Comparing the Book of Judges to Greek Literature

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The possible Hellenistic background of Israelite historiography is a hot debated issue to which Bob Becking, whom I want to honor with this contribution, also attributed some insightful and careful considerations (Becking 2001). I hope to demonstrate that the book of Judges in its final form may very well have been the product of an author and redactor presenting old Israelite stories in a Greek jacket. I am well aware of the fact that Bob Becking – and he is certainly not the only one – will have some doubts about the outcome of this undertaking (Becking 1990).[1]

Instead of starting with the customary and necessary remarks about the method to be applied here, I would like to begin presenting the relevant material by sketching the situation of a reader of the text living in the early Hellenistic age.[2] The methodological considerations will then be presented afterwards.

A survey of possible parallels

Imagine a Jew living in Jerusalem at the beginning of the third century BCE reading the book of Judges. We assume that he is reading it by himself, having had a good education. That means that he had learned Greek and, therefore, was familiar with the texts every pupil had to read in Greek schools: Homer's Iliad and maybe also the Odyssey, the works of Euripides and also those of historians like Herodotus and Thucydides (Evans 2008: 37). Like most Jews in Jerusalem in that period, especially the elite, he had no problem with accepting the Greek culture as a way of life. There was no tension with the traditional Jewish religion. They could easily exist next to each other. Things would first become problematic during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, about a century later (Grabbe 2002; Grabbe 2008: 163-65).[3]

When he starts reading it he is certainly happy to find out that Judah is presented as the first and the best of the tribes. According to Judg 1 it is the Lord himself who gave Judah this prominent place. Has not history proven how true this is? Judah is the only surviving tribe. As a citizen of Jerusalem the third century reader may be struck by the story in the first chapter about Adonibezek, the Canaanite king who after his defeat was brought to Jerusalem to die there. The remarkable detail that they cut off his thumbs and big toes, just as he had done with his captives (Judg 1:6-7), may remind him of a story about Alexander the Great who met a big group of nearly 4000 Greek captives. The Persians had cut off their hands, feet, and ears. They had kept them for a perpetual laughing-stock.[4] The specific detail of the thumbs may have reminded him of a detail from the story of the war between Athens and the people of

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[1] He remarks that we should not assume any kind of influence on the story in the book of Judges from the story about Iphigeneia in ancient Greek literature. According to Becking we are merely dealing with a universal motif (Becking 1990: 202).

[2] This survey updates an earlier version in Spronk 2010: 24-27.

[3] A plausible background is also pictured by Van der Toorn 2007: 23-25.

[4] This is reported by Quintus Curtius Rufus, a Roman historian living in the first century AD, in his *De Rebus Gestis Alexandri Magni*, or *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, a biography of Alexander the Great, book V. V.5-6.

the isle of Aegina in the fifth century BCE. It is told that the Athenians cut off the right thumbs of the Aeginean prisoners, so that they they were no longer able to use lances or rowing their boats. The Roman historian Claudius Aelianus (ca. 175 – ca. 235) described this in his *Various History* II.9:

> What decrees did the Athenians make, and those in a democracy ? That every one of the Aeginetae should have his thumb cut off from his right hand, so that he might for ever after be disabled from holding a spear, yet might handle an oar.

Continuing to chapter 2 of the book of Judges the ancient Jewish reader may have associated the verses 11-22 (describing the ever returning sequence of apostasy by the Israelites, punishment by YHWH, repenting by the Israelites, and deliverance by a judge sent by YHWH) with what he had learned in the philosophy classes. Was it not related to what was said, for instance, by the Stoic philosopher Zeno (334-262 BCE) about the eternal recurrence of things? For the Stoics 'there was one "history" which was repeated an infinite number of times' (Trompf 1979b: 12).[5] In the second century BCE Polybius used it in his *Histories* in the form of the idea of historical recurrence. In this he was much influenced by Plato, as he indicates himself. So we can speak of a common Greek conception. Polybius describes how the blessing of democracy is lost by the generation who forgot how it replaced the bad situation of oppression by oligarchs:

