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HISTORIOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY (RE)FORMULATION IN SECOND TEMPLE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

edited by
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CONTENTS

The Book of Judges as a Late Construct

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Introduction

The exegesis of the book of Judges may have been dominated too long by the discussion about the Deuteronomistic History. When in the middle of the twentieth century, Martin Noth presented his theory about the books from Deuteronomy to Kings as the work of one author — describing the conquest and loss of the promised land, using different sources, but arranging and framing them from a clear view on the reasons of the downfall of Israel and Judah — this theory was welcomed as a brilliant new insight, which was much more compelling than the many contradictory attempts to find traces of the sources that seem to have been used in the Pentateuch.[1] After the initial success, however, came the refinement of the theory leading to the "unsettling wide array of conflicting options that encourage scepticism of past attempts to sort out discrete redactional layers in the Dtr history."[2] The many detailed analyses can no longer be held together in one coherent view. The Deuteronomist(s) who was or were held responsible for large parts of the historical books of the Old Testament became "elusive."[3] The situation with regard to the book of Judges is well illustrated by the recent

1 R. Kratz, *Die Komposition der erzählenden Bücher des Alten Testaments: Grundwissen der Bibelkritik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), p. 219. H. J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (2. Überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), pp. 458–9, wrote: "Diese Erklärung zum Werk des Deuteronomisten hat eine beschämende Lücke in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft geschlossen."

2 S. A. Meier, "Review of Raymond F. Person Jr., *The Deuteronomic School: History, Social Setting, and Literature* Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002," *JBL* 122 (2003), 160–5 (160).

3 Cf. *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (eds.

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publication of two monographs in the classic tradition of redaction-critical studies but with totally different conclusions. In the first, Philippe Guillaume challenges Noth's theory about a Deuteronomistic writer/redactor and presents a new reconstruction of the growth of text.[4] In the second, Andreas Scherer, who calls Guillaume's ideas "ebenso verblüffend wie befremdlich,"[5] presents his own conclusions as a confirmation of Noth's view, although he finds a "polyphony of Deuteronomistic voices." Scherer also notes a new trend in the historical critical approach to the problem of the relation between the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets: a farewell to the theory of the Deuteronomists and a return of the idea of a Hexateuch which was so popular in the period before Martin Noth. Scherer does not agree with this trend, but he is even more critical with regard to those who want to escape the problems by limiting themselves to a synchronic analysis of the Masoretic text as it is transmitted to us. In his view this leads to simplification, not leaving room for the different voices of the different layers of the text. What is usually presented as respect for the text as a unity results in a limited view on the text based on the framework the exegete imposes onto it:

> Der Wunsch, den Texten möglichst hohen Respekt zu zollen, führt so, wenn auch ungewollt, zu einem Resultat, das auf das Gegenteil hinausläuft. Statt Exegese zu betreiben, die dem Facettenreichtum der mehrstufige entstandenen Texte Rechnung trägt, wird, bedingt durch den Zwang, alles auf ein und derselben Ebene zu betrachten, Eisegese kultiviert.[6]

The synchronic analysis of the book of Judges usually leads to beautiful results: clear structures around interesting themes. But other synchronic studies lead to other structures and other central themes — just as almost every redaction critic nowadays seems to have his or her own Deuteronomist.[7]

An interesting and promising new approach is suggested in Graeme Auld's

L. S. Schearing and S. L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

4 P. Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah: The Judges* (JSOTSup 385; London: T&T Clark, 2004).

5 A. Scherer, *Überlieferungen von Religion und Krieg: Exegetische und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Richter 3–8 und verwandten Texten* (WMANT 105; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), p. 9.

6 Ibid., p. 18.

7 See also the discussion between G. Andersson, *The Book and Its Narratives: A Critical Examination of Some Synchronic Studies of the Book of Judges* (Örebro: Universitetsbibliotheket, 2001) and G. Wong, "Narratives and Their Contexts: A Critique of Greger Andersson with Respect to Narrative Autonomy," *SJOT* 20 (2006), 216–30; with the response again by Andersson, "A Narratologist's Critical Reflections on Synchronic Studies of the Bible: A Response to Gregory T. K. Wong," *SJOT* 21 (2007), 261–74.

