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## Reflections on Associative Word Links in Judges\*

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### Abstract

Attempts to read Judges in a unified fashion have shed much light on this book. Yet, such readings often are not fully convincing because they gloss over details that do not easily fit into the literary, theological, or ideological perspective being advanced. This essay moves in a new direction by exploring a thick web of verbal resonances that brings various distinct components within Judges into a complex literary and theological conversation. Even as this webbing draws various parts of the book into association with each other, it at the same time highlights the distinct elements of each story. While many narratives in Judges are indeed interconnected, it is less clear that Judges contains a linear and progressive narrative with an over-arching message.

**Keywords:** Judges, inter-textual allusion, verbal wordplay, narrative theology, literary approaches to the Bible.

\* An earlier version of this study was read at the Old Testament seminar at Durham University, where Walter Moberly and his colleagues and students gave me much helpful feedback, as did my former student, Anne W. Stewart.

A good deal of recent scholarship on Judges has focused on the question of whether Judges, even if containing a conglomeration of diverse materials, should in fact be read as a unified literary composition or is better understood as a patch-work quilt whose components at best only loosely cohere together.<sup>1</sup> Most of the proposals by scholars who wish to read the book in a holistic fashion argue for some form of one or both of the following two broad types of interpretive schemas: (1) the book is primarily directed toward bolstering support for the Davidic monarchy by positively highlighting the tribe of Judah from which King David hailed, and/or by defaming Saul by subtly associating him with various negative images and incidents, as well as by projecting negative images of Northern tribes like Ephraim as well as Northern cult sites like Dan and possibly Bethel obliquely;<sup>2</sup> (2) the book describes a progressive and systematic decline of Israel and each of its judges. In this second model, Judges begins with an ideal judge, Othniel, and each later judge and the larger Israelite community he rules over is worse than his predecessor and the community of the previous era was, finally resulting in the religious and civil anarchy and strife that one finds in Judges 17–21.<sup>3</sup>

There are however a number of difficulties in reading Judges as a unified composition with an over-arching and controlling theme, let alone as a book with a tight and progressive unity. The most serious problem is that such claims of unity are not able to withstand close scrutiny. For example, if the point of the book is to support the Davidic monarchy, then why, as Martin Buber observed long ago, does the end of Judges 8 and all of Judges 9 contain material that openly mocks all human monarchic

1. To see a sharp contrast one can compare Barry G. Webb's *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading* (JSOTSup, 45; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), to Greger Andersson's *The Book and Its Narratives: A Critical Examination of some Synchronic Studies of the Book of Judges* (Örebro: Örebro University, 2001).

2. Scholars who advocate this position include Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (BibInt, 38; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Robert O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (VTSup, 63; Leiden Brill, 1996); and Marvin Sweeney, 'Davidic Polemic in the Book of Judges', *VT* 47 (1997), pp. 517-29. For fuller bibliography and a comprehensive critique of this line of scholarship, see Gregory T.K. Wong, 'Is There a Direct Pro-Judah Polemic in Judges?', *SJOT* 19 (2005), pp. 84-110.

3. A good example of this type of reading can be found in Dennis Olson, 'Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections on the Book of Judges', in *NIB*, II (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), pp. 723-888, or with a more subtle strategy in Gregory T.K. Wong, *Compositional Strategy of the Book of Judges: An Inductive, Rhetorical Study* (VTSup, 111; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

claims?<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, when one examines the portrayal of Judah within Judges, one encounters a rather mixed portrait. In ch. 1 and in the description of Othniel's activity described in Judg. 3.7-11, one finds Judah and a judge associated with this tribe cast in a generally positive light (although 1.19 may indicate a blemish in Judah's record).

Yet Judg. 15.9-13 portrays members of the tribe of Judah as timid and somewhat cowardly when they bind Samson and hand him over to the Philistines. Similarly, it seems dubious to argue that Judg. 20.18 reflects a pro-Judahite polemic inasmuch as it not only narrates that Judah led the battle against the tribe of Benjamin but does so in language strikingly similar to that found at the beginning of Judges 1. According to this line of argumentation, since such language seems to be positive in Judges 1, this must be the case here as well. However, a closer look at the larger context of Judges 20 reveals that the battle charge that Judah leads in 20.18 results in the utter defeat of Israel at the hands of the Benjaminites, leaving one with the distinct impression that Judah's behavior is being critiqued here. This contention is further bolstered by the observation that while Judg. 1.2 includes a phrase indicating that God has given the land of the Canaanites into Judah's hand, 20.18 includes no hint that Judah would be successful in the coming battle. It seems quite possible that the use of similar wording in Judges 1 and 20.18 is not to indicate that Judah is praised or given preeminence in both texts, but rather to show how far even the great tribe of Judah had fallen by the end of Judges, where Judah takes a leading role in the chaotic and morally dubious events narrated in Judges 19–21. Thus the employment of similar phrasing in this instance supports at least an element commonly highlighted in arguments claiming there is a progressive downward movement within Judges. This is the idea that certain early narratives and later narratives share common components in order to show a regression from a positive start early in the period of Judges to a very negative view of Israel at the end of this era.

What of the other half of the evidence for a Pro-Judah or Pro-David slant to Judges, that is, the contention by some scholars that Judges contains an anti-Saul (or anti-Benjamin), anti-Ephraimite, and anti-Northern Kingdom polemic?<sup>5</sup> Such arguments point most especially to the materials

4. Martin Buber's *Kingship of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 58-84, notes on 164-69. Eugene Maly's 'The Jotham Fable—Anti-Monarchical', *CBQ* 22 (1960), pp. 299-305, which argues that the Jotham fable is in fact a critique of those worthy individuals who fail to take the role of king, seems quite forced and is unconvincing.

5. The scholar who has advanced these types of views most strongly is Yairah Amit. See, for example, her 'Hidden Polemic in the Conquest of Dan: Judges XVII–XVIII', *VT*

in chs. 17–21, claiming that the various tribal groups and certain locations mentioned in these texts function as a type of negative propaganda that seeks to delegitimize Northern and Saulide claims. Thus Judges 17–18 not only portrays the tribal behavior of the Danites negatively, but it links the future site of one or possibly both of the two main Northern sanctuaries to idolatrous practices run by irregular Levites. Judges 19–21 has the Benjaminites as the arch-villains and the city of Gibeah, a location later linked to Saul, as the place where the rape of the Levite's concubine occurs. Finally one can argue that the Ephraimites in Judges 8 and particularly in Judges 12 are pictured as prone to civil strife.