> While those who had experienced oligarchic excess remained alive, they were content with the existing regime and were fully committed to equality of speech and the right of every citizen to speak his mind. But by the time a new crop of young men had been born and democracy was in its third generation, the principles of equal and free speech were too familiar to seem particularly important, and some people began to want to get ahead of everyone else. It was especially the rich who succumbed to this temptation and longed for power. But then, finding that their own resources and merits were not enough to enable them to get what they wanted, they squandered their fortunes on bribing and corrupting the general populace in all sorts of ways. Once this inane hunger for glory had made the common people greedy for such largesse and willing to accept it, democracy in its turn was overthrown, and replaced by violence and government by main force. For once people had grown accustomed to eating off others' tables and expected their daily needs to be met, then, when they found someone to champion their cause - a man of vision and daring, who had been excluded from political office by his poverty - they instituted government by force: they banded together and set about murdering, banishing, and redistributing land, until they were reduced to a bestial state and once more gained a monarchic master. This is the cycle of constitutions, the natural way in which systems of government develop, metamorphose, and start all over again. (Polybius, Histories, VI.9; Waterfield 2010: 377-78)

We do not know for sure how our ancient Jewish reader interpreted the beginning of the song of Deborah. When the much discussed translation of the second verse as referring to letting one's hair hang loose before starting the battle is also what the ancient reader had in mind, then it is not farfetched to assume that he associated it with the much repeated phrase in Homer's *Iliad* which spoke of the 'long haired' (*komoontes*) Greek warriors: 'At that hour Achaian fighting men with flowing hair took a meal by their huts and armed themselves' (*Iliad* 8.53-57; cf. also 3.79; 4.261).

Another and clearer parallel concerns the catalogue of all the tribes who participated in the battle against the Canaanites in Judg 5:14-18. This reminds one of the description in the second book of

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[5] Cf. also Trompf 1979a: 220-22, referring to Judges 2 within the framework of the idea of recurrence.

the *Iliad* of the warriors joining the war against Troy (Niditch 2008: 79; Wright 2011). The enigmatic reference to the tribe of Dan 'abiding with the ships' (Judg 5:17) has a parallel in what one repeatedly reads in the *Iliad* about Achilles staying with his ships, refusing to join the Greeks in battle (cf. also *Iliad* 1. 488-492). What also might have struck the ancient Jewish reader is that in the *Iliad* the Greek warriors before Troy are called Danaans (*danaioi*). In a number of texts they are mentioned together with their ships on which they came to Troy (cf. *Iliad* 1.89-90).

The gory details of the assassination of Sisera by Jael according to Judg 5:26 are uncommon in the Old Testament. It can only be compared to another story in this book describing the way Ehud killed king Eglon of Moab with some unpleasant details in Judg 3:21-22 and to something similar in 2 Sam 20:10. Such texts, however, will not have impressed anyone who was familiar with the <u>*Iliad*</u>, which is filled with descriptions about all kinds of weapons piercing all kinds of body parts. For instance:

> With this he hurled his spear, and Minerva guided it on to Pandarus's nose near the eye. It went crashing in among his white teeth; the bronze point cut through the root of his tongue, coming out under his chin, and his glistening armor rang rattling round him as he fell heavily to the ground.
> (*Iliad* 5.291-295)

Coming to the story of the battle of Gideon against the Midianites the ancient reader will notice that the number of soldiers of his small army, 300 men, is the same as the famous group of soldiers from Sparta lead by Leonides attempting to stop the invading Persians in Thermopylae. This is described by Herodotus (*Histories* 7,205), who also reported a battle between Sparta and Argos, in which both armies consisted of the same number of 300 (*Histories* 1.82; Brown 2000: 84).

