

Hebrew Texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings

Edited by

Klaas Spronk
Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Contents

List of Figures XI

- 1 **Hebrew Texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings** 1
 Klaas Spronk and Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman

PART 1

Hebrew Texts in Jewish Surroundings

- 2 **Converted Demons: Fallen Angels Who Repented** 9
 Johannes C. de Moor
- 3 **Jephthah and Saul: An Intertextual Reading of Judges 11:29–40 in
 Comparison with Rabbinic Exegesis** 23
 Klaas Spronk
- 4 **Two Women, One God and the Reader: Theology in Four Recensions
 of Hannah's Song (1 Samuel 2:1–10)** 36
 Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman
- 5 **Between Hermeneutics and Rhetorics: The Parable of the Slave Who
 Buys a Rotten Fish in Exegetical and Homiletical Midrashim** 50
 Lieve Teugels
- 6 **The Beauty of Sarah in Rabbinic Literature** 65
 Tamar Kadari
- 7 **David's Strengths and Weaknesses in the Targum of the Psalms** 83
 Geert W. Lorein
- 8 **From 'Writtenness' to 'Spokenness': Martin Buber and His Forgotten
 Contemporaries on Colometry** 104
 F.J. Hoogewoud
- 9 **Imitating Dutch Protestants: Jewish Educational Literature on the
 Biblical History from the 19th and the First Half of the 20th
 Century** 115
 Cees Houtman

PART 2

Hebrew Texts in Muslim and Christian Surroundings

- 10 Jewish Influences upon Islamic Storytelling: The Example of David and Bathsheba 135
Marcel Poorthuis
- 11 Elazar ben Jacob of Baghdad in Jewish Liturgy 151
Wout van Bekkum
- 12 Midrash Bereshit Rabbah in Christian Bindings: A Newly Discovered Medieval Ashkenazic Manuscript Fragment from Jena 170
Andreas Lehnardt
- 13 Martin Luther—Precursor of Modern Antisemitism? 188
Hans-Martin Kirn
- 14 ‘You are Constantly Looking over My Shoulder’: The Influence of the Relationship between Franz Rosenzweig and Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy on the *Gritlium* and on *The Star of Redemption* 112 198
Harry Sysling
- 15 Local Leadership in the Galilee: ‘Abd Allāh Salman Saleh Khayr (1906–1971) 212
Gert van Klinken

PART 3

Hebrew Texts in Jewish and Christian Surroundings

- 16 Finding Pearls: Matthew 13:45–46 and Rabbinic Literature 231
Eric Ottenheijm
- 17 ‘You Christians are being Led Astray!’ Some Notes on the *Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* 252
Pieter W. van der Horst

- 18 'Stay Here with the Ass': A Comparing Exegetical Study between
Cyril's Fifth Festal Letter and Rabbinic Exegesis in Babylonian Talmud
and Genesis Rabbah 56:1–2 264
Leon Mock
- 19 The Voice of Community: Jewish and Christian Traditions Coping
with an Absurd Commandment (Deut 21:18–21) 278
Michael C. Mulder
- 20 Noachide Laws: A Viable Option as an Alternative for Full Conversion
to Judaism? 293
Simon Schoon

PART 4

Hebrew Texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings

- 21 A Queen of Many Colours 311
Magda Misset-van de Weg

Index of Sources 337

Jephthah and Saul: An Intertextual Reading of Judges 11:29–40 in Comparison with Rabbinic Exegesis

Klaas Spronk

The story of Jephthah who sacrificed his daughter because of a vow he made to YHWH is much discussed, but not in the Bible. Apart from the chapters devoted to Jephthah in Judges 10–12 he is only mentioned in 1 Samuel 12:11 and Hebrews 11:32. These texts remain silent about his nameless daughter and there is no evaluation, be it positive or negative, of the sacrifice. In the Jewish commentaries, however, beginning with Josephus, the many questions this story evokes are taken up. Especially the fact that a child was sacrificed to YHWH is problematic: although it is in direct conflict with the Torah, Jephthah's action is not explicitly condemned in the text. This is a contradiction that has to be explained.