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theory about the "Book of Two Houses" (that is: the house of David and the house of the God of Israel built there by Solomon) as "the root-work that supports the whole tree of Genesis–Kings."[8] This "Book of Two Houses" would have received a first introduction in the stories about Samuel, and afterward the story of Moses to the Judges would have been added in anticipation of the "two houses," that is, it was written with the books of Samuel and Kings in mind and many of its stories appear to contain "pre-playing elements of the royal story."[9]

In the present article, I will elaborate on this idea, starting with a study of the way in which the book of Judges is connected to the book Joshua. Can the combination of correspondences to and differences with the book of Joshua be explained from the suggested point of view? Is it possible to relate the way that the book of Judges is connected to the book of Joshua, to the way the first-mentioned is connected to the books of Samuel and Kings? If so, it may be possible to support the idea of the book of Judges as a late construct, the work of a writer who connected the older history of Israel, contained in the books of Genesis to Joshua, with the newer history of its kings. This can perhaps be explained within the framework of Karel van der Toorn's theory about the Hebrew Bible as a product of scribal culture. He compares the production of the history of Israel with the work of Berossus in Babylon and Manetho in Egypt, collecting and editing older material in an effort to publish and preserve a national literature.[10] It would explain both the presence of such an extent of heterogeneous material in the book, as well as the many homogeneous elements that in the eyes of so many scholars point in the direction of a coherent literary piece of art. The late date of the book in its present form would also explain why the reader who comes from the book of Joshua is hardly prepared for this follow-up and why there are hardly any references in the books coming after the book of Judges to the persons and events as they are described there. For instance, from the reference in 1 Sam. 12:8-11, where a retrospective is given — starting with Jakob and

8 G. Auld, *Samuel at the Threshold: Selected Works of Graeme Auld* (SOTS Monographs; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 24.

9 G. Auld, "The Deuteronomist between History and Theology," in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VTSup 80; eds. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø; Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 353–67 (355); also his "Samuel and Genesis: Some Questions of John Van Seter's 'Yahwist'," in *Rethinking the Foundations. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (eds. S. L. McKenzie *et al*.; BZAW 294; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), pp. 23–32 (24–5). Similar conclusions about the Judges as "protokings" are found with M. Z. Brettler, "The Book of Judges: Literature as Politics," *JBL* 108 (1989), 395–418 (407) and P. J. van Midden, "A Hidden Message? Judges as Foreword to the Book of Kings," in *Unless Some One Guide Me . . . Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo* (eds. J. W. Dyk *et al*.; ACEBT Suppl 2; Maastricht: Shaker Publishing), pp. 77–86.

10 K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 259.

ending with Samuel — one gets the impression that the scribe was familiar with that period, but he only mentions a selection from what is recorded in the book of Judges. Some important Judges, like Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, and Samson, are left out. Gideon is mentioned by his other name, Jerubbaal, and the name of Barak is replaced by the otherwise unknown Bedan. The fact that Samson is missing is all the more remarkable because in the survey of 1 Samuel 12 the Philistines are mentioned among the enemies of Israel. The only one of the saviors named here who can be held responsible for the reported liberation from the Philistines is Samuel. It seems that the author of these words was not familiar with the stories of Samson as we know them as part of the history of Israel. This apparent omission in the canonical text was also noticed by the ancient scribes and some of them felt obliged to correct the text by replacing in 1 Sam. 12:11, the name of Samuel by that of Samson (as can be found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint and in the Peshitta). The Hebrew text — as the most problematic — has to be regarded here as representing the older stadium of the text. Apparently, most of the stories of the Judges were known, as can also be derived from the reference to the death of Abimelek mentioned in 2 Sam. 11:22, but the information may have been taken from other sources than the book of Judges.