Jotham's fable is a reminder of the many fables credited to the ancient Greek story teller Aesop (620-564), in which speaking trees also figure.[6]

Everyone who is familiar with the classical Greek literature will associate the story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter (Judg 11:29-40) with the similar history of Iphigeneia, the daughter of Agamemnon, especially in the way this is described in the play devoted to her by Euripides: *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (Römer 1998; Kunz-Lübke 2007: 265-267).

> Agamemnon, lord over this Greek armament,
> you cannot clear your ship from shore till Artemis
> has taken Iphigeneia, your daughter, sacrificed
> by you. You vowed to offer up the loveliest thing
> the year gave birth to, to the goddess who brings light.
> Your consort Clytemnestra bore a child in your house.
> (By this he meant that I was the year's loveliest gift.)
> You must offer her up.
> (Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, 1.17-24)

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[6] Briffard 2002 refers to a fable by Aesop about the trees asking the olive-tree to become their king. But the olive-tree refuses, because he does not want to give up the oil for which he is praised by God and men. Then they ask the fig-tree. He refuses as well for similar reasons. Then they go to the thorn bush who accepts the offer and asks them to come in his shadow and, 'if not a fire will go out from the thorn bush and devour the cedars of Libanon'. The resemblance is indeed striking. In fact, there can hardly be any doubt about it that these texts are related. It is more likely, however, that we are dealing here with the work of a later Jewish or Christian editor of the fables of Aesop. Especially the unexpected reference to the cedars of Lebanon points in this direction. This would also not be the only example of fables from other times and places being attributed to Aesop; cf. Priest 1985.

Both Jephthah and Agamemnon feel sorry for themselves and in a way blame their daughter; in both stories the daughter can be regarded as the real hero, accepting her fate and encouraging her father to keep to his vow; both stories end with the indication that the memory of the girl shall be kept alive. The biblical text does not explicitly describe the sacrifice itself. In some Greek versions of the story the girl is rescued. In the post-Homeric epic Kypria it is told how, when Iphigeneia was about to be sacrificed at Aulis, Artemis snatched her away, substituting a fawn in her place, and immortalized her among the Taurians. Hesiod records that the Achaians sacrificed only the image of the girl and she herself was rescued and immortalized by Artemis. Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon* breaks off in the description of the sacrifice just before the blow falls.   Euripides wrote another version of the story in *Iphigeneia in Aulis*. The original ending is lost, but there is evidence that in this play, too, the divine rescue took place. What is most important, though, in all these stories is the courage of the daughter, as is described by Euripides:

> When Lord Agamemnon saw the girl
> walking into the grove toward slaughter
> he groaned, and turning his head away
> he shed tears, holding his cloak in front of his eyes.
> She took her place next to her father
> and spoke: 'Father, I am here for you,
> and on behalf of my fatherland
> and of the whole land of Greece,
> I give my body willingly for them to take and sacrifice
> at the altar of the goddess, if that is the prophecy.
> For my part, may you all fare well, may you get victory by arms
> and come back to your native land.
> Therefore, let none of the Greeks take hold of me;
> I will offer my neck silently, and with good cheer.'
> (*Iphigeneia in Aulis*, 1547-1560)

Having read the stories of Samson the ancient Jewish reader might very well ponder about the similarities to and the differences from Samson's Greek counterpart, Heracles -- their relations with the gods and with women (Nauerth 1985; Margalit 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1987). Eventually, he is brought down not by brutal force but by a woman he loves. In Sophocles' play Heracles realizes that it is his wife Deianeira who had dyed his robe with poisonous blood: 'A woman, a female in no way like a man, she alone without even a sword has brought me down' (*Trichiniae* 1062-1063).

Coming to the part about Samson's riddle the ancient Jewish reader may recall the definition of the riddle by Aristotle, who stated: 'The very nature indeed of a riddle is this, to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words' (*Poetics* 22; Weitzman 2002: 169).