Now it must be granted that arguments contending that various texts in Judges contain a hidden polemic against certain political or religious factions have some merit to them. The question is: How significant are such hidden polemics and are they really capable of explaining the current shape of Judges? It seems to me that where such polemics do exist they are a sub-theme at best, and the fact that they are neither overt nor ubiquitous indicates that they may be of limited utility in the quest to understand the current shape of Judges. This is so for several reasons. To begin, readings that presume a hidden polemic would need to prove that the current shape of Judges existed at a time when such a polemic would be useful, and it is somewhat difficult to believe that the book existed in its current shape already early in the monarchic period, or that it underwent no real changes over hundreds of years.

A recent essay by Amit attributes the bulk of the material in Judges to a pre-deuteronomic group active in late eighth-century Judah who hoped to explain how Judah might avoid the fate of the fallen Northern Kingdom.<sup>6</sup> But this argument is not convincing for a number of reasons, including: (1) If the editor was primarily interested in condemning only the North, why does he time and again place the stories in a pan-Israelite perspective by using the term 'the sons (or children) of Israel' (3.7, 9, 12, 14, 31; 4.1, 5, 24; 6.1, 7 etc.)? (2) Why does this editor include so many positive heroic aspects of various Judges who come after Othniel, even of less worthy ones? Judges may present certain figures as a mixed bag, but aside from Abimelech, the other Judges all have some redeeming qualities. In

60 (1990), pp. 4-20, or Marc Brettler, 'The Book of Judges: Literature as Politics', *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 395-418, especially, 408-15.

6. Yairah Amit, 'The Book of Judges: Dating and Meaning', in Gershon Galil *et al.* (eds.), *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustanay Oded* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 297-322.

short, Judges communicates a host of ideas, and this complex brew of ideas speaks strongly against the notion that the primary thrust of the whole book is a critique of the sinful Northern Kingdom or an attempt to bolster the Davidic dynasty by denigrating Saul.

Even in those chapters where the evidence is strongest for a hidden polemic, as in chs. 17–18, there are other ways of interpreting the unusual content of these chapters. It is quite possible that Judges 17–18 should be read as an appendix to Judges 13–16 because both deal with warrior stories related to the tribe of Dan. In fact, there are a number of associative word links between Judges 13–16 and Judges 17–21 that will be discussed later in this essay. Most to the point, the larger thrust of chs. 17–21 appears to be a critique directed at all Israel for the social chaos that closed the period of Judges, rather than simply an explanation for the fall of the North or a justification of the Southern monarchy. It should be noted that phrase ‘In those days there was no king in Israel; each person did what was right in his own eyes’ (Judg. 17.6; 21.25, occurring in shorter form in 18.1 and 19.1), most commonly understood as a statement endorsing the legitimacy of the Southern monarchy, need not be read as a straightforward ideological piece of propaganda. It may be pointing out that having a strong central government is useful in eliminating certain types of abuses that thrive in such a decentralized society. Yet an author who penned such a text may be fully aware that having a monarch could lead to other abuses of power by the royal ruler. While the most probable explanation of this repeated phrase is that it explains the drive toward a monarchy, some scholars, including Wong,<sup>7</sup> argue that this statement is not endorsing a human monarchy at all, but refers to the fact that God is no longer respected as a king in Israel. But even assuming the most likely interpretation, that this phrase explains why kingship arose in Israel, does not require one to read it as a naive endorsement of the monarchy.

Claims that a theological rather than an ideological viewpoint unites all of Judges and accounts for the current shape of the book run into similar difficulties. It is true that the earlier judges are often portrayed more positively than the judges in the later chapters of the book, but one can find nagging exceptions to this general trajectory. When one looks at the length of years various judges exercised power, one notes that Judg. 12.7 reports that Jephthah judged Israel a mere six years while the narrator twice reports that Samson, a narrative occupying a later position in

7. Wong, *Compositional Strategy of the Book of Judges*, pp. 191-223.

Judges, judged Israel for 20 years (Judg. 15.20; 16.31).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Samson never engages in killing his own people as, say, Jephthah does in Judges 12. There are other examples that speak against a linear regressive reading of Judges. Ehud receives no direct divine communications and is never said to be under the influence of the spirit of God. Yet Gideon, who appears after Ehud, has several interactions with God and God's messenger; and we are told that the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah (Judg. 11.29). Those who find an over-arching pattern of decline are able to do so only by ignoring a host of details that suggest a more complex portrait of each unit within Judges as well as of the way in which these individual components relate to each other and fit into the larger book.

I wonder whether certain modern assumptions about what we expect a book to look like, especially a book filled with imaginative tales which we might tend to think of as a novella, are being retrojected into this ancient text in a manner that is impeding our ability to read Judges in its historical context. What I mean is that if this collection is called the book of Judges, then we expect it to be unified like other books we read. And we search for that unity by trying to see how all parts of the book might reinforce a central theme and do so in a progressive fashion. But did the ancients think of books in such a way? While it is true that the placement of Judges between Joshua and Samuel creates a discrete unit called Judges, it is important not to overstate the significance of this fact. Some of the canonical divisions arose out of the fact that scrolls become unwieldy when they are too large. Furthermore, most scholars recognize that the book contains various blocks that often sit uneasily next to each other. There seem to be at least two introductions, the first of which shares more affinities with the material in Joshua than with the bulk of Judges, and the storyline at the end of the book in many ways continues through the first several chapters of 1 Samuel.<sup>9</sup>

While I do not find interpretations that attempt to read Judges in a fully unified and progressive fashion totally convincing, I do recognize the usefulness of such readings. Certainly a good deal of the book is a meditation on Israelite leadership in the pre-monarchic era. There are indeed ways in which the end of the book shows a marked decline over the beginning of the book. Furthermore, the text contains certain structural features such as the double introduction and double conclusion. I am not

8. If one counts the minor judges, 12.9 and 12.14 mention that Ibzan and Abdon judge Israel for seven and eight years, respectively, further breaking any devolutionary pattern.

