Modern and ancient scholarship alike are testimony to the textual and exegetical problems of *The Song of Deborah*, and among them verse eight of this poem ¹. The verse reads in the MT as follows:

\[
yibhar \text{ Elohim } \text{ hådâšim} \quad 'āz lâhem še'ârim
mâgôn 'im yéré'êb wârômâh bê'arba'im 'elef bêyisrâ'êl.
\]

The rendition of the LXX (G²) ² and the Targum, followed by most medieval Jewish commentators and English translators, is based on an assumed parallel with Deut. xxxii 17: the apostasy of Israel and the ensuing punishment in the form of an enemy attack upon her cities. This interpretation, along with certain 'anomalous' renditions of the first hemistich (8a²) suggested by the ancients ³ has

¹) A portion of a seminar paper prepared for Dr. S. TALMON, Brandeis University, 1962, subsequently revised under his guidance at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem (1963).

²) LXX: ἔξελέξαντο θεοὶ καινοῦς
tóte ἐπολέμησαν πόλεις ἀρχόντων

³) One is JEROME'S: Nova bella elegit Dominus; another, the Syriac Peshitta: "God chooses new things". A third is an alternate interpretation suggested by GERSONIDES: The One, blessed be His Name, chose new things to render the miracle complete.

All three are agreed on making 'Elohim' the subject and agent of supernatural, somewhat mysterious, actions.
been largely rejected by modern scholars 1). But the critics themselves are far from agreeing on any single interpretation 2), while some scholars have abandoned the quest in despair 3).

Equivocation regarding the second hemistich is of equally ancient origin. The LXX understood the peculiar lähem as milhamāh and šīḥārīm ("gates") as a pars pro toto for 'cities'; but GA and GL read: ḍē ḏītōn (ḵēthīnōn) — "barley bread" 4) — which is the interpretation of the Peshitta as well. Amongst the moderns, emendations varying in their degree of severity have been proposed 5).

Before presenting our own interpretation, we propose to comment on some of the aforementioned views.

It can be said of the various emendatory proposals that they generally do violence to the MT (esp. v. 8a) and/or that they produce a meaning which ill-suits the immediate context of the verse or the more general context of the poem 6). As concerns the traditional interpretation of Israelite apostasy and the resulting enemy attack.

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1) Thus Moore, Lagrange, Burney, and Budde. The prime objection raised against the 'anomalies' is the rendering of 'Elohim' as the subject, due to the otherwise consistent employment of Yahweh throughout the poem.

2) Ewald and Meyer take 'Elohim' to mean "judges" and translate: They chose new judges (Burney, The Book of Judges, (London, 1918) p. 119). Burney's emendation of: is based on 1 Sam. xiii 19, even though the historical situation there is radically different. Kautzsch runs 8aα and 8aβ together:


4) Based on GAL is Budde's retroversion: "The barley bread was exhausted". (Das Buch der Richter, (1897) p. 43)

5) Lambert, (REJ XXX, (1894), p. 116), followed by Lagrange, alters the word divisions and reads: אֱלֹהִים שֵׁרִימִּים אֱלֹהִים לֶחָם שִׁבָּח (cf. A. Weiser, op. cit.)

6) A case of violent treatment of the text is Burney's proposal; Lambert-Lagrange afford an example of ill-suited meanings (cf. notes 2 and 5 above.) More satisfactory is the Ewald-Meyer interpretation of 8aα (note 2). Against it, however, must be urged the following objections. Firstly, the rise of the "saviour" is explicit in v. 7b: how can we account for its repetition in the following and parallelistically unrelated verse? Secondly, "saviour" in 7b is singular, i.e. Deborah herself, while Elōhim (which might otherwise be construed as referring to Deborah and Barak) is plural.