The remarkable story about the Danite migration may have reminded him of what was told about the foundation of Massalia (present day Marseille) by the people of the Greek city of Phocaea (Na'aman 2005). According to Herodotus (*Histories* 6.8) this had taken place in the middle of the sixth century, when the Phocaeans had to leave their homeland on the west coast of Asia Minor because of the Persians. The details of the story are related by the Greek historian Strabo (64 BCE – 19 AD) in his *Geography* (4.1.4), but we may safely assume that his sources date back some centuries earlier. Before they sailed to Gallia the Phocaeans would have received an oracle telling them to take a guide from Artemis of Ephesus; accordingly they went to Ephesus to ask the goddess how they should obey the oracular order. The goddess appeared to Aristarche, a woman 'held in high honour' in Ephesus, in a

dream, telling her to join the expedition, and take with her a statue from the temple. Aristarche went with the Phocaeans, who built a temple to Artemis, and made Aristarche the priestess. The parallels are clear: (1) Both stories tell of a migration of a people; the Phocaeans are driven away by the Persians; although it is not explicitly mentioned in Judg 18, it is clear that the Philistines must be held responsible for the migration of the Danites. (2) Both stories tell of the foundation of a new city far away. (3) Both stories tell of a divine oracle as a confirmation of the enterprise. (4) In both stories a cult image together with a cult functionary is obtained from a city visited on their way to the new location. (5) Both stories explain the existence of the temple built in the new location, the deity venerated there and the cultic functionaries working there.

When the story relating to the early days of Rome, told by Livy (*History* 1,9) and Plutarch (*Romulus* 14, 4f.), about the way in which the Sabine girls were carried away by the Romans in need of brides also goes back to older sources, the ancient Jewish reader may have associated these with the final verses of the book of Judges recounting something very similar with regard to the Benjaminites and the girls from Shilo (Gnuse 2008).

A survey of the history of research

What has been listed thus far is only a small selection of all possible parallels between the book of Judges and ancient Greek literature. In the history of interpretation of the book of Judges many more parallels have been suggested, but many of them can be labeled as possible but not probable. Some of them are superficial and could very well be merely coincidental as common motives that can be found in the vast amount of the ancient Greek literature and in other cultures as well. We have to realize that in general the relation between 'Athens' and 'Jerusalem' has always been hard to grasp and all too often the search for indications of influence in one way or the other has been mixed with heated debates on subjects such as dating and identity. It is interesting to observe the regular changes in this matter in the history of interpretation of the Bible. Already within the Bible itself one may note mixed feelings and tensions between the Jewish tradition and the growing influence of Greek ways of thinking, for instance, in the book of Qohelet, and possibly also Second Isaiah (Korpel 2005). In the first century CE commentators of the Old Testament no longer had problems with relating them. Philo of Alexandria made great efforts to show the correspondences between the law of Moses and the ideas of Plato. It can also be demonstrated that in his retelling of the story of Israel Flavius Josephus constantly alludes to stories known to the Greco-Roman readers in order to make the Hebrew Bible acceptable as a relevant source book to his readers.[7] Later interpreters of the Bible, like the church fathers, were more reluctant when it comes to this relation. Tertullian warns against the dangers of Greek philosophy:

> What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from the porch of Solomon, who had himself taught that the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart. Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief.
> (*De praescriptione haereticorum* 7)

Next to this we find in the same period, however, also the opinion of Eusebius who found it important to prove that Plato was influenced by Moses. The many citations of Plato in Eusebius' *Praeparatio*

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[7] Cf. Brown 1992: 119-127 about the way Josephus retells the story of Jephthah's daughter, and Feldman 1998: 489 about Josephus picturing Samson 'as an Israelite Achilles or Heracles'.

Evangelica books XI–XIII are meant 'to demonstrate the agreement between scriptures and the best representative of Greek philosophy' (Inowlocki 2011: 221).

Taking a big step in time, we see a new interest for the comparison with the classical texts in the period of the Enlightenment with its great interest in the sources of western civilization.