9. Serge Frolov, 'Rethinking Judges', *CBQ* 71 (2009), pp. 24-41.

opposed to trying to puzzle out various ways the book may be read as a unity but think it is important not to overstate the facts in a way that projects a false unity on to the text. Thus I would apply Greg Mobley's medieval cathedral metaphor, which he uses to talk about the loose unity of the many distinct components of Gideon's story, to Judges as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

I am concerned that the focus on a linear and progressive reading or one that attempts to explain the whole book in ideological or political terms misses many other ways that the materials in Judges may be interconnected. For example, a number of scholars have noted various thematic ties, some of which link adjacent narratives but others which link disparate parts of the book. Thus both Gideon and Jephthah, whose two stories are in close proximity, have to respond to the grumbling Ephraimites. Alternatively, one finds more distant thematic connections like those between Sisera and Samson, both men being undone by women in scenes that have strong sexual overtones. Many other examples could be given. What I want to focus on in this essay is a sometimes less noticed type of connective tissue, a thick web of verbal resonances that links various components within Judges. These often reinforce certain thematic connections, although at other times it is more difficult to discern their exact purpose or effect. Some of these verbal cues may help explain the current order of Judges or may be attempts to reinforce that order. Others may reveal a deeper literary-theological sensibility by continually forcing one to recognize the uniqueness of each story, while at the same time drawing a complex web of connections between and across discrete units. While these textual markers draw various stories into each other's orbit, they often leave one with a complex theological puzzle, rather than an over-arching point of view.

Building on the work of such scholars as Yair Zakovitch who have noted various verbal links within Judges, I will discuss a number of these associative connections.<sup>11</sup> Along the way I will sometimes briefly draw out the historical, literary, or theological implications of a certain set of links, implications that will be discussed in a bit more detail in my concluding reflections.

10. Greg Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel* (ABRL; San Francisco: Anchor Doubleday, 2005), p. 114.

11. Yair Zakovitch, 'The Associative Arrangement of the Book of Judges and Its Use for the Recognition of Stages in the Formation of the Book', in Y. Zakovitch and A. Rofé (eds.), *The Isaac Leo Seeligmann Volume* (Jerusalem: Rubenstein, 1983), pp. 161-83 (Hebrew).



The first such linkage was already mentioned above in the discussion concerning the question of a pro-Judahite polemic, where it was pointed out that Judg. 1.1-2 has phrasing that closely resembles language found in Judg. 20.18. Both passages contain almost identically framed queries concerning which Israelite tribe should go first into battle; 1.1 is phrased *בו יעלה לנו אלהכנעני בתחלה להלחם בו* as compared to 20.18 *מי יעלה לנו בתחלה למלחמה*. And both passages have God responding that Judah should lead the way, albeit in slightly different language (1.2 has *יעלה יהודה* as opposed to 20.18's *יהודה בתחלה*). This type of verbal tie-in creates a bookending effect in which a positive portrait of Judah at the opening of Judges is contrasted with a negative portrait of that same tribe near the end of the book. A similar type of bookending, in which an early motif recurs near the close of Judges, may explain why we have all Israel crying at Bochim (a city whose name means 'weepers') in Judg. 2.1-5 (which many believe refers to Bethel) and later in Judg. 20.23, 26 the community of Israel weeps, and here Bethel is explicitly mentioned. This latter case may well be making a theological point through contrasting the two settings in which Israel weeps. In Judges 2, Israel receives news that its failure to drive out the Canaanites and eliminate their cultural temptations will lead to a situation in which Israel will be endangered by the Canaanites and their gods. In ch. 20 the people are weeping before God because they are defeated by one of their own tribal groups, the Benjaminites, whom they are attacking because members of this tribe acted in sexually perverse ways associated with the Canaanites in Gen. 9.20-27 and Genesis 19.<sup>12</sup> Thus Judges 20 may be read as the fulfillment of Judg. 2.1-5 rather than as a simple contrast between a good beginning and a bad ending.

Our next example concerns the word *והצנח*, found only three times in the Bible, twice in Judges and once in Joshua. Judges 1.14 uses this word to describe Achsah's alighting from her donkey, and it is also found in the alternate telling of the Achsah story in Josh. 15.18. This same word recurs in Judg. 4.21, possibly of the tent-peg being driven into the ground or perhaps describing Jael's action of slipping out from under Sisera if one reads the scene more sexually. With the evidence available it is impossible to know if the word existed in both stories before they were placed into the larger book, if it gravitated from one story to the other (and if so in which direction), or if an editor placed it in both stories to link them

12. One scholar who brings out this point nicely is Daniel Block, 'Echo Narrative Technique in Hebrew Literature: A Study in Judges 19', *WTJ* 52 (1990), pp. 325-41.

together. On a literary and theological level, one can argue that this verbal tie calls for one to seek out other affinities between these two episodes. The most obvious is that both stories involve a woman who takes initiative in a man-like fashion to work her will on a male in her presence. Furthermore, the text in both instances appears to view these forward female actors positively.

The Ehud story contains several links to the final episode of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19–21. In particular, there is the fact that the Benjaminites play a major role in both episodes, and that both Ehud and his later Benjaminite brethren in Judges 20 have left-handed abilities. The text describes this left-handed ability with the same unusual term (אָטָר יַד־יְמִינֵהוּ), meaning something like 'impeded on the right hand', used only in Judg. 3.15 and 20.16. While some scholars have argued that this implies that Ehud was handicapped and the text is heightening the miraculous nature of his actions, this is an improbable interpretation. Judges 20.16 speaks of 700 warriors who were 'impeded on the right hand' and could sling a stone with great accuracy with their left hands, almost surely indicating a binding of the right hand in order to strengthen one's left hand so as to be a more effective warrior. This verbal link would be another example in which an early positive portrayal of left-handed Benjaminite warriors is contrasted with a later negative one. While Ehud's left-handed talents hurt Israel's enemies, his later Benjaminite descendants inflict major casualties against other Israelite tribes in Judges 20.

Another verbal echo centers on the way in which the Ehud story utilizes two distinct meanings of the root תִּקַּע, which can mean either 'to thrust' or 'to blow loudly'. This root is used when Ehud thrusts his knife into Eglon's belly in Judg. 3.21, and in a different sense once more when he then blows the ram's horn in 3.27. Each of the two following narratives, those concerning Jael and Gideon, employs only one meaning of this same root. In Judg. 4.21 the text uses this root to describe Jael driving a tent-peg into Sisera's head, while Gideon's attack on the Midianite camp mentions the act of blowing a ram's horn several times (6.34; 7.18 twice; 7.19, 20, 22). The recurring use of the verb תִּקַּע in its two distinct senses helps build some narrative and theological continuity between Judges 3–8.

