

GANZ NOTES - The Faber Sessions, Series 8, Part III - Scrooge of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens (5 December 2022)



A sketch of the young Charles Dickens, with his older sister Frances "Fanny" Dickens.

PREFACE BY CHARLES DICKENS

I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.

December 1843.^[1]

[1] Charles Dickens, [*A Christmas Carol*](#) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997).

A PRAYER BY CHARLES DICKENS

We humbly beseech thee O Father that we may be honest and true in all our dealings, and gentle and merciful to the faults of others, remembering of how much gentleness and mercy we stand in need ourselves; That we may earnestly try to live in thy true faith, honour and love, and in charity and goodwill with all our fellow creatures; That we may worship thee in every beautiful and wonderful thing thou hast made, and sympathize with the whole world of thy glorious creation. Amen.

QUOTES

CHRISTIAN, n. One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin. [Bierce, Ambrose. *Ambrose Bierce: The Devil's Dictionary, Tales, & Memoirs* (LOA #219) (Library of America) (p. 459). Library of America. Kindle Edition.]

A Christmas Carol, Stave Four – “The Last of the Spirits” - “No,

Spirit! Oh, no, no!" The finger still was there. "Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! **I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this if I am past all hope?"** For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!" The kind hand trembled. "I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

[Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (2003) (Penguin Classics) (pp. 162-164). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.]

This identification of Dickens with the festival of Christmas, so deeply inscribed in the popular culture of the English-speaking world, began when he was still a young man, just over a month short of his thirty-second birthday, but already firmly established as England's favourite novelist. The process had been initiated by the 'Good-Humoured Christmas Chapter' in the tenth monthly number of *Pickwick Papers*, published at the end of December 1836, but it was what Dickens called the 'most prodigious success' ('the greatest, I think, I have ever achieved')² of his first 'Christmas Book', ***A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas***, that clinched the matter. First published on 17 December 1843, this little book had already sold over 5,000 copies by Christmas Eve, and its publishers, Chapman and Hall, were planning the first of many reprints. Since this triumphant debut the *Carol* has never been out of print, being usually available in a number of different editions, and it has become as much part of the furniture of the Anglo-American Christmas as holly, mistletoe, Christmas trees and Christmas crackers. [Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (Penguin Classics), from the Introduction (p. xi). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.]

TEXTS

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (Penguin Classics) (pp. i-ii). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Publisher: Penguin Classics; New Ed edition (September 30, 2003)

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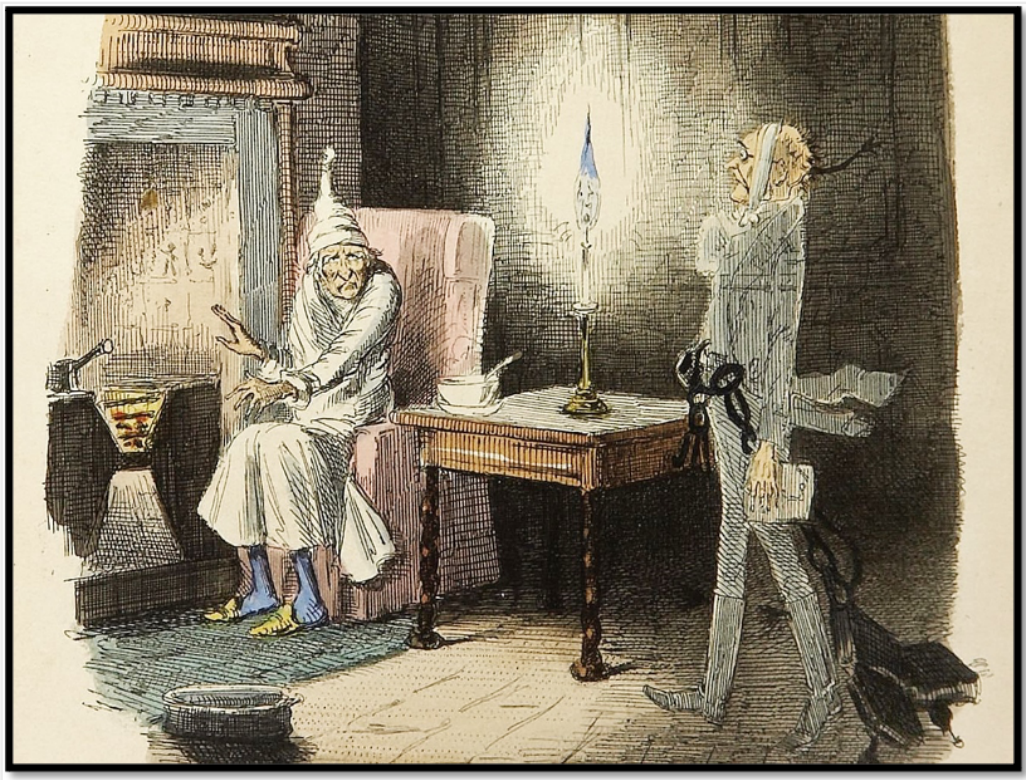
Paperback: 336 pages