In plays about biblical stories poets like Buchanan , Milton and – in the Netherlands – Vondel often take the plots, themes and sometimes even the names from the ancient Greek tragedies.

With the discovery of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations in the nineteenth century the attention shifted from 'Athens' to 'Babylon': to the comparison with the ancient Mesopotamian and Syriac texts that were more closely related, as it seems, in time and place. The Greek connection was not forgotten and we still find references to the Greek sources with scholars like Alfred Jeremias, Hermann Gunkel and Hugo Gressmann, within the framework of their religious historical studies. The article of Walter Baumgartner published in 1944 on the relation between ancient Israelite and Greek folk stories can be regarded as a final offshoot of this approach. Since then the tendency has been that the Greek connection was no longer relevant for the study of the Old Testament. An exception to this rule was the book published in 1967 by Michael Astour about the 'ethnic and cultural study in west Semitic impact on Mycenaean Greece', with the significant title *Hellenosemitica*. He sees many traces of contacts between Hellenic and Semitic cultures, beginning in the second millennium BCE and thus constituting the foundation of later cultures in this area. But he remained an outsider in the field of biblical studies, which was dominated by the view that there is a basic difference between Hebrew and Greek thought. Very influential in this regard was the work of Karl Barth and of Gerhard von Rad (Von Rad 1960: 129-131).

Characteristic of the views in these matters was the book by Thorleif Boman, published in 1954, sharply distinguishing ancient Israelite from Greek thinking.[8] More recently, also Walter Brueggemann pointed to basic differences between Jewish and Greek ways of reasoning. He states, for instance, that whereas the Greek 'tradition of thought and reason understood itself to be responsibly engaged in large, coherent claims, Jewish testimony relishes the disjunction that disrupts the large claim and that attends to the contradiction as the truth of the matter' (Brueggemann 1997: 325). He also observes 'that when Israelite tradition is placed in juxtaposition to the great classical traditions of Hellenistic philosophy, justice is clearly a Jewish, Yahwistic preoccupation, whereas the Greeks endlessly focus on order' (Brueggemann 1997: 738-39).

There are, however, opposed opinions, both among classicists and Old Testament scholars.[9] From the side of the scholars of classical literature we can mention here the studies of Martin L. West. In his publications he takes up the theory of Cyrus H. Gordon that at the end of the Bronze Age Minoans at Ugarit picked up the Near Eastern motifs there and reworked them, and that in this way they found their way into Greek literature. The most important period of contacts between Greece and the Near East was in his view the early first millennium, when the Phoenicians transferred not only goods from the East to the West, but also ideas and stories. This would have been the cause of many parallels between the works of Homer and Hesiod and the Old Testament.

Very interesting, but also much disputed, is the work of Walter Burkert. In a number of publications he emphasizes that the proper historical place of classical Greece is at the Western margin

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[8] The idea that the basic features of a culture can be discovered in words, grammar and syntax of a language was severely criticized by James Barr 1961, and he doubts the possibility to make distinctions between Greek and Hebrew views of life. In his book Barr especially attacks the approach of Boman (Barr 1961:46-79; see now also Joosten 2014).

[9] A curious outsider in this field is Joseph Yahuda. In his book *Hebrew is Greek*, which was allegedly published in 1982, but is only available on the internet, he tries to show in almost 700 pages that Hebrew is in fact Greek in disguise and that the Jews are Asian Greeks.

of a more comprehensive Near Eastern-Aegean cultural community that emerged in the Bronze Age and expanded westward in the first millennium. In the period around 700 BCE you could speak in his words of 'a near eastern-Mediterranean Koiné, a cultural community that continually brought forth ever new contacts and challenges' ('eine nahöstlich-mediterrane Koiné, eine Kulturgemeinschaft, die fortlaufend immer neue Kontakte und Anregungen hervorbracht' (Burkert 2003: 72). This agrees with the views of John Pairman Brown who with long lists of comparable words and ideas attempts to show 'that Israel stands just inside the Ancient Near Eastern Empires, Hellas just outside' (Brown 2000: VII). Both cultures share in his view 'a critique of social and religious institutions expressed in alphabetic script' (Brown 2001: VII).