If the book of Judges in its present form can be regarded as a late construct, this would also give a plausible explanation for the fact that the ancient Greek version of the end of the book of Joshua offers a different account of the continuation of the history of Israel compared to the way it is told in the book of Judges. In the final lines, which have no equivalent in Hebrew, reference is made to the ark. In this way it is related to the book of Samuel, because the ark is not mentioned in the book of Judges. It is also stated that, the Israelites worshipped other gods and that the Lord therefore delivered them into the hands of Eglon, king of Moab. This suggests that the introductory chapters of Judges were not known to the translator, because in the book of Judges the reference to this king is found in 3:12. Did the book of Judges receive its present form after the Greek translation of the book of Joshua was made?

The Connection to the Book of Joshua

The discussion about the relation between the final chapters of Joshua and the beginning of Judges is complicated.[11] Scholars nowadays usually speak, following the title of an article by Erhard Blum, of a "compositional knot."[12]

11 Cf. the summary by E. Noort, *Das Buch Josua: Forschungsgeschichte und Problemfelder* (Erträge der Forschung 292; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), pp. 198–205.

12 E. Blum, "Der kompositionelle Knoten am Übergang von Josua zu Richter: Ein

Many see it as their task to unravel it. The recent monograph by Mareike Rake on this subject has not made things easier.[13] According to her, in most of the cases of parallel texts in the book of Joshua and the first chapters of Judges, the text in Joshua is dependent upon those in Judges 1. She is also of the opinion, contrary to the outcomes of many other redaction-critical studies,[14] that the report of Joshua's death in Judg. 2:7-9 should be dated earlier than the version in Joshua 24. The problem with this way of reconstructing the growth of the text as a process of numerous editorial activities, is that one can never be certain on the basis of the transmitted text that one text is older or more original than the other. One always has to reckon with the possibility, as is admitted by Rake, that in a next stage the older text may have been re-edited on the basis of the later text. Without new evidence there will never come an end to this discussion. One can, however, also look at the problem of the relation between the books of Joshua and Judges from the angle of the book of Judges as a late construct.

There can be no doubt about it that in its present form, the book of Judges is presented as a sequel to the book of Joshua. This is already indicated by its beginning. Just like the book of Joshua it starts with the reference of the death of the primary figure in the preceding book: "It happened after the death of Joshua/Moses." According to critical scholars things become problematic, however, when one notes the — sometimes contradictory — repetitions in the first two chapters. Taking a closer look it can be noted that the quotations contain positive information about Judah, taken from Josh. 15:13-14 (cf. Judg. 1:20), 15-19 (cf. Judg. 1:11-15), and negative information about the other tribes, taken from Josh. 15:63 (cf. Judg. 1:21, with the Benjaminites instead of the Judahites), 16:10 (cf. Judg. 1:29), and 17:11-13 (cf. Judg. 1:27-28). To this is added new information, distributed in a similar way and therefore the dichotomy is deepened: a positive stance toward Judah and a negative one toward the other tribes. There are no compelling reasons to assume that in these parallels Judges is not dependent on Joshua. It is far more likely that we have to see the first chapters of the book of Judges as a kind of recapitulation of the book of Joshua.[15] The story is

Entflechtungsvorschlag," in *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic Literature: Festschrift C. H. W. Brekelmans* (BETL 133; eds. M. Vervenne and J. Lust; Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 181–212.

13 M. Rake, *"Juda wird aufsteigen!": Untersuchungen zum ersten Kapitel des Richterbuches* (BZAW 367; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006).

14 Cf., among others, E. Noort, "Josua 24, 28–31, Richter 2, 6–9 und das Josuagrab: Gedanken zu einem Straβenbild," in *Biblische Welten: Festschrift für Martin Metzger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (OBO 123; ed. W. Zwickel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), pp. 109–30, 113–15; H. N. Rösel, "Lässt sich eine nomistische Redaktion im Buch Josua feststellen," *ZAW* 119 (2007), 184–9.