A number of intertextual links suggest that Ehud's knife attack against Eglon contains sexual imagery and gender reversals. While further evidence to prove this contention will be presented later in this study, one

already has a strong hint of this in the nearly identical language linking Jael's murder of Sisera and Ehud's of Eglon. The use of the same verb, 'to thrust', would have the effect of drawing together these two stories, leading one to read each in the light of the other. The theme of gender reversal is highlighted in 4.20, in which Sisera tells Yael that if someone asks her the question הֲיִשְׁפָּה אִישׁ, 'is there a man here?', she is to respond ׀א, 'there is not'. Clearly the narrator is mocking the loss of Sisera's manhood as he hides in Jael's tent. Sisera's emasculation is further underlined by the specific tool that Yael employs in 4.21, a מַקְבָּה, translated as 'a hammer', but literally 'a hole puncher', or, more crudely, 'a female maker'. This word is from the same root as 'woman', נִקְבָּה, that is, 'the holed one', which BDB in an attempt at modesty renders, '*perforata*'. It should be noted that both the Jael and Ehud episodes involve the killing of a once-dominant male by another character who initially displays characteristics associated with female subservience. Thus both Ehud and Jael offer things to the people they are about to murder, in each case gaining their trust. Now some might protest that attention to gender issues in these ancient texts is anachronistic. However, Cynthia Chapman has mapped out the extensive use of gender tropes in Assyrian warfare texts that depict the Assyrian king as a true male and his bested enemy as a cowardly woman.<sup>13</sup> Similar language is also found in Israelite prophetic texts (e.g. Jer. 50.37; 51.30 and Nah. 3.13) and thus attending to such issues is entirely appropriate when warranted.

Another instance in Judges where rare vocabulary appears to link two adjacent stories is the use of the word סַפַּל, meaning 'bowl'. This word occurs only twice in Biblical Hebrew, once in the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5.25) when Jael offers Sisera a milk-based drink, and then in the very next chapter, in Judg. 6.38, in one of the fleece tests Gideon uses to gain assurance that God will indeed save Israel by Gideon's hand. In addition, both verses mention water, 5.25 as the first word, which turns out not to be the substance given to Sisera, and 6.38 as the final word describing the amount of dew Gideon squeezed from the fleece. It seems worth asking what we might deduce from this fact. One possibility is that the word existed in both stories before they found their way into Judges, and this may explain why they sit near each other. However, if this unusual word gravitated from one of these two stories to the second one, and if one accepts the regnant view that the Song of Deborah is an archaic text as

13. Cynthia Chapman, *The Gendered language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004).

many historical critics maintain, then it would seem probable that the use of the word **ספל** in a context that mentions water was introduced into 6.38 under the influence of 5.25. Of course, one might also inquire whether the repetition of this identical rare word points to some deeper associative connection between these two adjacent stories, or whether it is simply a verbal tie-in that may be aesthetically pleasing, but of little if any significance.<sup>14</sup>

The Deborah story shares another verbal link with the Gideon story, as well as several verbal ties with the Samson narratives found in Judges 13–16. The additional connection to the Gideon episode is the word usually taken to be Deborah’s husband’s name, Lappidoth, which in Hebrew also happens to be the feminine plural for ‘torch’. Some argue that the term in Judg. 4.4 should be rendered as an adjective describing Deborah as ‘fiery’ rather than indicating the name of her husband. After all, we never hear anything further of a man in her life and she seems to operate independently of male authority in much of Judges 4 and 5. Regardless of how one translates this term, it is linked to the use of the word torch elsewhere in Judges. The Hebrew Bible only uses the various forms of the word **לפיד** a total of 14 times (15 times if the form attached to Deborah as either her husband’s name or as an adjective meaning ‘fiery’ is included). Five of those 14 instances of the word ‘torch’ or ‘torches’ occur in Judges (or six of 15 if we count Lappidoth). There are two instances in the Gideon account when he attacks the Midianites (Judg. 7.16, 20) and three others occur when Samson ties foxes together by their tails and sets torches in the fox pairs igniting the Philistine fields of grain (the word occurs twice in Judg. 15.4 and once in 15.5). It should be noted that elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible this word is sometimes associated with God’s theophanic presence (Gen. 15.17; Exod. 20.18) or with Israel triumphing over its enemies (Isa. 62.1; Zech. 12.6). All three episodes in which it occurs in Judges are similarly about Israel’s triumph over various enemies by humans working under divine guidance.

An additional linguistic connection between the Deborah account and the Samson cycle is the unusual wording **והתקע אתהייתר** employed to describe Jael’s killing of Sisera with a tent-peg in Judg. 4.21. One finds almost identical wording, **והתקע ביהר**, in Judg. 16.14, which describes

14. An example of another verbal echo in closely adjacent stories that may serve a purely aesthetic function is the word **הבויר** (with a *tav*), which occurs three times in Judg. 4 (vv. 6, 12, 14) and then recurs in the adjacent Gideon story in 8.18. There is also a homonym of this word, spelled with a *tet*, in the following Abimelech story in 9.37.

Delilah's third unsuccessful attempt to extract the secret of Samson's strength from him. Interestingly enough, in both instances this nail-like device is wielded against the male victim's head. One might see this as simply another instance in which an early positive portrayal in Judges is contrasted with a later negative incident. Judges 4 narrates how the non-Israelite Jael helps defeat an Israelite enemy, while Delilah, a woman whose exact lineage is unclear, helps deliver Samson the Israelite warrior and judge into the hands of the enemy Philistines.

However, above and beyond this verbal linkage is the larger motif of a powerful male being seduced and done-in by the sexual wiles of a woman. The seduction motif is quite prominent in the Samson and Delilah story, but recent scholarship has argued that Jael may have sexually seduced Sisera before killing him.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, both accounts seem to play with the movement between woman as seductress versus woman as mother. Before cutting off Samson's hair, Delilah lulls him to sleep on her knees (Judg. 16.19). The hairless Samson calls to mind the image of a newborn. Similarly, in Judges 5 Jael feeds Sisera a milk-based drink and he is said to have fallen asleep between her legs (Judg. 5.25-27), an image with both sexual and birthing connotations.<sup>16</sup> Immediately following in v. 28 is a description of Sisera's mother looking out the window awaiting his return. This more complicated set of gender images, in which a male is seduced and unmanned by a woman who begins as a seductress and ends as a mother with a helpless baby in her lap, suggests something more may be going on than simply contrasting an early positive story with a later negative one.

Turning to the Gideon narrative, one finds a host of linguistic ties between the theophany scene in Judges 6 and the one found in Judges 13 at the start of the Samson saga. Since this is one case in which the evidence suggests that motifs from one locus have been imported whole cloth into a second narrative, I will wait until my concluding reflections to discuss the details of this particular example.