Whereas Brown does not venture to enter into the discussion about the formation of the Hebrew Bible, others use the possible Greek connection as an argument in dating certain books. In an article published in 1983 John Van Seters stated that the Deuteronomistic historical work is markedly similar to the work of Herodotus (Van Seters 1983: 354-362; Van Seters 1988). This was taken up by scholars like Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson and their pupils of the so-called Copenhagen School. In their view the Greek historians might be considered as the forefathers of the Jewish history writers of the post-exilic period. Other scholars that can be mentioned in this connection are Sara Mandell (1993) and Jan-Wim Wesselius (2002), who attempt to demonstrate that an author or group of authors at the end of the fifth century BCE used the structure of Herodotus' *Histories* to organize the material at their disposal into a continuous historical presentation of the history of Israel, from the creation of the world until the Babylonian exile.

This more positive view on the relation between the literature of ancient Israel and Greece met with fierce criticism (cf. Grabbe [ed.] 2001; Emerton 2006), but it is also taken to the extreme by Philippe Wajdenbaum in his dissertation of 2008 (published in 2011). He takes up the old idea of Eusebius about the relation between Plato and Moses. In his opinion Eusebius was correct in noting a great number of clear parallels, but according to Wajdenbaum it is more likely that the direction of the influence was the other way around: the books from Genesis to Kings, including Ruth and Esther, would have been written and edited by a single author who lived in Alexandria in the second century BCE, who 'wanted to transpose - in the form of their own national epic - the Ideal State of Plato's *Laws*, a political and theological project initiated in the *Republic*' (Wajdenbaum 2011: 4). Wajdenbaum underpins his thesis with a great number of parallels from many different Greek and Roman sources, from Homer to Ovid. Many of these suggested parallels are new. The fact that they have been overlooked by biblical scholars thus far is attributed by Wajdenbaum to the age-old Christian bias against Greek culture and to the fact that the ancient writer did not want to make his source of inspiration overly clear: 'In order to make the borrowing seem less blatant, the biblical writer dismantled these stories/texts entirely and re-composed them according to a specific pattern' (Wajdenbaum 2011: 71). In different ways the author would have left 'deliberate "fingerprints" (…) for the erudite reader, to point subtly to his sources' (Wajdenbaum 2011: 74). This leads to an overwhelming number of parallels to the books from Genesis to Kings, among which also many for the book of Judges (Wajdenbaum 2011: 214-34). Most of these are not listed among those mentioned in the survey above as probable. This comes as no surprise, because the approach by Wajdenbaum is so far removed from the customary scholarly discussion that we either have to accept that we are dealing here with a Copernican turnabout or have to assume that the author is fooled by his own distrust (Labuschagne 2013). It is telling that Wajdenbaum completely ignores the closely related work of John Pairman Brown. He could have certainly benefitted from his more modest approach.

Methodological Considerations and Evaluation

The work of Wajdenbaum draws our attention to the matter of the right method: how do we deal with the undeniable fact that there are clear correspondences between ancient Israelite and ancient Greek literature? Wajdenbaum proposes to work with the structural analysis as developed by the anthropologist Lévi Strauss, who is of the opinion that a myth is composed of all of its variants, no matter where and when they are found. When the aim of your study is to find out who influenced whom, this is not very helpful, because it leaves open every possibility. This makes the starting point decisive; a clear case of circular reasoning, which can also be detected in the study of Wajdenbaum.