15 This interpretation can be compared to the way in which S. Frolov explains the repetition in his article "Joshua's Double Demise (Josh. xxiv 28–31; Judg. ii 6–9): Making

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retold from a new perspective. The character of this new perspective is indicated at the beginning. Just as Joshua took over from Moses, now Judah takes over from Joshua. Judah is presented as appointed by YHWH (1:2). Judah proves to be competent for this task, because, just like Joshua, it is able to deal with the kings from Canaan (1:5-8; cf. Joshua 10). Exactly where Judges 1 differs from Joshua, it concerns the obvious attempt to put Judah in a more favorable light than it appears in the text of Joshua. This is what has happened in 1:21, where — compared with the parallel in Josh. 15:63 — the name of the Judahites is replaced by the name of the Benjaminites as the ones who must be blamed for not driving out the Jebusites from Jerusalem.[16] In 1:8 it is told that the Judahites conquered Jerusalem. Because there is no reference in 1:8 of the Jebusites, we can assume that in the eyes of the author it does not contradict 1:21. Conquering and burning a city is one thing; definitively driving away the inhabitants is something else. The same distinction is made in v. 18-19: Judah subdued Gazah, Ashkelon and Ekron, but at the same time it is remarked that it was not able to supplant the inhabitants of the Philistine coast, which is nothing else than the region of the mentioned cities.[17] What is more important, however, is that in this way — by combining 1:8 and 1:21 — not only the negative picture of Judah in Josh. 15:63 could be corrected, but it also left room for the later report of David taking the city of Jerusalem and making it his capital (2 Sam. 5:6-12). Note that in the story of David the Jebusites are explicitly mentioned: "the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land." This underlines the parallel with Judg. 1:8, 21.

With regard to the tribes, Judges 1 has the same order as Joshua 14–19, except for Simeon and Benjamin. In the list according to the book of Joshua the tribe of Simeon is mentioned in the middle, after Benjamin. In Judg. 1:3 Simeon has moved to the beginning and is closely related to Judah. The probable reason for this is that already in the book of Joshua, the tribes of Judah and Simeon are closely related. According to Josh. 19:19 Simeon's heritage was surrounded by the land that was given to Judah. So it seems to be only logical that when Judah goes, Simeon follows. The position of Simeon as second in the line of tribes also has a parallel in 1 Chronicles 4, where Simeon is mentioned after Judah and before Reuben. The fact that Benjamin is mentioned earlier in Judges 1 — compared with the list in Joshua — can be related to the place that this tribe takes

Sense of a Repetition," *VT* 58 (2008), 315–23, but he restricts his theory to Judg. 1:27–2:5 as a re-evaluation of Joshua 14–24.

16 Cf. J. C. de Vos, *Das Los Judas: Über Entstehung und Ziele der Landbeschreibung in Josua 15* (VTSup 95; Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 166–7.

17 Cf. B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 136.

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in the rest of the book of Judges. In ch. 20–21, it plays a prominent part in the battle between the tribes. In this battle, it is again Judah who goes first. This is indicated in 20:18 where precisely the same question and the same answer by YHWH is indicated compared with 1:2.

The story of the messenger in Bochim, the following reports of Joshua releasing the people, of the people serving YHWH during the life of Joshua, of Joshua's death, and finally, of the next generation forgetting YHWH (2:1-10), can be read together[18] and be regarded as a deliberate reaction to the book of Joshua as well. The connection is made by the reference to Gilgal in 2:1. This reminds of the passing through the river Jordan and the 12 stones placed there as a memory of what YHWH had done for his people (Josh. 4:19-20). When the messenger is said to have come from Gilgal, this is more than topographical information. In Judges 2 the messenger of YHWH repeats what Joshua had spoken according to Joshua 24, referring to YHWH's acts on behalf of his people in the past and to Israel's obligations within the covenant with YHWH. The resolute answer of the people in Josh. 24:24 is in glaring contrast with the outcome as established in Judg. 2:2. They have not acted according to their solemn words. The repetition of the report of Joshua releasing the people and of Joshua's death and burial, already described in Josh. 24:28-31, can be explained as a means to emphasize the change in reaction of the people. In Josh. 24:31, the positive attitude of the people is mentioned after the death of Joshua; in Judg. 2:7 it is mentioned before the death of Joshua, whereas after his death the covenant is soon forgotten. So the emphasis is on the reaction of the people. From this point of view the repeated message of Joshua's death can be explained as a consequence of the recapitulation of the whole book of Joshua as an introduction to the book of Judges. It may seem to be illogical, but it is functional.