In my contribution to this volume honouring my esteemed colleague Dineke Houtman I will present a new intertextual approach to the story, which is inspired by traditional Jewish exegesis. By reading the story of Jephthah and his daughter in relation to a number of other Biblical stories it can be demonstrated that already within its canonical context in Tanakh it is an example of a bad leader, prefiguring king Saul in a number of ways.

1 Intertextuality and the Rabbinic Exegesis of Judges 11

In her book *Subversive Sequels in the Bible*, Judy Klitsner gives some interesting examples of 'how Biblical stories mine and undermine each other'.¹ She is one

1 Judy Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible: How Biblical Stories Mine and Undermine Each Other* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2009). This book was brought to my attention during a course I gave together with Dineke Houtman on the exegesis of the story of Joseph. One of the participants, Bart Trouwborst, had published a study inspired by the work of Klitsner on the parallels between the stories of Joseph and Solomon: G.A. Trouwborst, *Salomo: koning in het licht van de Tora: intertekstualiteit in 1 Koningen 1–11* (Nieuwleusen: Sifron, 2014).

of many modern, primarily Jewish, scholars who have published studies about parallels and analogies within the Bible.² According to Klitsner and others, this intertextual approach has much in common with ancient rabbinic exegesis.³ She relates it to some of the traditional exegetical rules, like number 17 of the 32 hermeneutical principles attributed to R. Eliezer ben R. Yossi Ha-Gelili: 'A text is not fully expounded in its place, but it is fully expounded in another.'⁴ Much quoted within this framework is a passage from Song of Songs Rabbah, 1:10:

Once as Ben 'Azzai sat and expounded, the fire played round him. They went and told R. Akiba, saying, 'Sir, as Ben 'Azzai sits and expounds, the fire is flashing round him.' He [R. Akiba] went to him and said to him: 'I hear that as you were expounding the fire flashed round you (...) Were you perhaps treating of the secrets of the Chariot?' 'No,' he replied, 'I was only linking up the words of the Torah with one another and then with the words of the prophets, and the prophets with the Writings, and the words rejoiced as when they were delivered from Sinai, and they were sweet as at their original utterance'.⁵

2 Cf. amongst others P.D. Miscall, 'The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies,' *JSOT* 6 (1978): 28–40; M. Garsiel, *The First Book of Samuel: A Literary Study of Comparative Structures, Analogies and Parallels* (Ramat Gan: Revivim, 1985); E.L. Greenstein, 'The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus,' *AJS Rev* 15 (1990): 151–178; Y. Zakovitch, 'Through the Looking Glass: Reflections/Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible,' *BibInt* 1 (1993): 139–152; P.R. Noble, 'Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusion,' *VT* 52 (2002): 219–252; J. Berman, *Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible: Battle Stories and their Equivalent Non-Battle Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); J. Grossman, "'Dynamic Analogies" in the Book of Esther,' *VT* 59 (2009): 394–414; Amos Frisch, 'Comparison with David as a Means of Evaluating Character in the Book of Kings,' *JHS* 11 (2011): article 7; Hava Shalom-Guy, 'Three-Way Intertextuality: Some Reflections of Abimelech's Death at Thebez in Biblical Narrative,' *JSOT* 34.4 (2010): 419–432; Hava Shalom-Guy, 'The Call Narratives of Gideon and Moses: Literary Convention or More?,' *JHS* 11 (2011): article 11.

3 Cf. Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg, *Sustaining Fictions: Intertextuality, Midrash, Translation, and the Literary Afterlife of the Bible* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008); and Michail Kitsos, 'Examples of Intertextuality in Ecclesiastes Rabbah: An Examination of the Book of Psalms in Ecclesiastes Rabbah with Methodological Nuances,' in *Reading Ecclesiastes Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 268–282 (281).

4 Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels*, xviii, n. 7.

5 Quoted by Gerald Bruns, 'Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation,' in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 625–646 (627); cf. also Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels*, xviii.

