus: pro regione enim excelsi, id est, Dei, obtulisse dicuntur animas suas, et ideo laudibus efferuntur, cum caeterae tribus reprehendantur.

(Vers. 19.) Venerunt reges, et pugnaverunt. Reges terrae Chanaan dicit, qui regi Jabin subditi erant. Pugnaverunt reges Chanaan. Idipsum repetit, In Tanach. Tanach enim provincia est, ubi est torrens Cison. Juxta aquas Mageddo. Mageddo enim civitas est posita super torrentem Cison. Et quod dicitur, Juxta aquas Mageddo, intelligitur juxta torrentem Cison, civitas Mageddo. Tamen nil tulere praedantes. Hoc subsannando dicitur, cum non solum nil praedae tulerint, quin potius animas eruere nequiverint.

(Vers. 20.) De coelo dimicatum est contra eos. Quia in quadraginta millibus Israel clypeus et hasta inveniri non poterat, idcirco Dominus de coelo lapidibus grandinis, et igne dimicavit pro eis contra hostes suos. Sicut est et illud in libro Josue: Stellae manentes in ordine suo, et cursu adversus Sisaram pugnaverunt (Jos. X, 11). Stellae Angeli intelliguntur, qui de coelo contra Sisaram pugnaverunt.

(Vers. 16.) Why dwellest thou between two borders, that thou mayest hear the hissings of the flocks? In the Hebrew is not read two, but between thy borders, namely of thy neighboring tribes, that thou mayest hear the hissings of the flocks; as if she were saying: The flocks with which thou aboundest thou desirest to keep, and fearest to lose them, and thou delightest rather to hear their hissings than thou strivest to go forth with thy brothers to fight the enemies of Israel. And because thou doest this, thou proudly resistest the command of the Lord. Whence also follows the same as above: Reuben being divided, a contention of the magnanimous was found: because he did evil, making little of the command of the Lord and being proud.

(Vers. 17.) Gad rested beyond the Jordan. And this is placed in rebuking, because Reuben remaining, Gad remained with him by a like counsel. And Dan was vacant for ships. Because seeing that the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad did not go with their brothers to fight, terrified by fear, being vacant for ships, he took flight. Asher dwelt on the seashore, and stayed in the harbors. Similarly this is placed in rebuking, because Asher also, dwelling on the seashore, stayed in the harbors, being about to take flight rather than to fight with the brothers.

(Vers. 18.) Zebulun and Naphtali offered their souls to death, in the region of Merom. In the Hebrew, upon the region of Merom. And the sense is, That the other tribes being unwilling to go, these two tribes gave their souls to death. Upon the region of Merom. For Merom is interpreted as high: for they are said to have offered their souls for the region of the High One, that is, of God, and therefore they are extolled with praises, while the other tribes are reproved.

(Vers. 19.) The kings came, and they fought. He speaks of the kings of the land of Canaan, who were subject to king Jabin. The kings of Canaan fought. He repeats the same thing, In Taanach. For Taanach is a province where the torrent Kishon is. Beside the waters of Megiddo. For Megiddo is a city placed above the torrent Kishon. And what is said, Beside the waters of Megiddo, is understood as the city of Megiddo beside the torrent Kishon. Yet they took nothing while plundering. This is said in mockery, since not only did they take nothing of prey, but rather they were unable to save their own lives.

(Vers. 20.) From heaven it was fought against them. Because among the forty thousand of Israel a shield and a spear could not be found, therefore the Lord fought for them from heaven with hailstones and fire against His enemies. As is also that in the book of Joshua: The stars remaining in their order and course fought against Sisera (Josh. X, 11). By stars Angels are understood, who fought from heaven against Sisera.

(Vers. 21.) Torrens Cison traxit cadavera eorum. Est enim hic defectus; et quasi interrogando, ubi? et respondeatur: In torrentem Cadumin, id est, in mari Rubro; unde sequitur: Torrens Cadumin, torrens Cison. Torrentem Cadumin mare Rubrum vocat. Cadumin enim interpretatur antiquorum, eo quod antiqua miracula in eo facta fuerunt, transeuntibus filiis Israel, et Aegyptiis pereuntibus. Et quia mare Rubrum Aegyptios emortuos evomuit, ita ut eos mortuos Israelitae super littus maris viderent, et eadem cadavera piscibus et bestiis maris abstracta fuerint: idcirco traxit torrens Cison cadavera eorum, ut pro cadaveribus Aegyptiorum sibi ablatis, cadavera Chananaeorum ipsius maris Rubri pisces et bestiae comederint. Conculca, anima mea, robustos. Haec Debbora in persona totius Israel dicit, ut omnes uno animo robustorum, id est, fortissimorum inimicorum suorum colla conculcarent: sicut est et illud in libro Josue de quinque regibus Chananaeorum (Jos. X, 24).

