

Judges Series

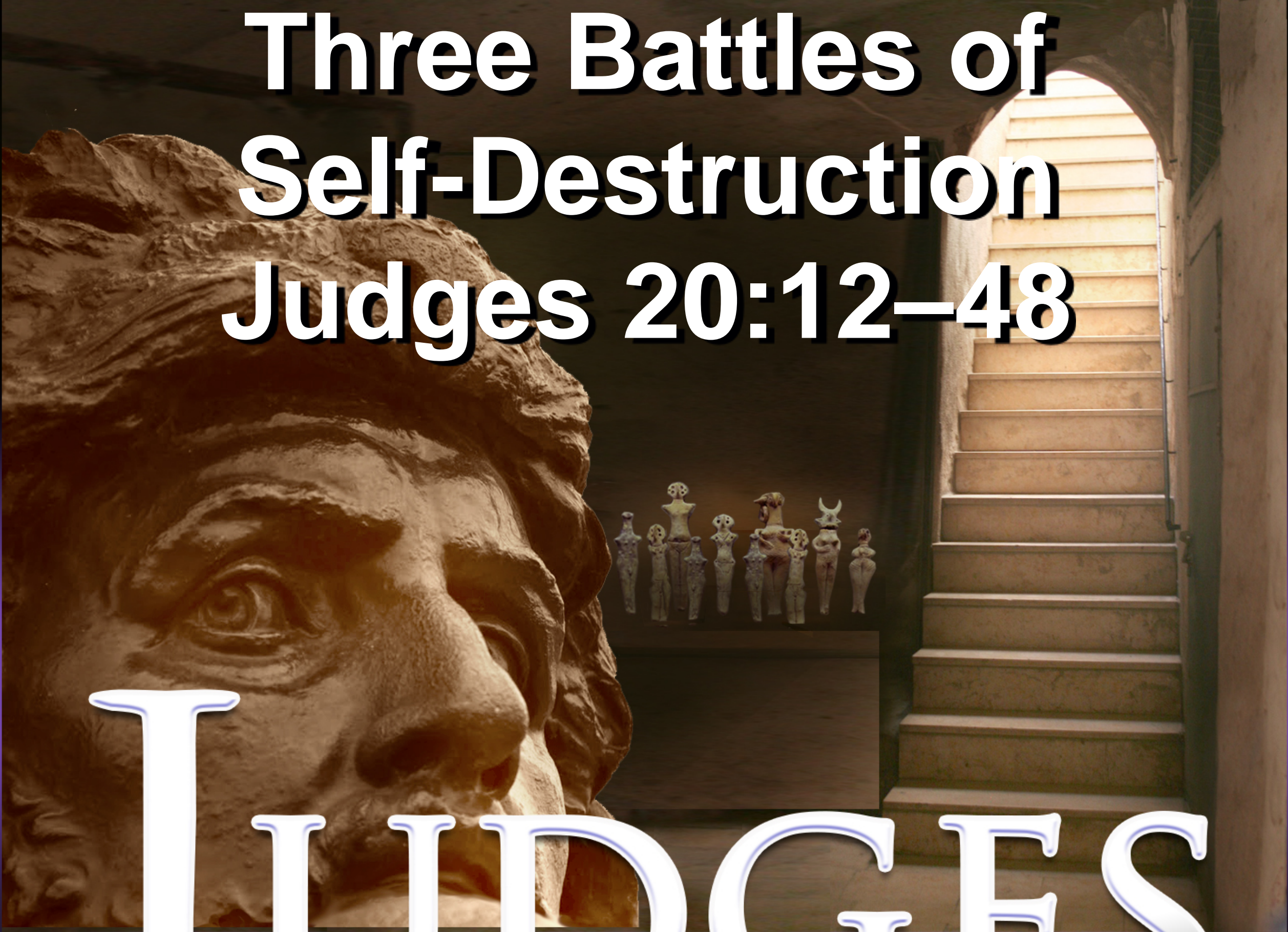
Lesson #100

May 9, 2023

Dean Bible Ministries

www.deanbibleministries.org

© 2023, Dr. Robert L. Dean, Jr.