In the history of interpretation, the story of Jephthah's daughter has often been linked to the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22) and it seems likely to assume that this is also the case in rabbinic tradition.⁶ A closer look at the sources, however, shows that in midrashic texts about Judges 11, a parallel between Jephthah and Abraham is not often noted.⁷ In this regard there is a remarkable contrast with Christian commentators.⁸ This holds especially true for the later rabbinic texts. In the earliest commentaries, of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo, we do find references to Genesis 22. In his retelling of the story, Josephus may have deliberately used the same word indicating that, like Isaac, Jephthah's daughter was the father's only child.⁹ Much more explicit is the parallel in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 40.2. In this retelling the daughter, who is named Seila, accepts her fate and even rebukes her father for his sadness:

who is it that can be sorrowful in their death when they see the people delivered? Do you not remember that which was in the days of our fathers, when the father set his son for a burnt offering and he gainsaid him not, but consented unto him rejoicing? And he that was offered was ready, and he that offered was glad.¹⁰

In later Jewish commentaries on the story of Jephthah¹¹ the emphasis is less on his daughter and more on the vow. This leads to a comparison with other

6 Cf. Barbara Miller, *Tell it on the Mountain: The Daughter of Jephthah in Judges 11* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), xxii. In this study, which combines feminist critique and Jewish midrash, she presents an intertextual reading of the Abraham and Jephthah narratives.

7 Cf. Elisheva Baumgarten, "'Remember that Glorious Girl': Jephthah's Daughter in Medieval Jewish Culture," *JQR* 97 (2007): 180–209 (183).

8 See the surveys by Margaret Alexiou and Peter Dronke, "The Lament of Jephthah's Daughter: Themes, Traditions, Originality," *Studi Medievali* 12 (1971): 819–869; and John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford: University Press, 2001), 100–178.

9 *Antiquitates* 1.222 and 5.264; cf. Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 185.

10 Cf. Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 166.

11 Overviews of the history of ancient Jewish interpretation are given by Shulamit Valler, "The Story of Jephthah's Daughter in the Midrash," in *Judges. A Feminist Companion to the Bible* (second series), ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 48–

texts. In Genesis Rabbah 60.3 there is a discussion about the proper way of requesting something of God. It mentions four examples of asking God a favour in an improper way, that is, taking the risk that the wish is fulfilled in an inappropriate way: (1) Eliezer suggesting that the woman who offers him to drink and who waters his camels will be the wife of Isaac (Gen 24:13–14); (2) Caleb promising his daughter to the one who captures Kiriath Sefer (Josh. 15:16); (3) Saul promising his daughter to the one who slays Goliath (1Sam. 17:25); (4) Jephthah promising to sacrifice the one who comes out to greet him. A similar, slightly smaller list can be found in Talmud Ta'anit 4a:

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Three [men] made haphazard requests, two of them were fortunate in the reply they received and one was not, namely, Eliezer, the servant of Abraham; Saul, the son of Kish; and Jephtha the Gileadite.

Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, as it is written, So let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher etc.' She might have been lame or blind, but he was fortunate in the answer given to him in that Rebecca chanced to meet him.

Saul, the son of Kish, as it is written, And it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter. [He] might have been a slave or a bastard. He too was fortunate in that it chanced to be David.

Jephtha, the Gileadite, as it is written, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth out of the doors of my house etc. It might have been an unclean thing. He, however, was fortunate in that it so happened that his own daughter came to meet him.

This is what the prophet had in mind when he said to Israel, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?' And it is further written, Which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it to my mind. (Jer. 19:5) 'Which I commanded not': This refers to the sacrifice of the son of Mesha, the king of Moab, as it is said, Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead and offered him for a burnt-

66; Phyllis Silverman Kramer, 'Jephthah's Daughter: A Thematic Approach to the Narrative as Seen in Selected Rabbinic Exegesis and in Artwork,' in *Judges*, ed. Brenner, 67–92; David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 134–137; Miller, *Tell it on the Mountain*, 62–76; Baumgarten, 'Remember that Glorious Girl'; Shulamit Valler, 'Strong Women Confront Helpless Men: Deborah and Jephthah's Daughter in the Midrash,' in *Words, Ideas, Worlds: Biblical Essays in Honour of Yairah Amit*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2012), 236–254.