15. Pamela Tamarkin Reis, 'Uncovering Jael and Sisera: A New Reading', *SJOT* 19 (2005), pp. 24-47.

16. In fact, a later Jewish midrash imagines that the milk given to Sisera came from Jael's own breasts, as noted by Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 90, citing R. Adler, "'A Mother in Israel': Aspects of the Mother Role in Jewish Myth", in R.M. Gross (ed.), *Beyond Androcentrism: New Essays on Women and Religion* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 237-55 (248).

Both Abimelech and Jephthah gather אֲנָשִׁים רִיקִים, ‘worthless (literally “empty”) men’, around themselves (9.4; 11.3), a term used in this way only here and once more in a late retelling from 2 Chron. 13.7 describing Jeroboam’s revolt. Oddly enough, this same plural form of the word ‘empty’ is used in a different sense when it is applied to the empty jugs in Gideon’s battle strategy in Judg. 7.16. While this could be sheer coincidence, the fact that three of the seven times this exact form of the word occurs in the Bible are in three adjacent stories in Judges may point to a purposeful attempt to interlink Judges 6–11 verbally.

Since the Gideon story is clearly a composite of several different episodes it seems worth noting in passing that some of the distinct elements of this cycle of stories appear to be interlinked by verbal associations. I will give one brief example. The story of the fleece test in Judg. 6.36–40 and the following episode involving the winnowing of Gideon’s oversized army in 7.1–6 likely derive from distinct sources. After all, Gideon’s doubts at the end of ch. 6 seem to be correlated with the idea that he has a small army rather than the oversized force one finds at the start of ch. 7, a story that begins with the hero’s name shifting to Jerubbaal once again. But it may be that these two stories were placed in proximity due to shared vocabulary. Both stories speak of setting or stationing an object with the root נָצַג or נִצַּג (6.37 and 7.5), a root that only occurs three times in Judges, all in the Gideon episode. Furthermore, the object that is stationed in each story is also described in these same two verses as well as elsewhere in ch. 6 as set by itself, using the root לָבַד (6.37, 39, 40; 7.5), a preposition that occurs in these two adjacent stories four of the nine times total it is used within Judges. Interestingly enough, the preposition לָבַד occurs twice more near the end of the Gideon story in Judg. 8.26, and 8.27, which also includes the third and final usage of the root נָצַג or נִצַּג within Judges.

Judges 12.1 is what I would call a hinge verse in that it links the Jephthah narrative both to an earlier and to a later story in the book. In terms of an earlier story, Judg. 12.1 closely echoes the episode in the Gideon narrative in which the Ephraimites quarrel with Gideon over his failure to muster them to fight the Midianites (Judg. 8.1). In somewhat similar language, the Ephraimites complain about Jephthah’s failure to call on them to help fight the Ammonites. But the end of 12.1 reports the following Ephraimite threat against Jephthah: בֵּיתְךָ נִשְׂרֵף עָלֶיךָ בָּאֵשׁ, ‘We will burn your house down over you’. Issued because Jephthah failed to call on the Ephraimites, this threat closely resembles the expression used by Samson’s wedding companions when they threaten his future bride by

telling her to coax the answer to the riddle from Samson: נשרף אֹתְךָ וְאֶת־בֵּית אָבִיךָ בְּאֵשׁ (14.15).

An analogous hinge verse is Judg. 4.21, two pieces of which were discussed separately above. Thus 4.21 contains both the word וְתַצַּנַח, which reaches back to 1.14, and the key phrase וְתִתְקַע אֶת־הַיֶּתֶד, which recurs in slightly modified form in 16.14. If such hinge-verses are not accidental it might be worth probing how they affect a theological reading of these now-connected stories. Connecting Jael back to Achsah and forward to Delilah may well point to the early recognition that all three of these women drive the action in the narratives in which they occur. The aggressive and somewhat manipulative behavior of each character may explain why at some stage in the book's development a redactor sought to link these three stories together in an associative manner. Tying Judg. 12.1 back to 8.1 and forward to 14.15 prevents the reader from simply viewing Gideon as a better leader than Jephthah because he averted a civil war with the Ephraimites. This is so because Judges 12 portrays the Ephraimites in more malevolent terms in that the threat they issue against Jephthah closely resembles one later used by members of Israel's arch-foe, the Philistines. This may also be an attempt to suggest that just as Jephthah has acted like a Canaanite by sacrificing his daughter, likewise major portions of the Israelite populace also acted like Canaanites in that they utilize threats that the book elsewhere associates with the Philistines. Here one sees that some of these verbal connections may place two or more stories into a complex associative relationship.

Another set of links that deserve attention are the several key words that bind together the loosely connected components of the Samson cycle found in Judges 13–16. As evidence for the composite nature of these chapters one only needs to note that there are two summaries concluding his judgeship (15.20 and 16.31) and that his birth narrative stresses a number of ideas that receive little emphasis elsewhere in this story but share close connections with Judges 6. In spite of its clearly composite nature, Robert Alter has demonstrated that the root פָּעַם, meaning 'foot, instant, time', artfully ties together at least parts of what likely were once unconnected stories. Thus this root is employed in 13.25, in a number of other instances in ch. 16 (vv. 15, 18, twice in 20 and 28), and once in Judges 15.3.<sup>17</sup> Equally of note is that the root of the word 'spirit' or

17. Robert Alter, 'Samson without Folklore', in Susan Niditch (ed.), *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 47-56.



‘wind’ is found in all four chapters (13.25; 14.6, 19; 15.14, 19 and somewhat unusually in a verbal form in 16.9 to describe the way rope burns when it even smells fire nearby). Finally, there are several associative word links between the opening and closing chapters of the Samson story, including multiple occurrences of the root חלל, ‘to begin’ (13.5, 25 and 16.19, 22), and its homonym חלה, ‘to be weak’ (16.7, 11, 17), and a variety of uses of the root נער, ‘young lad’, found in 13.8, 12, 24; and more unusually in 16.9 to describe a piece of tow and in 16.20 of Samson’s thought to shake off the Philistines in the same way he had done previously. The deployment of these recurring words or word echoes helps tie together and at least loosely unifies the diverse array of materials in chs. 13–16.

While we have already pointed out a number of links between the Samson stories and other earlier parts of Judges, there are several associative links between Judges 13–16 and Judges 17–21 that function to link these two blocks together. Both 16.5 and 17.2-3 mention the same unusually large sum of 1100 pieces of silver, and 16.31 and 18.2, 8, and 11 each mention the cities of Zorah and Eshtaol. One additional associative word connection is that Judges 16 and Judges 20 each use the root נתק, though in two differing meanings. This verb is used in its meaning ‘to break apart’ or ‘to snap’ three times during Delilah’s failed attempts to bind Samson and rob him of his strength (twice in 16.9 and once in 16.12). It is used twice more in Judges in 20.31 and 20.32, in both instances describing how the Israelites employ a military tactic ‘to draw out’ the Benjaminites from the city of Gibeah which they are defending.