(Vers. 22.) Tunc ungulae equorum ceciderunt fugientibus impetu, et praeceps ruentibus fortissimis hostium. Ungulae eorum, in Hebraeo legitur; lapidibus enim grandinis de coelis, id est, ab Angelis eorum equorum ungulae cecidisse traduntur: ut sit sensus: Si ungulae equorum tactu lapidum ceciderunt, quid putas equitibus accidisse?

(Vers. 23.) Maledicta terra Meroz, dixit Angelus Domini. In Hebraeo legitur: Maledicite Meroz, dixit Angelus Domini. Angelus Domini ab Hebraeis Michael intelligitur, qui jubet per Debboram populo Israel, ut maledicant Meroz, id est, potestati Angelicae, quae praeerat Chananaeis: Meroz enim interpretatur arcanum. Idcirco maledici jubetur, id est, anathematizari, eo quod Angelis caeteris dimicantibus pro Israel, ipse non solum non pugnaverit, verum etiam in adversitate eorum perstitit. Maledicite habitatoribus ejus, id est, Meroz, et populo ejus. Et redditur causa cur maledicantur, quia scilicet non venerunt in auxilium Domini, et in adjutorium fortissimorum ejus.

(Vers. 24.) Benedicta inter mulieres, Jahel, uxor Haber Cinaei. Inter mulieres, scilicet Saram, Rebeccam, Rachel, Liam, et caeteras ferme mulieres. Benedictatur in templo, subauditur Domini, ut ibi sit memoriale ejus, sicut et Judith. Et redditur causa cur benedicatur, quia scilicet sapienter et prudenter fecerit, eo quod petenti aquam, lac dederit. Idcirco lac dedit, ut hostis fugiens sibi fidem potiolem accommodaret. Et si quaeritur cur non vinum dederit, respondendum est quia domus Rechab vinum non bibunt, sicut habes in Jeremia propheta (Jer. XXXV, 14).

(Vers. 21.) The torrent Kishon dragged away their carcasses. For here is a defect; and as if asking, where? and it should be answered: Into the torrent Kadumin, that is, into the Red Sea; whence follows: The torrent Kadumin, the torrent Kishon. He calls the Red Sea the torrent Kadumin. For Kadumin is interpreted as of the ancients, because ancient miracles were performed in it, the children of Israel passing through and the Egyptians perishing. And because the Red Sea vomited out the dead Egyptians, so that the Israelites saw them dead upon the seashore, and those same carcasses were dragged away by the fish and beasts of the sea: therefore the torrent Kishon dragged away their carcasses, so that instead of the carcasses of the Egyptians taken from them, the fish and beasts of the same Red Sea might eat the carcasses of the Canaanites. Trample, my soul, upon the robust. Deborah says this in the person of all Israel, that all with one mind might trample the necks of the robust, that is, of their strongest enemies: as is also that in the book of Joshua concerning the five kings of the Canaanites (Josh. X, 24).

(Vers. 22.) Then the hooves of the horses fell away as they fled with impetus, and headlong as the strongest of the enemies fell. Their hooves, is read in the Hebrew; for it is handed down that by hailstones from the heavens, that is, by the Angels, the hooves of their horses fell away: so that the sense is: If the hooves of the horses fell by the touch of the stones, what do you think happened to the riders?

(Vers. 23.) Cursed be the land of Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord. In the Hebrew is read: Curse ye Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord. The Angel of the Lord is understood by the Hebrews as Michael, who commands through Deborah the people of Israel that they should curse Meroz, that is, the Angelic power which presided over the Canaanites: for Meroz is interpreted as secret. Therefore it is commanded to be cursed, that is, to be anathematized, because while the other Angels fought for Israel, he himself not only did not fight, but even persisted in their adversity. Curse ye the inhabitants thereof, that is, of Meroz, and its people. And the cause why they are cursed is given, because namely they came not to the help of the Lord, and to the help of his most valiant ones.

(Vers. 24.) Blessed among women, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Among women, namely Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, and almost all other women. Let her be blessed in the temple, it is understood of the Lord, that there may be her memorial there, as also Judith. And the cause why she is blessed is given, because namely she acted wisely and prudently, in that to him asking for water, she gave milk. Therefore she gave milk, that the fleeing enemy might adapt to himself a stronger trust. And if it is asked why she did not give wine, it is to be answered that the house of Rechab do not drink wine, as you have in Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. XXXV, 14).