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Smiley, Jane. *Charles Dickens: A Life* in the Penguin Lives series. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc, 2002.

JOHN LEECH, ILLUSTRATOR



Scrooge and Marley's Ghost (1843)

Ford's Theater^[1], *A Christmas Carol Legacy: Remembering John Leech's Timeless Illustrations* -

Dickens was in his 30s when he planned to publish a stinging manifesto about child labor laws and government policies against poor children. He had researched the ghastly conditions of England's mines and discovered powerful oral histories of real English children. Before publishing however, he shared his

manifesto with friends. **They argued against his instincts to fight for justice in what they thought was a misguided diatribe. Instead, they insisted that he go at it by writing a story.**

Dickens's last two novels had not sold well. Driven by the distinct possibility of financial ruin, he pushed himself to write *A Christmas Carol* in mere weeks. In writing it, he imagined a story that folks could return to again and again. He thought he could easily achieve this if he had the novel illustrated.

For the task, Dickens chose John Leech,^[2] a caricaturist and illustrator known for his humor and satirical bent.

[1] See: <https://www.fords.org/blog/post/a-christmas-carol-legacy-remembering-john-leech-s-timeless-illustrations/>.

[2] From *WikiArt* at "**John Leech**" – "John Leech (29 August 1817 – 29 October 1864 in London) was an English caricaturist and illustrator. He is best known for his work for *Punch*, a humorous magazine for a broad middle-class audience, combining verbal and graphic political satire with light social comedy. Leech catered to contemporary prejudices, such as anti-Americanism and antisemitism and supported acceptable social reforms. Leech's critical yet humorous cartoons on the Crimean War help shape public attitudes toward heroism, warfare, and Britons' role in the world."

BRITANNICA - on "A Christmas Carol"

A Christmas Carol, in full **A Christmas Carol, in Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas**, short [novel](#) by [Charles Dickens](#), originally published in 1843. The story, suddenly conceived and written in a few weeks, is one of the outstanding Christmas stories of modern literature.

Through a series of spectral visions, the miserly [Ebenezer Scrooge](#) is allowed to review his life and to change its outcome. The Ghost of Christmas Past reveals [vignettes](#) of Scrooge's early life as a schoolboy,

an apprentice, and a young man in love. The Ghost of Christmas Present reveals to Scrooge that joy has little to do with wealth; together they visit the homes of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's much-abused clerk, and of his generous nephew Fred, who has married for love. Finally the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come allows Scrooge a vision of what his end will be like if he continues on his present course—he will die despised and unmourned. After witnessing these scenes, Scrooge is a changed man. He immediately sets about mending his ways, becoming generous and thoughtful and thereby finding redemption and joy.

BRITANNICA - on "Charles Dickens"

Charles Dickens, in full **Charles John Huffam Dickens**, (born February 7, 1812, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England—died June 9, 1870, Gad's Hill, near Chatham, Kent), English novelist, generally considered the greatest of the Victorian era. His many volumes include such works as A Christmas Carol, David Copperfield, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations, and Our Mutual Friend.

Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity during his lifetime than had any previous author. Much in his work could appeal to the simple and the sophisticated, to the poor and to the queen, and technological developments as well as the qualities of his work enabled his fame to spread worldwide very quickly. His long career saw fluctuations in the reception and sales of individual novels, but none of them was negligible or uncharacteristic or disregarded, and, though he is now admired for aspects and phases of his work that were given less weight by his contemporaries, his popularity has never ceased. The most abundantly comic of English authors, he was much more than a great entertainer. The range, compassion, and intelligence of his apprehension of his society and its shortcomings enriched his novels and made him both one of the great forces in 19th-century literature and an influential spokesman of the conscience of his age.

MICHAEL SLATER, EDITOR OF PENGUIN EDITION OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*

(Penguin Classics) (pp. i-ii). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Publisher: Penguin Classics; New Ed edition (September 30, 2003)

Language: English

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CHARLES DICKENS was born at Portsmouth on 7 February 1812, the second of eight children. Dickens's childhood experiences were similar to those depicted in *David Copperfield*. His father, who was a government clerk, was imprisoned for debt and Dickens was briefly sent to work in a blacking warehouse at the age of twelve. He received little formal education but taught himself shorthand and became a reporter of parliamentary debates for the *Morning Chronicle*. He began to publish sketches in various periodicals, which were subsequently republished as *Sketches by Boz*. *The Pickwick Papers* was published in 1836–7 and after a slow start became a publishing phenomenon and Dickens's characters the centre of a popular cult. Part of the secret of his success was the method of cheap serial publication which Dickens used for all his novels. He began *Oliver Twist* in 1837, followed by *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–9) and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41). After finishing *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) Dickens set off for America; he went full of enthusiasm for the young republic but, in spite of a triumphant reception, he returned disillusioned. His experiences are recorded in *American Notes* (1842). *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–4) did not repeat its predecessors' success but this was quickly redressed by the huge popularity of the Christmas Books, of which the first, *A Christmas Carol*, appeared in 1842. During 1844–6 Dickens travelled abroad and he began *Dombey and Son* (1846–8) while in Switzerland. This and *David Copperfield* (1849–50) were more serious in theme and more carefully planned than his early novels. In later works, such as *Bleak House* (1852–3) and *Little Dorrit* (1855–7), Dickens's social criticism became more radical and his comedy more savage. In 1850 Dickens started the weekly periodical *Household Words*, succeeded in 1859 by *All the Year Round*; in these he published *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1860–61). Dickens's health was failing during the 1860s and the physical strain of the public readings which he began in 1858 hastened his decline, although *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–5) retained

some of his best comedy. His last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was never completed and he died on 9 June 1870. Public grief at his death was considerable and he was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

THE IMMEDIATE CATALYST FOR WRITING

All [his Christmas stories] were published in the same format as the *Carol* and illustrated by distinguished artist friends of Dickens, but the expensive hand-coloured plates were dropped. The *Carol*'s immediate successor was *The Chimes. A Goblin Story of Some Bells That Rang an Old Year Out and a New Year In* (1844), followed by *The Cricket on the Hearth. A Fairy Tale of Home* (1845), *The Battle of Life. A Love Story* (1846), and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain. A Fancy for Christmas Time* (1848). [Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (Penguin Classics) (p. 26). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.]