The Connection to the Books of Samuel

Keeping the results in mind, the analysis of the way the book of Judges is related to the previous book, we shall now look at the way it is related to the following book, namely Samuel. On some points they correspond; the book of Judges is connected to the previous book of Joshua with reference to the missing leader ("After the death of Joshua"), the final chapters emphasize repeatedly the fact that Israel did not have a king. The repeated phrase "in these days there was no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1) is generally acknowledged as a pro-monarchical refrain, which uses the horrible stories in the last chapters of the book of Judges

18 Cf. ibid., p. 137 and A. van der Kooij, "'And I Also Said': A New Interpretation of Judges II 3," *VT* 45 (1995), 294–306 (305–6), for the opinion that Judg. 1:1–3:6 is a coherent introduction to the era of the judges.

as arguments in favor of the appointment of a king with the power to bring peace and justice.

Apart from this correspondence, there are a number of topographical correspondences between the books of Judges and Samuel. The story of the outrage in Gibea foreshadows the controversy between Saul and David, because it takes place in towns related to these future kings. The travelers, coming from a very hospitable Bethlehem — David's place of birth — wrongly pass by the later city of David, Jebus (19:10-12, with the hardly accidental remark that this is Jerusalem), to get into trouble in Gibea, the later home town of Saul. To this can be added that Rama is also mentioned in 19:13. Within the story there is no clear reason for this. It seems that this remark had the intention of relating this story to a coming event, namely the appearance of Samuel who was born in Rama (1 Sam. 1:19; 2:11). The mentioning of Shiloh in 18:31; 21:12, 19, and 21 has a counterpart in 1 Samuel 1, where it is mentioned as the place of the temple. Within this framework it is also possible to assume that the location Mizpa — as the place of the gathering of the tribes for the battle against the Benjaminites (20:1, 3; 21:1, 5, 8) — is somehow related to the fact that in the same place the Israelites, guided by Samuel, defeated the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:5-14). These topographical connections between the book of Judges and the next book have their counterparts in the repetition of city names from the book of Joshua in Judges 1. Additionally, the story of YHWH's messenger in Bochim is also related to the story of the entrance into the land by means of the reference to a city, namely Gilgal.

Apart from these topographical correspondences, there is a clear correspondence between the extraordinary behavior of a man cutting his dead wife into twelve pieces sending them to all the tribes of Israel (Judg. 19:29) and Saul's way of convoking the Israelites by sending them the pieces of his oxen (1 Sam. 11:7). Furthermore, since the information provided in Judges 19 about the man is most uncommon, one may assume that this narrative was modeled on the Saul story.

Another interesting correspondence between the books of Samuel and the book of Judges is the use of the phrase שאל באלהים. Within the stories of Saul and David this way of asking the will of God can be regarded as a "Leitmotiv."[19] The downfall of Saul is connected with it, as becomes clear in the story of his attempt to make contact with the spirit of the dead Samuel, when it is no longer possible for him to make contact with YHWH (1 Sam. 28:6, 16). The rise to power of David, on the other hand, is related to his successful attempts to get divine advice. Good examples of this can be found in 1 Sam. 22:10, 13 and especially 2 Sam. 2:1 (David asks YHWH: "Shall I go up?"). The way it is described there has its closest parallel within the Old Testament in the scene in Judg. 18:5-6,

19 H.-F. Fuhs, "שאל *šā'al* [ask]," *TWAT* VII (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993), 910–26 (921).

where the oracle is also given to people on their way.[20] In the book of Judges the expression returns in the repetition of the question addressed to God who shall go up first (1:1, 20:18). This is an indication that the attested deliberate references to the next book in the final chapters of Judges are part of the overall design of the book. A closer look at the story of Samson will confirm this.