offering. (2 Kings 3:27) 'Nor spoke it'; This refers to the daughter of Jephthah. 'Neither came it to my mind': This refers to the sacrifice of Isaac, the son of Abraham.¹²

In the later Midrash Tanhuma (Be-Hukkotai 5) we find a discussion about human sacrifice, indicating that the daughter was more familiar with scripture than her father and also that she was less positive about what was going to happen than suggested in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*:

As Jephthah was making ready to offer up his daughter, she wept before him and pleaded, 'My father, my father, I came out to meet you full of joy, and now you are about to slaughter me. Is it written in the Torah that Israel should offer the lives of their children upon the altar?'

Jephthah replied, 'My daughter, I made a vow.'

She answered, 'But Jacob our father vowed, "Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee" [Gen 28:22]. Then, when the Holy One gave him twelve sons, did he perchance offer one of them on an altar to the Holy One? Moreover, Hannah also vowed, "I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life" [1 Sam 1:11]—did she perchance offer her son [on an altar] to the Lord?'

Though she said all these things to him, Jephthah did not heed her, but he went up to the altar and slaughtered her before the Holy One. At that moment, the Holy Spirit cried out in anguish: 'Have I ever asked you to offer living souls to Me? I commanded not, nor spoke it, neither came it into My mind' [Jer. 19:5].¹³

It can be concluded that in rabbinic exegesis the first association when reading the story of Jephthah's daughter was not with Genesis 22. This has to do with the questions that come up when reading Judges 11. Apparently, for the rabbis these were theological in the first place: what is a proper vow? And: does God command human sacrifice? In what follows I will suggest connecting another biblical text to the story of Jephthah's daughter. It is based on another question that comes up when reading this text: who is a good leader in Israel?

¹² Translation: *The Soncino Babylonian Talmud*.

¹³ Translation: *The Book of Legends. Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, ed. Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. Translated by William G. Braude (New York: Schocken Books, 1992), 109.

2 The Story of Jephthah within the Book of Judges

When it comes to intertextuality, the book of Judges is one of the most interesting in Tanakh. It is known for its fixed schemes and returning themes. This constantly invites the reader to compare the different stories with each other, to get a clear picture of what is specific in each story and how it is related to the other stories within its present context.

As with most of the stories of the individual judges, the story of Jephthah is introduced by the observation that Israel sinned against YHWH, who then becomes angry and delivers Israel into the hands of an enemy:

Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of YHWH, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook YHWH and did not serve Him. So the anger of YHWH was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

Judg 10:6–7

The first line, with the use of the verb *הוסיף*, ‘to continue’, was also found in the introduction to the stories of Ehud (3:12) and of Deborah and Barak (4:1) and will return in the introduction to the story of Samson (13:1). Compared to these texts, the introduction in chapter 10 is more elaborate. No fewer than seven groups of idols are mentioned, whereas in the other introductions usually only Baals and Asherahs/Ashtorets are mentioned or no specific names are given. Next to the Baals and the Ashtoreths there is now also reference to the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and of the Philistines, that is the gods of the peoples mentioned in the book of Judges as the enemies of Israel. We do not find such specific references to national deities in the rest of the book. Only in 6:10 there is mention of the ‘gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live’. So here, in the introduction to the story of Jephthah, Israel’s broad apostasy is emphasized.

According to 10:7, YHWH then ‘sells’ Israel into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites. This not only refers to the following story of Jephthah, but also to that of Samson. Jephthah fought only the Ammonites. It was left to Samson to take up liberation from the Philistines. It is interesting to note that it is said of both Jephthah and Samson that they made a beginning to this struggle (using the verb *הִלֵּךְ* *hif*, ‘to begin’, in 10:18 and 13:5). This points forward to the fact that for the final victory over these peoples Israel would have to wait for king David.