**Three Battles of
Self-Destruction
Judges 20:12–48**

JUDGES

2021

When Chaos Was King

What we've learned:

- 1. Judges 19 begins a crisis in the home that develops into a national crisis which threatens the extinction of a tribe and the complete fragmentation and destruction of the nation.**

What we've learned:

- 1. Judges 19 begins a crisis in the home that develops into a national crisis which threatens the extinction of a tribe and the complete fragmentation and destruction of the nation.**
- 2. The crisis begins when an unnamed Levite has a domestic flareup in his home. The lack of authority orientation in his home is that of the nation.**

What we've learned:

- 3. Having left late in the evening they are unable to travel far. So, rather than staying in Jebus, a foreign city, he follows the letter of the law and stays in Gibeah.**

What we've learned:

- 4. He is offered hospitality by a non-native from Ephraim. But when night falls, the perverted sodomites of the city surround the house and demand the man be turned over to them for their sexual pleasure. The Levite turns over the concubine and she is gang-raped throughout the night and then barely drags herself home. He discovers her body at the doorstep the next morning and in a rather callous manner calls for her to get up so they can leave.**

What we've learned:

- 5. The Levite used a gruesome and graphic Ancient Near Eastern means, cutting up her body into 12 pieces, to call the nation to arms.**

Then in Judges 20:

- 1. The anatomy of national self-destruction.**
- 2. Why does God's guidance lead to the loss of two battles?**
- 3. How the decisions of individuals within a nation impact the whole nation.**

- 4. The structure of these three chapters (Judges 19–21):**
 - a. The background to the horrific attack (19:1–9);**
 - b. The details of the horrific attack (19:10–28);**
 - c. Israel's response to the horrific attack (19:29–20:48); and**
 - d. The national implosion created by the horrific attack (21:1–24).**

The end of the book reflects the beginning: war of purification, war of destruction, war of divine judgment.

“Holy war” is not a term used in the Hebrew. It was not used until after the Islamic wars of the 7th century.

The biblical term is

חָרָם (*ḥāram*) | , ban, devote, destroy utterly. Often it is translated for something devoted, or set apart to the Lord, or it has the idea of something placed under a divine “ban” or judgment.

Judg. 1:1, “Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, ‘Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?’”

Judg. 1:2, “And the LORD said, ‘Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.’”

Judg. 1:17, “And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah.”

**חָרַם *charam*-1 hif wawConsec 3 masc plur
to ban, devote, destroy; bring judgment**

The Tale of the Three Battles

The Build Up, Judges 20:1–11

The Tribes Gather, Judges 20:1–3a

The Levite Reports on the Tragedy, Judges 20:4–7

The Reaction of the Nation, Judges 20:8–11

The Inquiry and Response, Judges 20:11, 12

Judg. 20:11, “So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.”

Judg. 20:12, “Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, ‘What is this wickedness that has occurred among you?’”

Judg. 20:13, “ ‘Now therefore, deliver up the men, the sons of Belial [wicked, perverted] who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!’ But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel.”

Judg. 2:11, “Then the sons of Israel did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and enslaved themselves to the Baals; [RD]

Judg. 2:12, “and they abandoned the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. [RD]

Judg. 2:13, “They abandoned the LORD and enslaved themselves to Baal and the Ashtoreths.” [RD]

Mobilization of the Armies, Judges 20:14–17

Judg. 20:14, “Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the sons of Israel. [RD]

Judg. 20:15, “And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men.”

בַּחֹרֶב *bachur-2* passiveQal part masc
sing abs to choose, they were “choice”
men, men who qualified for the job

Judg. 20:16, “Among all this people were seven hundred choice men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair’s breadth and not miss.

Judg. 20:17, “Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war.”

**בַּחֲרֵם *bachur-2* passiveQal part masc
sing abs to choose, they were
“choice” men, men who qualified for
the job**

The significance of the left-handed men.