The text of Judg. 19.25-27 contains subtle allusions to at least two other texts within Judges. One is the Ehud narrative, which as we noted earlier has other close ties to ch. 20. Here we are particularly interested in 3.21-25. This passage describes how, after having murdered Eglon, Ehud shut and locked the doors to the upper chamber and escaped. It then narrates how, after delaying because they thought Eglon was relieving himself, Eglon’s servants used a key to open the locked doors, only to find their master fallen dead on the ground. Both the Ehud and the Levite’s concubine stories describe acts of penetration that eventuate in the death of the victim, involve a closed doorway, and relate a discovery of a dead or dying person once a door is opened.<sup>18</sup> In Hebrew the linkage

18. I am using this qualified language since it is not certain from the Hebrew of Judg. 19 whether the concubine expired upon the doorstep, or only afterwards on the journey, or when the Levite cuts her into pieces.



is more noticeable yet, in that the plural construct דלתות, ‘doors’, occurs only four times in Judges, three times in the Eglon story (3.23, 24, 25) and once in Judg. 19.27. Furthermore, both stories utilize three quickly echoing forms of words built out of the root פתח, ‘to open’ (Judg. 3 contains all three in v. 24, and Judg. 19 has one in v. 26 and two more in v. 27). Both stories also employ the active participle of the root נפל, ‘to fall’, which occurs in Judg. 3.25 (in the masculine singular form) and 19.27 (in the feminine singular form). And both discoveries are prefaced with the Hebrew word וכהנה. Finally, Judges 19 here twice refers to the abused concubine’s husband as ‘her lord’, אדנייה, while elsewhere in the story he is called her ‘man’ or ‘husband’ (19.3; 20.4). This specific suffixed form calls to mind Judg. 3.25’s report that Eglon’s servant found ‘their lord’, אדנייהם, dead on the ground.<sup>19</sup>

I noted in my discussion of the Ehud story above some other links between Judges 3 and Judges 20, and suggested that those verbal connections likely were intended to contrast an early positive story of Benjaminite military prowess against Israel’s enemies with a later account in which the Benjaminites deploy their skill against fellow Israelites. But these more subtle and less noticed allusions found between Eglon’s murder and that of the Levite’s concubine place these stories into a much more complex literary relationship. In a number of ways the two stories are inversions of each other. In both stories the one called ‘master’ or ‘lord’ is locked in a house, but in one instance he is murdered in a way that metaphorically calls to mind being raped, in the other this character avoids a rape that results in a murder.

The close literary relationship between Judges 3 and 19 strongly bolsters the case of those who argue that the Ehud account is suffused with sexual imagery and gender inversions against the claims of those who think such interpretations are based on anachronistic concerns.<sup>20</sup>

19. The word ‘lord’ is used by the Levite’s young lad in 19.11-12, but that is to be expected. There is yet one other verbal link between Judg. 3 and Judg. 19, namely, the root כהה, ‘to delay’, which is used only twice in Judges—once in 3.26 of Eglon’s servants who allow Ehud to escape and once in 19.8 of the Levite on the fifth day, a delay that contributes to the rape and murder of his concubine.

20. Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Book of Judges* (Old Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 31-32, brings out a number of these sexual connections, in particular noting a link to open and locked doors in Song 4.12 and 5.5. Other recent scholars, such as Lawson Stone, ‘Eglon’s Belly and Ehud’s Blade: A Reconsideration’, *JBL* 128 (2009), pp. 649-63, esp. 654, and Jack M. Sasson, ‘Ethically Cultured Interpretations: The Case of Eglon’s Murder (Judges 3)’, in Galil *et al.* (eds.), *Homeland and Exile*,

The tightly shared network of verbal associations between Judges 19 and ch. 3 make it highly probable that Ehud should be seen as a character who initially plays the subservient role by bringing an offering to his overlord Eglon, but in the end plays the dominant role by penetrating and killing Eglon. Ehud does not simply murder Eglon; rather, he metaphorically emasculates and rapes him, in that the account of his murder mirrors the language found in ch. 19. This leaves one with a disturbing contrast drawn between Judges 3 and 19, namely, that feminizing and then raping one's male enemies is to be praised while allowing this type of violence to be done to an innocent female fellow citizen is an outrage.

While one could conceivably argue that Judges 19 is a critique of Ehud's sexualized violence in Judges 3, this interpretation seems improbable when one reads Judges in its ancient context in which the enemy either violently defeats or is so defeated. If my reading is correct, it suggests that although today's readers and the biblical audience may be equally horrified by the events of ch. 19, a contemporary audience might well assess the use of rape imagery in Judges 3 quite differently than the biblical audience. In short, this network of associations may highlight a place in which we may be forced to acknowledge our own distance from the Hebrew Bible's worldview, including certain aspects of its theological worldview.

The rape scene in Judges 19 contains yet an additional allusion to another text in Judges. The expression in 19.27, *וַיִּפְתַּח דְּלֶתֹת הַבַּיִת*, 'and he opened the doors of the house', also evokes Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter. This is because the Hebrew word for 'he opened', *יִפְתַּח*, in Judg. 19.27 is identical to the name Jephthah, and the vow Jephthah makes by opening his mouth rashly is linked to the person that comes through the doors of his house (Judg. 11.31). The expression in Judg. 19.27, which can be translated as 'Jephthah, the doors of the house', may be a subtle cue to the reader to draw a connection between Judges 19 and Judges 11. To an attentive reader this Hebrew expression calls to mind the scene in which Jephthah, after vowing to sacrifice whoever comes out of the doors of his house if he is victorious in battle, returns home safely and finds himself greeted by his only daughter, whom he must now sacrifice.

pp. 571-95, esp. 590, have argued against such interpretations, seeing them as a case of over-reading. However, once one notices the striking set of connections between Judg. 3 and 19 it becomes much more likely that the Ehud account does indeed contain a host of sexual references.

If I am correct about this additional intertextual link it may well indicate that although Judges 11 contains little if any language overtly critiquing Jephthah's behavior, the larger shape of Judges implicitly critiques Jephthah's vow, which results in the sacrifice of his daughter.<sup>21</sup> This is accomplished by drawing an analogy between Jephthah's sacrifice of his dependent daughter and the immoral behavior of the Levite who gives his dependent concubine to a depraved crowd of Benjaminites. In both stories women outside the domestic threshold find themselves in mortal danger. It may be that this image is in fact inverted in the Ehud story, in which Eglon is turned into a woman, and yet he is metaphorically raped not only inside his domicile, but inside with his doors locked.