The distress caused by the Ammonites is considerable:

From that year they harassed and oppressed the Israelites for eighteen years, all the Israelites who were on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, in Gilead. Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

Judg 10:8–9

The first line contains a wordplay: **וַיִּרְעֲצוּ וַיִּרְעָצוּ**, ‘they harassed and oppressed’, which is taken up at the end of the next verse: **וַתִּצָּר**, ‘(Israel) was (severely) distressed’. This is more than usual in the description of foreign oppression. In respect of duration it was not extraordinary: the oppression lasted just as long as in the period of the Moabite oppression before Ehud, 18 years (3:14), and not as long as the period of the Canaanite oppression before Deborah, 20 years (4:3). However, in terms of geography it was more extensive, as it was not restricted to the area of one tribe, but included the territory of Gilead at the east side of the river Jordan and that of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim on the west side. Never before in the period of the judges had the occupation been so extensive.

After the customary crying out by Israel to YHWH, one would expect the usual continuation within the book of Judges: the customary positive reaction of God sending a deliverer, just as He had done before with Othiel (3:9) and Ehud (3:15). As in the story of Gideon, the introduction to the story of Jephthah also has the crying out to YHWH followed by an intermezzo. In Gideon's story (6:7–10) it was stated that after Israel cried to YHWH he sent them a prophet reminding the Israelites of what YHWH had done for his people and that He also had asked them not to worship other gods. The prophet repeats what was said by the messenger of YHWH at the beginning of the book (2:1–4). Compared to these related intermezzos in chapters 2 and 6, it is striking that in the introduction to Jephthah's story, no intermediary, either a prophet or a heavenly messenger, is mentioned. It is YHWH himself who reacts with an objection:

YHWH said to the Israelites: ‘Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from the Philistines? Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites oppressed you; and you cried out to me, and I delivered you from their hand. Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.’

10:11–14

Then the Israelites repent, admit their sins and put away the other gods. YHWH's reaction is remarkable: 'His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel' (10:16). The same expression (וַתִּקְצֹר נַפְשׁוֹ) is used in 16:16 describing Samson's reaction to Delilah pressing him daily, urging him to reveal the secret of his strength. So after the extreme punishment by God of the people we also hear of an extreme reaction by God giving in to Israel's more than usual acts of repentance.

The transition to Jephthah as the liberator sent by YHWH also differs from the way the previous judges were introduced. He is not 'raised up' by YHWH like Otniel or Ehud, or called by YHWH like Barak via Deborah or like Gideon via the messenger of YHWH. The closest parallel within the book of Judges is with the beginning of the book. After the death of Joshua, the Israelites asked YHWH: 'who shall go up first to fight against the Canaanites?' (1:1). According to 10:18 the leaders of Gilead ask: 'Who is the man who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon?' When it comes to the answer, there is a clear difference with the question at the beginning. It is explicitly stated that the leaders are asking 'one another', not YHWH. In fact, YHWH is remarkably silent now, especially when we take into account that he himself addressed the people shortly before, speaking of his works in the past. YHWH is not involved in appointing Jephthah. Only after the negotiations between Jephthah and the leaders is YHWH mentioned again in the story. He does not have an active role here, however. The leaders (who are now referred to as the elders) swear an oath in the name of YHWH and also Jephthah 'speaks his words before YHWH' (11:11).

The fact that he is not explicitly appointed as a liberator of Israel by YHWH is something that Jephthah has in common with the so-called minor judges. The information about Tola (10:1–2), Jair (10:3–5), preceding the story of Jephthah, and of Ibzan (12:8–10), Elon (12:11–12), and Abdon (12:13–15), following it, is built up in the same way: after the previous judge stood up, or judged, the new judge; he was from a certain tribe; sometimes his father is mentioned; he judged Israel for a number of years, died and was buried in a specific place. Next to the fact that also here a reference to YHWH is missing, one notes that precisely the same kind of information is given about Jephthah at the end of his story: 'And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in the cities of Gilead' (12:7). The only extra information given about the minor judges concerns their offspring, which is numerous. Jair had thirty sons, Ibzan had thirty sons and thirty daughters, Abdon had forty sons and thirty grandsons. Of the other judges, information about any offspring is only given about Gideon. Just as with the minor judges, it is mentioned before the report of his death: he had seventy sons who were his own offspring and a son,

whose name he called Abimelech (8:30). The contrast with Jephthah having only one daughter is obvious. It is emphasized within the story of Jephthah himself when it is explicitly remarked that ‘besides her he had neither son nor daughter’ (11:34) and that ‘she had known no man’ (11:39), leaving Jephthah with no offspring at all. One may note here the same tendency as was observed in the introduction to his story: compared to the other stories about the judges things are taken to the extreme.