A more sound method is presented by Dennis R. MacDonald in his studies on the relation between the epics of Homer and the story of Tobit (MacDonald 2001) and the gospel of Mark (MacDonald 2003). He designated six criteria for the examination of literary imitation: accessibility, analogy, density, similar sequencing, distinctive traits, and interpretability (MacDonald 2003: 2-6).[10] On the basis of these criteria he makes it plausible that the writer of the book of Tobit deliberately imitated the *Iliad*. With regard to the gospel of Mark he is less convincing, but at least his use of these clear cut criteria makes it possible to discuss it. In the presentation given above of possible associations of parts of the book of Judges with Greek literature a selection of the many parallels mentioned in the history of research was already made. This admittedly subjective selection can now be judged on the basis of more or less objective criteria taken from another field of research.

MacDonald's first criterion is accessibility: the Greek literature containing the parallel stories and themes should be available to the writer or editor of the book of Judges. Before we can say something about this, we have to be clear about the date of the book, but anyone who is familiar with the recent history of interpretation will realize that there is no *communis opinio* about this insight. The theory of the Deuteronomistic History is no longer dominant. What can be remarked here is that most scholars agree that the book of Judges is based on a number of old stories and traditions, which have been reworked and adapted by a number of later editors.[11] On the basis of comparison with texts from Joshua and the books of Samuel – so on the internal evidence – David Carr suggests 'that the book of Judges only emerged at a relatively late point as a probable post-P (and perhaps post-Chronistic) bridge between Genesis-Joshua on the one hand and Samuel-Kings on the other' (Carr 2011: 291).[12] So we can assume with some confidence that it is possible that in the early Hellenistic age the book of Judges was still a work in progress. In that period the books of Homer were certainly available. They were well-known and probably part of the curriculum, already in elementary schools (Finkelberg 2012: 16-17). Less 'canonical' but also wide spread were the plays of Euripides, and it is also not unlikely that literate Jews in Jerusalem were also familiar with ancient Greek historians like Herodotus. In a number of cases, however, we have to assume that stories recorded by later Greek and Roman writers went back to traditions of the early Hellenistic period for which we have no written evidence.

The second criterion is analogy: are there more examples of the imitation of the same model? An interesting analogy is offered by the book of Tobit, written ca. 200 BCE. MacDonald has pointed to many parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*. Nickelsburg comments that there are also many parallels of the book of Tobit with Genesis and sketches an intricate web of intertextuality (Nickelsburg 2001). Precisely the same can be observed in the book of Judges. Next to the assumed parallels with Greek texts there are also some striking parallels with Genesis, especially in the story of Jephthah and his daughter (with the story of the sacrifice of Isaac in Gen. 22) and in the story of the death of the concubine (with the story of the sodomite inhospitality in Gen. 19).

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[10] Cf. also Frolov and Wright 2011, who agree with MacDonald about the method, but come to a negative conclusion with regard to the assumed relation between the biblical text and the books of Homer.
[11] Cf. Groß 2009: 82-94, who distinguishes ten 'Wachstumphasen'.
[12] Cf. also Schmid 1999: 220, 252-55 and Spronk 2010.

The third criterion, density, pertains to the volume of the contacts between the two texts. Here we can remark that the number of possible Greek parallels is relatively high, that is, bigger than in most other books of the Old Testament.

The fourth criterion, order, has to do with the sequence of the different elements of the parallel. The assumed parallel of the founding of a new city with its own temple by the Danites with the similar story of the Phoceans meets this criterion.

The fifth criterion is distinctiveness. Here we can point to the extraordinary detail of the cut-off thumbs and toes in Judg. 1.

The final criterion is the interpretability: does the parallel help to get a better understanding of the text? The assumed Greek influence makes sense as it offers a plausible cultural background of someone who collected a number of folk stories, rewriting them and editing them as part of an ongoing history of ancient Israel, filling the gap between the books of Joshua and Samuel. We do not necessarily have to assume that he deliberately added elements reminding his readers of well-known Greek stories. He may have simply used them as part of his cultural heritage.

We may conclude that it is not only possible to read the book of Judges against a Hellenistic background but also plausible that this book was written and edited by someone living in the early Hellenistic period and familiar with Greek literature.

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