There are two broad ways we might mine this type of evidence. One is to see whether these types of verbal markers might tell us something about the way in which Judges developed into the text we have today. The second is concerned with how various linkages like these affect our literary and theological understanding of Judges. I have spent more time highlighting such literary and theological links in the examples explored above for two reasons: because I am more interested in such issues, and because I believe that these types of literary and theological insights are more secure in that they are based on the text we have, not on its putative prehistory.

For a moment, however, let us explore what if anything this assortment of verbal connections might tell us about the development of Judges. It is possible that some of the verbal connectors in Judges functioned to help order and stabilize the text in either its oral or, more likely in my opinion, written form. There are many ways this could have occurred. The most obvious would be that stories could have been placed in close proximity to each other because they shared a common unusual expression, such as the use of *אנשים ריקים*, 'worthless men', which is found near the beginning of both the Abimelech and Jephthah stories (9.4; 11.3), or the many uses of the root *הקט* in the three sequential stories of Ehud, Deborah and Gideon. Or alternatively, the use of a word in one story could have bled over into a nearby narrative, which might explain why *ספל* occurs in Judges 5 and once more in ch. 6. Of course, it is impossible to know whether the stories were placed in proximity due to shared vocabulary

21. Thus, while I am highly sympathetic to many of the points made by Alice Logan's, 'Rehabilitating Jephthah', *JBL* 128 (2009), pp. 665-85, I believe that the larger book contains a critique of Jephthah, albeit in rather subtle form, that she has failed to note.

that they each already contained, or if such shared vocabulary developed over time either to interlink the sequence of stories, or as a form of assimilation in which a word or motif from one story bled into another.

Here we must mention that although the longstanding presupposition has been to speak of written texts, Susan Niditch and David Carr have advocated strongly that ancient written texts such as the Bible were part of a largely oral culture.<sup>22</sup> These associative links between various stories may point to the oral nature of this literature. If this model is correct perhaps these verbal ties are mnemonic devices used by oral story tellers to help remember the sequence of the stories. Alternatively, perhaps they arose from the natural tendency for recently used words to be picked up in a later story. Or possibly these verbal links were purposefully added for aesthetic and literary reasons to entertain the audience by creating greater cohesion through the cycle of stories.

While these are possible explanations, I think it is more probable that the verbal ties are not oral cues but scribal devices. Niditch and Carr rightly call into question the notion of widespread literacy in ancient Israel. However, scholars examining larger ancient Near Eastern scribal practices have provided strong evidence that scribal practices often did in fact lead to once-distinct narrative threads being merged, and to certain other phenomena like conflation and assimilation between two stories with some thematic connection. One thinks here of the models for textual development proposed by various scholars in Jeffrey Tigay's collection, *Empirical Models of Biblical Criticism*, or of Karel van der Toorn's recent book on scribal culture.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of Tigay's book, it appears that Judges contains some instances of what Zakovitch identifies as assimilation between two related biblical narratives.<sup>24</sup> An almost certain case of assimilation, which Zakovitch discusses in his contribution to Tigay's collection, is found in Judges 13. He points out that vv. 15-16, 19-20 and parts of 13.5 and 13.23 appear to be later expansions that took materials from Judges 6, where they seem at home, and imported them into Judges 13, where they sit much less easily.

22. Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), and David Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

23. Jeffrey Tigay (ed.), *Empirical Models of Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), and Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

24. Yair Zakovitch, 'Assimilation in Biblical Narratives', in Tigay (ed.), *Empirical models of Biblical Criticism*, pp. 175-96.

Zakovitch bolsters his case by noting how the sacrificial motif plays a larger role in Judges 6, where Gideon subsequently destroys a Baal altar and sets up one to YHWH in its place, while the subsequent Samson stories never again mention the idea of sacrifice. Furthermore, he highlights the disjunction between 13.20 and 13.21 in terms of how the couple discerned that the visitor was an angelic being. In v. 20 Samson's parents witness the mysterious visitor ascend in flames, while in v. 21 it is the disappearance of the angelic figure that confirms his divine status.<sup>25</sup> Verse 21 fits into the larger story of ch. 13, while v. 20 creates some confusion and seems out of place.

Reasoning in a similar fashion, one could argue that the expression used of Jael's action toward Sisera in Judg. 4.21 has been assimilated into Delilah's actions toward Samson in Judg. 16.14 because both narratives involve scenes in which a woman sexually toys with a man by wielding an object upon his head while he is sleeping. The expression וַהֲתַקֵּעַ בִּיהוֹד in Judg. 16.14 is enigmatic and thus seems secondary, all the more so when compared to the way its close analogue in Judges 4 functions. Even if one can prove that such assimilation occurred in certain cases, one might ask why certain types of texts are prone to assimilation and what is the literary and theological effect of such assimilation. Thus explaining the historical process of a text's evolution, even when it can be proven with some confidence, does not exhaust the job of the interpreter.

Aside from Tigay's and Van der Toorn's work in the area, William L. Holladay has demonstrated that at times distinct blocks of materials may be incorporated into a book by various associative methods, and in fact sometimes one associative method will give birth to yet another one. In a presentation he has given in my Introduction to the Bible course at Smith College, Holladay presented an example of an associational method of scribal editing in Jeremiah 18 in which a passage concerning a potter (Jer. 18.1-12) sits next to an oracle that mentions Lebanon (Jer. 18.13-17). He pointed out that this same juxtaposition of topics occurs in Isaiah 29, in which a potter and his clay are mentioned in 29.16, immediately followed by 29.17, a verse that mentions Lebanon. Of course, one still needs to explain why these two topics sit next to each other in Isaiah 29. It turns out that this juxtaposition in Isaiah is most likely due to the fact that 29.16 and 29.17 each contain the same *niphal* third masculine singular imperfect form of וַשָּׂה, 'will be accounted' or 'will be reckoned'.

25. Zakovitch, 'Assimilation in Biblical Narratives', pp. 192-95.

Once the two oracles in Isaiah were firmly grouped together it seems that the editors of Jeremiah drew on other elements of the already close association between Isa. 29.16 and 29.17. In short, whoever edited Jeremiah remembered that the idea of a potter and his clay creation resided next to a passage invoking Lebanon in Isaiah, whereupon this associative link was used to order some of the random oracles in Jeremiah. Holladay's insight provides evidence of an ancient filing system based on associations, which is exactly what one would expect to find in Israelite scribal culture in which scribes living in a primarily oral culture were seeking to order scrolls of diverse materials in associative ways. Weaving together diverse materials in a familiar pattern would also help those who knew the filing system locate various passages more easily in the future.