There is one other element which captures the attention of the reader when comparing the description of the other judges with the information given about Jephthah. This concerns his origin. For most judges only the name of the father is given. Before the story of the birth of Samson no mothers are mentioned. Jephthah is an exception. The first thing we hear about his birth is that he was the son of a prostitute (בֶּן־אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה, 11:1). This is emphasized by the fact that she is even mentioned before his father Gilead. The other exception is the mother of Abimelech, who was Gideon’s concubine (פִּילְגֶשֶׁת, 8:31). This brings us to a next step in relating the story of Jephthah to its present context: the parallels with the preceding stories of Gideon and Abimelech.

3 Jephthah and His Daughter Compared to Gideon and Abimelech

At the end of the stories about Jephthah we hear of his problems with the Ephraimites. They blame him for not having called them up for the fight against the Ammonites (12:1). Precisely the same happened earlier when the Ephraimites appeared to be angry with Gideon, because he had not called them to fight against the Midianites (8:1). The outcome of these arguments is very different. Whereas Gideon solved the problem diplomatically, the quarrel with Jephthah ends in a civil war with the Gileadites killing thousands of the Ephraimites. Gideon clearly did a better job as a leader of Israel as a whole.

There are more indications that the reader is invited to compare Jephthah to Gideon. In 11:1 Jephthah is introduced as ‘a mighty man of valour’ (גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל). It is precisely the same, unexpected expression which is used by the messenger of YHWH when he addresses Gideon in 6:12. They are also both endowed with the spirit of YHWH (6:34; 11:29). They share this privilege with Otniel (3:10) and Samson (13:25), but more than them Gideon and Jephthah interact with YHWH. And here again one can note a remarkable difference. In the stories of Gideon, the initiative comes from YHWH most of the time. He calls up Gideon to liberate his people, encourages him with miracles and dreams, and instructs him in his military operations. In the story of Jephthah it is the other way

around. Jephthah starts the negotiations with YHWH, just as he did with the king of Ammon.

In fact, Jephthah speaks of YHWH relatively often. In both the negotiations with the elders of Israel and with the king of Ammon, Jephthah pays due respect to YHWH. When Jephthah is made 'head and commander' over Israel, he also 'speaks his words before YHWH' (11:11). When he tries to persuade the king of Ammon to give up his claims to the contested region, he calls upon YHWH as judge (11:27). Jephthah shares with the king of Ammon (and with the reader) his clear theological insight: the real judge is YHWH. Jephthah gives the honour of the victory over the Ammonites to YHWH (12:3). YHWH, however, does not speak to Jephthah as he did to Gideon.

Jephthah can also be compared to Abimelech in a number of ways. We already came across the parallel with regard to their birth. Their mothers are mentioned, but only to indicate that they were of lower rank: a concubine and a prostitute. Both Abimelech and Jephthah had to deal with the fact that their father also had normal offspring, which caused problems especially—as is usual in these situations—with regard to the inheritance. Abimelech solved the problem radically, emphasizing the difference with his brothers and then killing them (9:1–5). Initially, Jephthah was less successful than Abimelech and was forced to migrate to another country (11:2–3), but in the end he also made it to the top, becoming the leader of Israel. Before that, he had proven his qualities as the leader of a group of 'worthless' men, apparently men without scruples who knew how to fight. The words used here, אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים, are also used to indicate the men hired by Abimelech to support his coup (9:4). In the end, like Abimelech, Jephthah failed as a leader of Israel; they both became involved in a civil war.