- **A left-handed person was considered handicapped.**
- **In combat, a left-handed man in a group of right-handed men was a danger.**
- **But if an entire unit of lefties could be put together, it was an advantage.**
- ***Benjamin* meant “son of my right hand,” but the tribe has a large number of lefties. All left-handed slingers, going against four hundred thousand right-handed swordsmen (Judges 20:17).**

THREE BATTLES: Judges 20:18–48

The First Battle: Judges 20:18–21

Judg. 20:18, “Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, ‘Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?’ The LORD said, ‘Judah first!’

Judg. 20:19, “So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah.

Judg. 20:20, “And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah.”



Why does God let this happen? Why does God allow defeat, when He is the one that directed them?

The Significance of Bethel, “House of God”

Gen. 12:8, “And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.”

Gen. 13:3, “And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,”

God Renewed the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob at Bethel.

Gen. 28:10, “Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran [i.e., north].

Gen. 28:11, “So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

Gen. 28:12, “Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Gen. 28:13, “And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: ‘I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.’ ”

Gen. 28:17, “And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God [Bethel], and this is the gate of heaven!’ ”

The tabernacle was at Shiloh, about 10 miles to the north.

But they brought the Ark of the Covenant down to use as Joshua had at Jericho and Ai.

Later Jeroboam I will establish another sanctuary here with a golden calf.

Judg. 20:21, “Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites.

Judg. 20:22, “And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day.

Judg. 20:23, “Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?’ And the LORD said, ‘Go up against him’.”

Why does God allow this disaster?

- 1. They inquire of God. This seems good on the surface, but the manner is superficial. They do not ask “Shall we go up against our brother,” but “Who shall go up first?” They have made the decision without consulting God. This indicates a level of self-sufficiency and a lack of genuineness.**

Why does God allow this disaster?

2. That God answers is the grace of God. They did not approach God according to the instruction of the Law: no sacrifice, no high priest. They failed to follow protocol.

Why does God allow this disaster?

3. The nation was far from guiltless and innocent. They had already been condemned for their idolatry and their abandoning God, so divine discipline was part of the package.

They were still following what was good in their own eyes.

Why does God allow this disaster?

4. But this seems so harsh. Wrong question. They still had not learned. The second time they show that they have not learned the lesson or humbled themselves.

They are treating God more as a good-luck charm, than coming to Him in light of His unique character.

The Second Battle: Judges 20:22–25

Judges 20:22, “But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day.

Judges 20:23, “The sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening, and inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?’ And the Lord said, ‘Go up against him.’

Judges 20:24, “Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.

Judges 20:25, “Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and felled to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel; all these drew the sword.”

The Third Battle: Judges 20:26–48

The Blinded Benjamites

Judg. 20:34, “And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them.”

Judg. 20:41, “And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them.”

Look for the difference in this third approach to God.

Judg. 20:28, “and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, ‘Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?’

“And the LORD said, ‘Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand.’ ”

Third Battle—Phase One

Judges 20:29–34 (93 words in Hebrew)

Judg. 20:29, “Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah.

Judg. 20:30, “And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times.”

Third Battle—Phase One

Judges 20:29–34 (93 words in Hebrew)

Judg. 20:31, “So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, and were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down and kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel.

Judg. 20:32, “And the children of Benjamin said, ‘They are defeated before us, as at first.’ But the children of Israel said, ‘Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways.’ ”

Judg. 20:33, “So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel’s men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba.

Judg. 20:34, “And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them.”

Third Battle—Phase Two

Judges 20:35–41 (110 words in Hebrew)

Judg. 20:35, “The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword.”

Judg. 20:36, “So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah.”

Judg. 20:37, “And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword.”

Judg. 20:38, “Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city,

Judg. 20:39, “whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, ‘Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.’

Judg. 20:40, “But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up in smoke to heaven.”

Judg. 20:41, “And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them.

Judg. 20:42, “Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst.”

Third Battle—Phase Three

Judges 20:43–48 (105 words in Hebrew)

Judg. 20:43, “They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east.

Judg. 20:44, “And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these were men of valor.

Judg. 20:45, “Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them.”

Judg. 20:46, “So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these were men of valor.

Judg. 20:47, “But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months.

Judg. 20:48, “And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from every city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.”