Dickens did not write directly about Christmas again, however, until a sudden inspiration in October 1843 precipitated the creation of the *Carol*. Earlier in the year he, like Elizabeth Barrett and many others, had been appalled by the brutal revelations of the *Second Report (Trades and Manufactures) of the Children's Employment Commission* set up by Parliament. Barrett published a powerful poem, 'The Cry of the Children', and Dickens, 'perfectly stricken down' by the *Report*, contemplated bringing out 'a very cheap pamphlet, called "An appeal to the People of England, on behalf of the Poor Man's Child"'. **Speaking at the first annual soirée of the Manchester Athenaeum, an institution which sought to bring culture and 'blameless rational enjoyment' to the working classes, Dickens dwelt on the terrible sights he had seen among the juvenile population in London's jails and doss-houses and stressed the desperate need for educating the poor.** This occasion seems to have put into his mind the idea for a story, building on, but also utterly transforming, the old Pickwick Christmas Eve tale of Gabriel Grub, which should help to open the hearts of the prosperous and powerful towards the poor and powerless, **but which should also bring centrally into play the theme of memory that, as we have seen, was always so strongly associated with Christmas for him.** [Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*

(2003) (Penguin Classics) (pp. 22-23). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.]

THE KAPPA-ELEMENT – THE TONE OR MOOD

From Stave One - *Once upon a time*—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.^[1] It is striking to me in our contemporary setting how *temperate* Dickens is in the telling of this Story. For example, he describes Scrooge in the most stark ways, especially in the First Stave, yet he maintains a “light and playful” touch as he does so.

From C.S. Lewis, “On Stories” - I should like to be able to believe that I am here in a very small way contributing (for criticism does not always come later than practise) to the encouragement of a better school of prose story in England: **of story that can mediate imaginative life to the masses while not being contemptible to the few.** But perhaps this is not very likely. It must be admitted that the art of Story as I see it is a very difficult one. What its central difficulty is I have already hinted when I complained that in the *War of the Worlds* the idea that really matters becomes lost or blunted as the story gets under way. I must now add that there is a perpetual danger of this happening in all stories. **To be stories at all they must be series of events: but it must be understood that this series—the *plot*, as we call it—is only really a net whereby to catch something else. The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something that has no sequence in it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality.** Giant-ship, otherness, the desolation of space, are examples that have crossed our path. The titles of some stories illustrate the point very well. *The Well at the World's End*— can a man write a story to that title? Can he find a series of events following one another in time which will really catch and fix and bring home to us all that we grasp at on merely hearing the six words? [Lewis, C. S. *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Kindle Edition.]

WHAT IS A “CAROL”?

Dickens called his "chapters" not that but staves, keeping within the musical mode of a "carol".

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**stave**" – "**6. Music.** A set of lines for musical notation". "Stave" is the plural form of "staff" within the musical frame of reference. Thus "**staff**" means "**20. Music.** A set of horizontal lines (now five in number) on which, and in the spaces between, notes are placed so as to indicate pitch."

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (2022), edited by Andrew Louth – "CAROL - A song of joy, originally accompanying a dance; now applied esp. to traditional and popular songs of a religious character. The word is from the Italian *carola*, a 'ring dance' (from *carolare*, 'to sing'). Historically the *carol* differs from the hymn in being a popular, and often unpolished, reflection on a religious theme, composed for informal singing, whereas the *hymn* was written by skilled and educated churchmen for formal use in Divine Service. Modern practice in England, where the 19th and 20th cents. have seen a considerable revival of the popularity of carols, has tended to confine the singing of them to Christmastide and to break down the distinction between carols and hymns, carols being often sung in church, and hymns outside the liturgy. A service of carols and lessons, introduced by E. W. *Benson, Bp. of *Truro, in 1880, was adopted by King's College, Cambridge, in 1918; as modified in the following year, it has become widely popular. There are many traditional carols for seasons other than Christmas."