Within this network of relations between the stories of Jephthah and the story of Gideon and Abimelech the story of Jephthah's daughter plays a role in pointing out the difference in the way Gideon and Jephthah seek security from YHWH. It is remarkable that with both of them it is not enough that they received the spirit of YHWH. In 6:34 it is said that the spirit of YHWH came upon Gideon. He then gathered a large army, but nevertheless asked God to perform miracles with a fleece of wool, to assure him that he would be with Gideon in battle (6:36–40). The same situation occurs in 11:29, which relates that the spirit of YHWH came upon Jephthah. Then follows a remark about the journey he makes. The text is not very clear here about the route he takes: 'he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from Mizpah of Gilead he advanced toward the people of Ammon' (11:29). Mizpah was mentioned in 10:17 as the place where the Israelites had gathered facing the army of the Ammonites. So we may assume that on his trip Jephthah

gathered extra men for this army. As with Gideon, he now wishes to have confirmation about the support by YHWH. Compared with Gideon he not only asks something of YHWH, but also offers him something in return.

It can be concluded that, coming from the stories about Gideon and Abimelek, the reader of the story of Jephthah will notice the differences in leadership.¹⁴ The best leader is the one who communicates best with YHWH. Within this framework there is a parallel between Gideon and Jephthah trying to obtain a guarantee from YHWH before going into battle. Whereas Gideon gets his confirmation from YHWH himself, even more than once, Jephthah's attempt is characterized by miscommunication.

4 Jephthah and His Daughter Compared to Saul and His Son

Within its canonical context the story of Jephthah can be related to both the previous and the following stories, especially to the stories about Saul. The fact that Abimelech does not receive the spirit of YHWH, like Gideon and Jephthah, but instead receives an evil spirit from God (9:23), is reminiscent of what happened to Saul (1Sam 16:14). The difference is that Saul had first received the spirit of YHWH and that this had abandoned him leaving room for the evil spirit. Therefore, in the stories about Saul we see parallels to both the good leadership of Gideon based on the good relationship with YHWH and to the bad leadership of Abimelech, who ruled without ever asking YHWH for advice or help. Saul shares with Gideon the fact that he is called to his office by YHWH and he shares with Abimelech the bitter ending of his office, being killed without honour. Abimelech is killed by a woman, Saul by himself avoiding the dishonouring death by an uncircumcised Philistine. They both try to prevent this shameful death by asking the armour-bearer to deliver the final blow (Judg 9:54; 1Sam 31:4).

Taking a further look at the parallels with the story of Saul, it is interesting to note that Jephthah's rise to the leadership of Israel started with the question 'who will make a beginning with the fight against the Ammonites?' (10:18), indicating that the definitive victory would be gained later by Saul and David (1Sam 11; 14:47 for Saul; 2Sam 10 for David). Besides, 1 Samuel 18:7 tells us how Saul and David return from their victory over the Philistines and are greeted by the women coming out of the city to meet them with dances and timbrels.

14 Cf. Elie Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech, and Jephthah Narratives* (Judg 6–12) (VTS 106, Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Precisely the same situation is pictured in Judges 11:34, on Jephthah's return from battle. The only other place in the Tanakh where we find the combination of these words for dances and timbrels is in Exodus 15:20, describing Miriam and the women of Israel rejoicing about the victory over the Egyptians.

Within the stories of Saul we also come across a very interesting parallel to the story of Jephthah and his daughter. It is the narrative of Saul who is ready to kill his son Jonathan, who had broken an oath imposed by his father on his army to secure victory over the Philistines (1Sam 14).¹⁵ In contrast with the story of the binding of Isaac, the stories of Jephthah and Saul have in common that here the initiative does not come from God, but from the fathers themselves. The life threatening situation is caused by the fathers' pious actions. Whereas Jephthah had made a vow, Saul had sworn an oath: 'Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies' (1Sam 14:24). It is in the same situation before the battle. Jonathan is said to be unaware of this curse. Nevertheless, he is prepared to bear the consequences after he had unknowingly violated the command by eating honey. Just like Jephthah's daughter, he explicitly states that he is prepared to die (1Sam 14:34). Unlike Jephthah there is no hesitation whatsoever with Saul that his son must be killed (v. 35). Only because the people protest does Jonathan survive his father's resoluteness.