There are many parallels between 1 Samuel 1 and Judges 13. Both stories begin by presenting the problem of a barren woman. The texts also introduce the respective husbands with exactly the same words: "And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, and his name was Manoah" (Judg. 13:2); "And there was a certain man of Ramathaim-Zophim, of the hill-country of Ephraim and his name was Elkanah" (1 Sam. 1:1). The introduction of a story with ויהי איש אחד מן may seem to be very common, but it is not. Within the Old Testament we only find it in these two places.[21] In both stories the woman eventually gives birth to a son who was promised by God under the condition of keeping to a number of prescriptions. In Judges 13 the messenger of YHWH orders the unnamed woman: She is not allowed to drink wine or strong drink or eat something unclean and no razor shall come upon the head of her son, because he shall be a Nazirite for life. In 1 Sam. 1:11 Hannah makes a vow herself: "I will give him unto YHWH all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." Afterward she has to explain to the priest that she was not drunk when she uttered the words.

The best way to explain these parallels is that the author of the Samson story was familiar with the story of the birth of Samuel.[22] The correspondences in the form and content can hardly be coincidental or ascribed to a common pattern of miraculous birth stories. When one compares the two narratives, one notices a number of elements that seem to have been added in Judges 13. The story is made more miraculous with a messenger of YHWH replacing the priest. The element of abstinence from strong drink is also more natural in the story of Hannah. Naming the son a Nazirite in Judges 13 can also be regarded as a later, exaggerating, and in fact incorrect interpretation of the given prescriptions. The motivation for relating Samson to Samuel can be found in the words of the messenger of YHWH: "the child shall be a Nazirite of God from the womb. And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judg. 13:5). When

20 Ibid., 920.

21 It is used without אחד also in Gen. 39:2; Judg. 17:1; 19:1; 1 Sam. 9:1; 2 Sam. 21:20; and 1 Chron. 20:6. See on the discussion about the repetition of this expression as an argument in redaction critical studies M. Leuchter, "'Now There Was a [Certain] Man': Compositional Chronology in Judges — 1 Samuel," *CBQ* 69 (2007), 429–39.

22 Cf. R. Bartelmus, *Heroentum in Israel und seiner Umwelt* (AThANT 65; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979), pp. 85–6.

the woman repeats these words to her husband she changes the reference of the deliverance from the Philistines to a reference to Samson's death: "the child shall be a Nazirite of God from the womb to the day of his death" (13:7). This can be seen as a reference to the later battles against the Philistines by Samuel, Saul, and David. During his lifetime Samson was not able to defeat these enemies. It was only under the reign of King David that the Philistines were defeated definitively.

Another reference to the reign of King David can be found in the story of Samson carrying the gates of the Philistine city of Gazah to the mountain opposite of Hebron (16:3), which is the place where David is crowned as king (2 Sam. 2:3-4) after having served the Philistines.[23]

All this can be interpreted as indications that in its present form the stories about Samson were meant as an introduction to the history as recounted in the books of Samuel. Once the reader is put on this track he may notice more common elements: Samson being driven by the spirit of YHWH like King Saul; Samson inventing a riddle and in this way showing himself to be wise like Solomon; Samson getting involved with foreign women, which recalls the risky marriage policy of King Solomon and of King Ahab; Samson bound and blinded like the last king of Judah, Zedekiah.

One can therefore note a correspondence between the end of the book of Judges and the books of Samuel which has much in common with the correspondence between the beginning of Judges and the book of Joshua. As was remarked above the function of the priest in the story of the birth of Samuel is taken over in the parallel story about the birth of Samson by the messenger of YHWH. In a similar way, the role of Joshua in the story of the making of the covenant in Joshua 24 is now taken up in the story about the broken covenant in Judges 2 by a messenger of YHWH. The writer/editor of the book of Judges shows an inclination toward the supernatural.

The Greek Connection

Now that it has become clear that the book of Judges was composed with both the books of Joshua and Samuel in mind — and therefore has to be dated relatively late — it is all the more interesting to review other evidence pointing in this direction, namely the often noticed Greek parallels. A survey of the history of research in this matter may give some indication about the texts involved and how these texts relate to those discussed above as connecting points with earlier Israelite literature.