CAROL, popular hymn, of joyful nature, in celebration of an occasion such as May Day, Easter, or Christmas. The earliest English carols date from the 15th cent. The carol is characterized by simplicity of thought and expression. Many are thought to be adaptations of pagan songs. Despite the folk-song character of true carols, many Christmas hymns

composed in the 19th cent. have been called carols. The oldest printed carol is the *Boar's Head Carol*, printed in 1521 by Wynkyn de Worde. Carols of French origin are called noels. See R. L. Greene, *The Early English Carols* (1935); E. Routley, *The English Carol* (1958); P. Dearmer et al., ed., *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928, repr. 1964).^[1]

The *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* – "Christmas Carols are in commemoration of the song of the angels to the shepherds at the nativity. Durand tells us that the bishops with the clergy used to sing carols and play games on Christmas Day. (Welsh, *carol*, a love-song; Italian, *carola*, etc.)".^[2]

WHAT IS "THE" CAROL

1. God^[3] rest^[4] you merry,^[5] gentlemen,^[6]
Let nothing you dismay,^[7]
For Jesus Christ our^[8] Saviour
Was born upon this day,
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray:

O tidings^[9] of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.

Bp. Bishop.

^[1] Paul Lagassé, Columbia University, [*The Columbia Encyclopedia*](#) (New York; Detroit: Columbia University Press; Sold and distributed by Gale Group, 2000).

^[2] *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (20th Edition) is the most recent version. Published by Chambers in March 2019 and running to 1600 pages. This 20th edition by Susie Dent, updating the original version by Ebenezer Cobham Brewer (first edition in 1870).

[3] Notice that the first word of this oldest of English Christmas carols is *God*.

[4] *Wikipedia* at "God rest you merry, gentlemen" – "The transitive use of the verb **rest** in the sense "to keep, cause to continue to remain" is typical of 16th to 17th century language (the phrase "rest you merry" is recorded in the 1540s). Etymonline.com notes that the first line "often is wrongly punctuated" as "God rest you, merry gentlemen" because in contemporary language, *rest* has lost its use "with a predicate adjective following and qualifying the object" (*Century Dictionary*)."

[5] The adjective "**merry**" comes from Old English (very early!), which means in **OED**: "Full of animated enjoyment (in early use chiefly with reference to feasting or sporting); full of laughter or cheerfulness; joyous. Also of a person's general disposition given to joyousness or mirth." Further, "So "rest" in "[may] God rest you merry" is in the subjunctive and means "May God rest you merry"... "**Merry**" is the complement of the verb. **Rest** can (or could in the past) take a number of such complements, such as "rest happy, rest content", and it was also used transitively either with a reflexive pronoun (I rest myself content) or with a personal pronoun when you make someone else rest happy or rest merry etc. In this case, **we ask that God will rest merry the present company (Gentlemen)**.... If the pronoun were written as "ye" the grammar would be scrambled, because "ye" is really the nominative and would suggest that the assembled company is the subject of the verb. **But we've already have the subject, God**. Then it would look as though God were the object, and we were saying "May you gentlemen rest God merry, please." But that is not the point."

[6] The title "**gentlemen**" means in **OED**: "A man of gentle birth, or having the same heraldic status as those of gentle birth; properly, one who is entitled to bear arms, though not ranking among the nobility (see quot. 1869), but also applied to a person of distinction without precise definition of rank."

[7] The **OED** under the verb "**to dismay**": "To deprive of moral courage at the prospect of peril or trouble; to appall or paralyze with fear or the feeling of being undone; utterly to discourage, daunt, or dishearten."

[8] The ownership here is important: not "the" Savior" but *our* Savior.

[9] The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**tidings**" – "**2. a.** The announcement of an event or occurrence; a piece of news

(now *obsolete* or *archaic*); usually in *plural tidings*, reports, news, intelligence, information."

THE NAME: EBENEZER SCROOGE

SCROOGE

A name invented by Dickens, which is probably a combining of "to screw" and "to gouge".

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**to screw**" – "**c.** *transitive*. To tighten or adjust (a screw, peg, etc.) by turning." And "**to gouge**" – "**3. a.** To cut or force out with or as with a gouge; to push out (a person's eye) with the thumb. Chiefly with *out* adv. Const. *out of*." However, in the United States in the late 19th century it means: **4.** "U.S. To cheat, impose upon."

The main point that I want to make is that in the biblical story "Ebenezer" signified *both* the place of impossible, horrible defeat *and* the place, under the leadership of Samuel, where that same enemy – the Philistines – were defeated finally and completely, never to be an enemy again.