There is one other interesting parallel between these stories. When Jonathan hears for the first time about his father's damning oath, he reacts disapprovingly: *עָבַר אָבִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ*, 'My father has troubled the land' (1Sam. 14:29). The

15 Cf. Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12* (The Anchor Yale Bible 6D; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 445. Walter Groß, *Richter* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar; Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 597, is of a different opinion: 'Auch wenn literarische Bezüge nicht nachzuweisen sind, muß kanonisch die Gelübdeerzählung als Gegengeschichte zu Gen 22 gelesen werden, insofern in diesen beiden Erzählungen sowohl der menschliche Protagonist als auch JHWH genau gegensätzlich handeln (...). Dagegen ist 1Sam 14,24–46 nicht als interpretationsrelevante Parallele einschlägig, da dort das Heer sich gegenüber Saul für den dem Fluch seines Vaters verfallenen Jonatan einsetzt und diesen auslöst, während Heer oder Volk oder Älteste in der Gelübdeerzählung Ri 11 keine Rolle spielen.' On the other hand Groß also remarks in his comments on v. 35: 'Eine kanonischer Leser wird vor allem einem Bezug zu 1Sam 14,24–26 heraushören, der zweiten Erzählung von einem Vater (Saul), der durch Schwur/Gelübde sein Kind (Jonatan) in Todegefahr bringt. Dort klagt mit demselben Verb *עָבַר* der Sohn seinen Vater an 14,29: "Geschädigt hat mein Vater das Land", hier dagegen der Vater seine unschuldige Tochter.' (p. 604). Cf. also his remark 'Die Tochter reagiert hier wie Jonatan in 1Sam 14,43: "Hier bin ich, ich bin bereit zu sterben." Beide Kinder nehmen mit Selbstverständlichkeit die tödlichen Konsequenzen väterlichen Handels auf sich.' (p. 605).

fact that eating the honey had made him feel so well again had shown that his father's order was foolish. Jonathan uses the Hebrew word עָכַר, 'to trouble'. The same word is used by Jephthah when, on his return, he is confronted by his daughter: הַכָּרַע הַכָּרַעַתִּי, 'You really trouble me' (Judg 11:35). Although Jonathan is obedient to his father, he also criticized him, even if not to his face.

The comparison with the story of Jephthah and his daughter evokes some questions, which cannot be answered from the given text. Did she know about her father's vow or was she unaware of it, like Jonathan? We know of her reaction face to face with her father. What would she have said about her father's vow in his absence, for instance, in the two months spent with her friends before returning to him again? And where were the people in the story of Jephthah? Why was there no one to stop him troubling his people with this foolish action?

5 Conclusions

It can be concluded that when looking at the story of Jephthah within its present context, the reader is invited through the repetition of specific words, phrases and themes to compare this story with the stories of Gideon and Abimelech. It then becomes clear that with regard to leadership, Gideon did a better job than Jephthah, who has more in common with Abimelech. The quality of their leadership depends on the relation to YHWH. In Gideon's case this is very close, with Jephthah there is more distance, with Abimelech there is no relationship with YHWH at all.

In the book of Judges there is much that points ahead towards the future kings Saul and David. Jephthah's vow, which costs him his daughter, has a parallel in Saul's oath, which almost costs Jonathan his life. The most striking feature here is that whereas Jonathan rightly blames his father for his seemingly devout but in reality inappropriate action, this element is missing in the story of Jephthah's daughter. On the contrary, the words used by Jonathan against his father are spoken by Jephthah to his daughter. One could say that within the present canonical context, Jonathan's words can be seen as a correction to Jephthah unjustifiably blaming the victim.

This is only one of many connections between the book of Judges and the stories in the books of Samuel and Kings. It indicates that the book of Judges was written with the stories of the later kings in mind. Within this framework the story of Jephthah and his daughter can be read as a call for a better leader: one who does not put the life of his child at stake on dubious grounds. One could even read it as the call for the people to correct a foolish leader.