With this in mind, it seems reasonable to argue, as I noted above, that some of the associative links between various stories in Judges, particularly between closely adjacent stories, may explain how those stories ended up near each other—although, to be completely accurate, Holladay's example is really more about borrowing one text's ordering principle and applying it to a second distinct body of literature. Interestingly enough, there may be one example in Judges of an associative order borrowed whole cloth from another context. In Judges 8 Gideon has some interactions with the people of Succoth and Penuel. These two cities are not mentioned very frequently in the Hebrew Bible. Yet they do occur in close proximity to each other in Genesis 32 and 33 (albeit in reverse order), where they are followed by a story about the city of Shechem that involves the questionable use of violence (Gen. 34). And in Judges 9 one has the story of Abimelech, which also is set in Shechem and involves questionable violence on Abimelech's part both against the other sons of Gideon and later against the townspeople of Shechem. This narrative link between Genesis and Judges might explain some peculiarities of Hebrew vocabulary in this section of Judges. The verb *הרג*, 'to kill', is first introduced in Judges in 7.25 and it also is used in Judges 8 and 9 with some regularity.<sup>26</sup> It occurs only twice more in Judges, once in ch. 16 and once in 20. And this verb is also used in Genesis 34, as well as in its poetic analogue found in Gen. 49.6, to describe an instance of indiscriminate violence the text appears to condemn. Interestingly enough, the word

26. Wolfgang Bluedorn, *YHWH Versus Baalism: A Theological Reading of the Gideon Abimelech Narrative* (JSOTSup, 329; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 148-49, 159-61, highlights the introduction of verb *הרג*, 'to kill', into Judges. I have devocalized the Tetragrammaton in Bluedorn's title.

אָמַן, ‘trusting’, occurs in the exact same form in Judg. 8.11 and in Gen. 34.25, both times in relation to a city that suffers a devastating and potentially unwarranted attack.<sup>27</sup>

Having examined some possible scribal and oral cultural explanations for certain associational links in Judges, we will now look at some other theoretical models that might be labeled ‘mythic’, ‘literary’ and ‘theological’. In her book on the Bible as oral literature, Niditch rightly objects to the way that much recent scholarship speaks about the relationship between Exodus 1–15 and exodus images found in Deutero-Isaiah and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Rather than seeking to explain such affinities in terms of priority and dependence, it may be more productive to understand these shared affinities as revealing ‘an orally derived sense of what sorts of themes and motifs belong together’.<sup>28</sup> I would suggest some related possibilities. At least in terms of what Niditch describes as ‘the victory-enthronement pattern’, one might highlight how archaic mythic patterns shape Israelite perceptions of certain central events. Jon Levenson has demonstrated how mythic patterns have shaped significant narrative and ritual elements in the biblical text and drawn them into an ever more complex relationship.<sup>29</sup> A closely related phenomenon is what Robert Alter called type scenes, in which certain literary settings tend to call forth shared images and themes allowing for variations on a common pattern.<sup>30</sup> Yet another suggestion is Larry Lyke’s proposal that rabbinic types of associative wordplay may be operative already within the Hebrew Bible and may in fact explain certain developments found in the biblical tradition.<sup>31</sup> He illustrates how particular narrative tropes may

27. Laura Carlson, a graduate student in a Yale Divinity School course I taught on Judges in 2009, drew my attention to the use of אָמַן, ‘trusting’, in Judg. 8 and Gen. 34.

28. Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, p. 24.

29. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

30. Robert Alter discusses type scenes in his book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), as well as in ‘How Conventions Help Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type Scenes’, *Prooftexts* 3 (1983), pp. 115–30. Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, p. 18, has noted that Alter’s type scenes are not all that different from the idea at the center of traditional form criticism, and that literary critics such as Alter end up reinventing the wheel at times.

31. Larry Lyke, *King David with the Wise Woman of Tekoa: The Resonance of Tradition in Parabolic Narrative* (JSOTSup, 255; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), and *I Will Espouse You Forever: The Song of Songs and the Theology of Love in the Hebrew Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).



include a set of ideas or images and goes on to suggest that distinct narratives might have over time come to share more and more components because they touched upon one of these complex tropes.

We have already noted above that the unusual phrasing concerning a woman wielding a tent-peg against a man's head found in Judges 4 and 16 may have been generated by a set of tropes present in both narratives. Similarly, we noted the unusually dense set of connections between Ehud's 'rape' of Eglon and the rape of the Levite's concubine. In this latter example, one need not look very far to see that the Levite's concubine story itself shares striking affinities with several other rape scenes in the Hebrew Bible, including the Dinah story, the Sodom story, and the story of Amnon's rape of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13. Thus the term *נבלה*, 'an outrage' or 'disgraceful act', is used in Genesis 34, Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13. And the *piel* of *ענה* meaning 'to humiliate sexually' is used in Genesis 34, Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13. It may be that the existence of certain verbal or thematic connections between two or more narratives gave rise to a tendency to continue to deepen such textual resonances as the material grew into its current canonical form.<sup>32</sup> A similar associative phenomenon likely explains the somewhat unusual *piel* usage of *ענה* three times in Judges 16 (16.5, 6, 19) in a sexually suggestive scene that speaks of overpowering Samson, which is soon followed in 19.24 and 20.5 in a more common usage of raping the Levite's concubine.

However these verbal ties arose, whether by coincidence, by means of orality, or by scribal technique, we ultimately have a book that contains a pervasive set of verbal webs that link various episodes in a complex literary and theological fashion. And yet, even as this webbing draws various parts of the book into association with each other, it at the same time forces one to notice the distinct elements of each story and thus to recognize that while one can speak of interconnections, it is much less clear that one can speak of a unified and progressive text with an overarching message. The variety and complexity of these various verbal ties

32. One of the richest set of connective links in the Hebrew Bible can be found in the deep resonances between materials in Genesis and those in the Succession Narrative. Two thoughtful reflections on what the many shared features of these two corpora might say about the development of the Hebrew Bible are Edward L. Greenstein, 'The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus', *AJSR* 15 (1990), pp. 151-78, and Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Theme and Motif in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. xi 2ff) and the Yahwist Corpus', in *Volume du Congrès, Genève 1965* (VTSup, 15; Leiden: Brill, 1965), pp. 44-57.



points to the distinctness and uniqueness of each part of Judges even as it reveals an attempt to bring these distinct elements into a complex literary and theological relationship.