In the same way, "Scrooge" becomes the name *both* of an utterly lost, miserly, miserable man *and* of the redeemed man.

So remarkable a deliverance could not be allowed to sink into oblivion, hence Samuel's memorial-stone, set up like our war memorials in a prominent place. But Samuel's stone recalled not the names of the dead but the living Lord God, the Helper of his people. *Ebenezer* means 'stone of help' or 'stone of the Helper', a name frequently applied to the Lord (e.g. the refrain 'He is their help and their shield' in Ps. 115:9–11). The explanation of the name, *Hitherto the Lord has helped us*, can mean either 'as far as this geographical spot', which fits the context well, or 'until now'; the Hebrews loved to use words and expressions with double meanings, and most likely kept both senses here.^[1]

EBENEZER

1 Samuel 4: ¹ At that time, the Philistines gathered for an attack on Israel. Israel went out to engage them in battle and camped at **Ebenezer**, while the Philistines camped at Aphek. ² The Philistines then drew up in battle formation against Israel. After a fierce struggle Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield. ^[2]

1 Samuel 4: ¹⁰ The Philistines fought and Israel was defeated; everyone fled to their own tents.^{*} It was a disastrous defeat; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. ¹¹ The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were dead. ^[3]

Defeat had evidently been unthinkable and immediately questions as to the reason were asked by *the elders* who had accompanied the troops. If they had heeded the words of Samuel, they would not have been surprised. **They were right in assuming that the Lord was responsible for their defeat, but wrong in thinking that a parade of the ark of the covenant would compensate for their neglect of the Lord's ethical demands.** The 'ark' or 'chest' contained the very law of God to which Israel was committed under the covenant initiated by the Lord himself. **To think that the presence of the ark with them would reverse their fortunes without any change of heart in Israel's leaders was a measure of their insensitivity to spiritual things.** ^[4]

1 Samuel 7: ¹² Samuel then took a stone and placed it between Mizpah and Jeshanah; he named it Ebenezer,^{*} explaining, "As far as this place the Lord has been our help." ¹³ Thus were the Philistines subdued, never again to enter the territory of Israel, for the hand of the Lord was against them as long as Samuel lived. ^g ^[5]

Ebenezer eb-ə-nē'zər [Heb. *eḇen hāezer* - 'stone of the help'; Gk. *Abenezer*].

1. Here Israel was defeated by the Philistines, four thousand men falling in the battle (1 S. 4:1ff.). It appears also to have been the scene of the disaster when the ark of God was captured (vv 3ff.). The place is not identified. It was across from Aphek; but this site also is unknown (cf. Josh. 12:18). In *Onom.* Eusebius places it between Jerusalem and Ascalon, in the neighborhood of Beth-shemesh.

2. A stone set up by Samuel to perpetuate the memory of the signal victory granted to Israel over the Philistines in answer to his prayer (1 S. 7:12). It stood between Mizpeh and "Jeshanah," an emended reading followed by the RSV and NEB (cf. 2 Ch. 13:19). The AV, following the MT, reads "Shen" (tooth). A location on the border between Israel and Judah appears likely, but proper identification has not yet been made.

W. Ewing^[6]

[1] Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 86.

[2] *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 1 Sa 4:1–2.

* *To their own tents*: the defeat is so catastrophic that the soldiers abandon the army for home; cf. 2 Sm 18:17.

Ⓒ 1 Sm 2:34.

[3] *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 1 Sa 4:10–11.

[4] Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8 of *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 74.

* Ebenezer: "stone of the helper," i.e., the Lord.

⁹ Jgs 3:20; 11:33.

[5] *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), 1 Sa 7:12–13.

Onom. Onomasticon

RSV Revised Standard Version

NEB New English Bible

AV Authorized (King James) Version

MT Mas(s)oretic Text (See TEXT AND MSS OF THE OT)

[6] W. Ewing, "Ebenezer," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988) 8.