A first parallel with Greek texts and ideas can be found with regard to cutting off a prisoner's thumbs (1:6). It has also been reported by Aelian that the

23 I owe this reference to Claudia Camp.

Athenians decided that "every one of the Æginetæ 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" (*Various Histories*, bk 2, ch. 9).[24]

Bernd Diebner makes some interesting remarks about Sisera, Jael, their names and their interaction.[25] The non-Semitic name Sisera can be related to Greek σισῦρα, which means "cloak made of goatskin." In ancient Greek literature, since Herodotus, this is used to indicate a barbarian: σισυροφόρος, "one who is wearing a goatskin." The name of Jael is easier to translate: "mountain goat." Because of this meaning the attention is drawn to an interesting parallel from Greek mythology, namely of the god Zeus as a newborn child hiding from the deadly threat of Kronos and being fed by the goddess Amaltheia with the milk of a goat. This is all the more interesting because according to Judg. 4:19 Sisera asks for water, but Jael gives him milk to drink and then she covers him with a blanket. Although this indicates that she concealed him, it might also remind of the covering of a child. All the possible associations that become apparent against the Greek background give extra drama to the story.

Gideon's army of only 300 soldiers (7:6) can be associated with the small group of brave soldiers of the Spartan king Leonidas with which he fought the mighty Persian army in Thermopylae (Herodotus 7.205.2). Herodotus also mentions a battle between Sparta and Argos of 300 selected men on each side (1.82).[26]

The fable of Jotham (9:8-15), with the trees talking to each other, has many parallels, like the Akkadian story of the quarrel between the tamarisk and the palm-tree, each claiming superiority over the other. A similar text is found in an Aramaic text from the fifth century BCE found in Egypt, containing a discussion between a pomegrate-tree and a bramble.[27] The connection with the Greek fables of Aesopus is therefore not unique. Many commentaries refer to Aesopus' fables mentioning the fir-tree and the bramble, or the pomegranate, apple-tree, and the bramble, quarelling about who is the best.[28]

24 Cf. G. F. Moore, *Judges* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), p. 17.

25 B.-J. Diebner, "Wann sang Deborah ihr Lied? Überlegungen zu zwei der ältesten Texte des TNK (Ri 4 und 5)," *ACEBT* 14 (1995), 106–30.

26 Cf. J. P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas, Volume II* (BZAW 276; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), p. 84.

27 Cf. T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: A Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer's Folklore in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 423–7.

28 The very close parallel found by C. Briffard, "Gammes sur l'acte de traduire," *Foi et Vie* 101 (2002), 12–18 is based on a misunderstanding. We are dealing here with the work of a Jewish or Christian editor of the fables of Aesopus. Especially the unexpected reference to the cedars of the Libanon points in this direction. This would also not be the only example of fables from other times and places being attributed to Aesopus (cf. J. F. Priest, "The Dog in the Manger: In Quest of a Fable," *Classical Journal* 81 (1985), 49–58).

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The story of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter (11:29-40) has many parallels in Greek literature. Comparable stories also refer to vows made to the gods, with fatal consequences for a daughter or a son.[29] According to some scholars this is no more than a universal motive.[30] According to Baumgartner, however, the correspondence between the Greek stories and the story of Jephthah's daughter "ist zu auffällig, um zufällig zu sein."[31] The story in Judges 11 shares a number of details with the way Euripides at the end of the fifth century BCE described the fate of Iphigeneia: the father is experiencing a military crisis; both Jephthah and Agamemnon have ambivalent feelings, feeling sorry for themselves and in a way blaming 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. All this makes it very likely that this story — which is uncommon within the biblical context — was for some reason borrowed from Greek tradition.

