

order to deceive her father's messengers, and to protect her husband, placed the Teraphim in the bed and represented it as David, too ill to answer the summons of Saul. Samuel, with the instinct of the prophet, denounced this worship of household gods as rebellion against Jehovah, and characterized it as "idolatry." (1 Sam. xv., 23.)

Yet we find, 500 years after this event, evidences of the same divided worship of Jehovah by Israel, in Zechariah's denunciation of belief in Teraphim as a delusion and a snare. (Zech. x., 2 ;

The greatest sin of Israel, however, in the eyes of the prophets, was her worship of the gods of other nations, especially the gods of the Canaanitish tribes. Before the time of the prophets, little objection was made to the recognition of the power of other national gods. It cannot be doubted that Moses recognized the authority of Pharaoh's gods, though he had faith that Jehovah was more powerful than the gods of Egypt. This is especially apparent in Exodus vii. to xii. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and it became a serpent, Pharaoh's wise men and sorcerers, under the power of Egypt's gods, cast down their rods also and these became serpents. But Aaron's serpent was the mightier, *for it swallowed theirs*. Did the rod of Aaron turn the water of the Nile into blood, Pharaoh's god was no less potent, for he could enable the magicians to do as much. It was simply a contest between the God of Moses and the gods of Pharaoh, in which, finally, Jehovah triumphed. Interpret the record in any other way and we make it meaningless. It is more than probable that in the commandments we have an allusion to this worship of other gods as not prohibited entirely, but permissible if they are held as inferior to Jehovah. It is not simply thou shalt have *no other gods*, but "Thou shalt have none other gods *before me*."

The Book of Judges gives us an

insight of the social, political and moral condition of the Hebrews between the conquest of Canaan and the reign of David, covering a period of about 300 years—(from about 1300 to 1000 B. C.) They were years of tumult and barbaric strife, in no wise conducive to the development of pure spiritual perceptions, and we shall seek in vain to find these. In this record we notably find evidences of Israel's crude ideas of God. For them Jehovah was the God of battles. Their name, Is-ra-el, may be properly defined—"God does battle." And indeed, if we may credit the record, he did this for the Judges. As the gods of the Greek's directed in *their* warfare, so we find the God of Gideon commanding in his battles even to the minutest details, (see Judges vii.) The sword of the Lord and Gideon was a fearful visitor to the Midianites, and Jehovah's hand was on the hilt.

Thus in times of war the Hebrews and their God were in the closest relation, it was then their dependence upon Him became the greatest, and, when their wars were successful, their faith in Him was the firmest. But faith in victory meant loss of faith on the part of the people, when their battles ended in defeats, since to them defeats betokened Jehovah's weakness and the superior strength of other gods. And so altars to Baal were erected in honor of the gods of the Canaanitish tribes, and Israel fell back into nature worship in which the "grove" worship of the unchaste goddess, Asherah, took a prominent place. Gideon's consecration to the service of Jehovah began by his losing faith in his father's gods. (See Judges vi., xxv.-xxviii.) Nor was his faith in Jehovah strong at that time as is shown by the proofs he required (Judges vi., 36-40) of the Lord's sincerity ere he would undertake the campaign against the Midianites. As was Gideon so were the other Judges, simple military leaders, not righteous men. Their record is one of assassinations, treachery, pillage, barbarian con-