With reference to the possible connections between the biblical Samson and Greek Herakles, the correspondence of so many shared elements makes it highly likely that one was influenced by the other, with the more dominant and widespread Greek culture as the giving partner. In both stories, a god is involved in the conception of the coming hero; both heroes defeated lions; both stories contain episodes with bees and foxes; both heroes lost their beloved to another man; both fought against armies; both are related to wells of water; both worked as slaves; both remove gates and pillars; both lose their life through a woman.[32]

One final correspondence mentioned in commentaries on the book of Judges is the rape of the virgins, as narrated in ch. 21. This is often compared with the Roman legend of the Sabine women, mentioned in the works of Livy and Plutarch.[33] According to Soggin a better parallel can be found in the Greek story of the Messenians abducting the girls from Laconia during the celebration of a festival of Artemis.[34] This also has a setting in the cult, but a major difference is

29 Cf. Gaster, *Myth*, p. 430 and J. G. Frazer, *Apollodorus* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1921), pp. 394–404.

30 Cf. B. Becking, "Iphigeneia in Gilead: Over het verstaan van Richteren 11:29–40," *Kerk en Theologie* 41 (1990), 192–205 (202).

31 W. Baumgartner, "Israelitisch-Griechische Sagenbeziehungen," in *Zum Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), pp. 147–78 (153); cf. T. Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?" *JSOT* 77 (1998), 27–38.

32 Cf. the survey by C. Nauerth, "Simsons Taten: Motivgeschichtliche Überlegungen," *Dielheimer Blätter* 21 (1985), 94–120.

33 Cf. R. Gnuse, "Abducted Wives: A Hellenistic Narrative in Judges 21?" *SJOT* 22 (2008), 228–40.

34 J. A. Soggin, *Judges: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 304; cf. Gaster, *Myths*, p. 445.

that in the Greek story the girls were ransomed back to their families. This parallel is thus limited to just one common aspect and is therefore not so convincing like the parallels between the stories of Jephthah and Samson which depend on several aspects.

Conclusion

It is important to note that there is no direct relation between the Greek parallels and the texts discussed above which were used to connect the book of Judges to the books now surrounding it. This may indicate that on this point the old Israelite tradition was prevalent, whereas in stories not recorded or referred to in the older Israelite literature, the writers felt free to tell them according to the fashion of their time.

The Greek evidence discussed above may be evaluated in the light of Van der Toorn's theory about a Hellenistic background for the origin of the Bible.[35] Somewhere in the early Hellenistic age the Jewish scribes wanted to offer an authoritative version of the history of Israel, stretching from creation to the restoration after the Babylonian exile. Our analysis of the book of Judges indicates that these scribes already had the book of Joshua at their disposal, followed by the stories of the kings beginning in Samuel. The book of Judges was produced to fill the gap in between. A number of traditional stories were used as a basis and to this, new material was added. The scribes started their version of the history — connecting the period of Joshua with that of Samuel — with a recapitulation of the book of Joshua, beginning it in the same way as the book of Joshua: "And it happened after the death of . . ." At the other end of the book they connected it with the book of Samuel by a number of proleptic signals. Read within the present context — between the story of the good leader Joshua succeeded by the equally successful tribe of Judah and the references to the failing king — the stories of the Judges contain serious warnings against bad leadership. The fable of Jotham indicates that it is not always the best who becomes king. The story of Jephthah's daughter reminds us of the fact that kings may think that they can negotiate with the gods, like Agamemnon did, much to the disadvantage of those close to him. Looking at Samson one should realize that people having power can use this arbitrarily. On the other hand, mighty men like Sisera and Samson, can also become weak as a child, giving in to the temptation of being treated like a child by a woman who exposes his vulnerability. It is a view on power and the powerful that can also be found in Qohelet with his warnings against the foolish (4:13) and childish king (10:17), just as Qohelet warns against an impulsive vow,

35 See note 10.

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like the one by Jephthah.[36] This agreement with Qohelet is another indication for the relatively late date of the book of Judges in its present form. Within this framework it is also interesting that the positive attitude concerning Judah, the tribe of David, corresponds to the perspective taken by the Chronicler. When we also take into account the more formal parallel in 1 Chronicles 4 with regard to the place of Simeon as the tribe mentioned after Judah, just as in Judges 1, it becomes tempting to assume that these books stem from the same period.

36 Cf. Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomists," 38.