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JUDGES IN RECENT RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This article surveys research published from 1990 to the present on the book of Judges. The material is arranged in two sections. In the first part, attention is given to major judges and characters (Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, Samson, Micah and the unnamed woman of ch. 19). In the second section, the focus shifts to a consideration of other material published since 1990, including 'Feminist Interpretations', 'Literary Treatments', 'Commentaries and Books', 'Isolated Passages', and 'Other Articles'.

Introduction

The first task in exploring Judges in 'recent research' is deciding on what is meant by the word 'recent', and setting this research in the context of previous scholarship. Two survey articles help set the parameters. Bayley (1991–92) surveyed three major commentaries on Judges, published in the decades of 1970 and 1980—by Boling (1975), Gray (1986) and Soggin (1981). Bartelmus (1991), also, provided a comprehensive review of articles, commentaries and books on Judges published between 1950 and 1990—40 commentaries, 68 monographs and 184 articles. In this article, I survey material published from 1990 to the present.

With a large number of recent articles and monographs on hand, the second task is to focus the discussion. The first section of this survey highlights research on major judges and characters, and is arranged according to the plot sequence of the book itself: Ehud in 3.12-30, Deborah in chs. 4, 5 and 4–5, Gideon in chs. 6–8, Abimelech in ch. 9, Jephthah in 10.17–12.7, Samson in chs. 13–16, Micah in chs. 17–18 and the Levite's

concubine in chs. 19–21. In the second section, the focus shifts to a consideration of other material published since 1990—'Feminist Interpretations' and 'Literary Treatments', 'Isolated Passages', 'Commentaries and Books' and 'Other Articles'.

1. *Major Judges and Characters*

a. *Ehud*

Several recent articles about Ehud deal with genre or genre-like matters. Handy (1992) argues that this first extended story of a major judge is a Moabite joke told by the Israelites. His thesis is 'the story of Ehud and Eglon is not history, but rather ethnic joke' (p. 233). The story displays mean-spirited humor, which is often found in 'ethnic humor'. The two principals are stock characters: Ehud is 'the canny Israelite' and Eglon, by contrast, is the 'stupid foil' (p. 237). Deist (1996) summarizes the plot of Judg. 3.12-30, highlights the deuteronomistic framework of the story and then asks 'what shall we do with this kind of story?' (p. 266). He concludes that translating the story into traditional western theological categories compounds the problem of interpretation, and he argues for a more critical, transformative stance toward the story. Deist points out that interpreters must move beyond the practice of translating biblical narratives into western theological categories (freedom of god, salvation history). With respect to the Ehud–Eglon story, one must take into account the ancients' custom of shaming one's opponent. The story is told 'with the express aim of publicly shaming [Eglon] out of his socks' (p. 269).

Brettler (1991, 1995) asks if the Ehud story should be understood as 'history' or 'literature'. He works from Alter's 'literary' treatment of the story (1981) and Halpern's 'historical' understanding of the same passage (1988). After juxtaposing these two positions, Brettler suggests that the pericope be understood as political satire, whereby the author's audience feels superior to the group satirized. In addition, the historical context is the author's own time period rather than the era described. After making a case that the names 'Ehud' and 'Eglon' are 'semantically opaque' (p. 29), Knauf (1991) argues that 'Ehud' was a Benjaminite clan, not a Benjaminite leader; and although 'Eglon' may look like a Canaanite personal name, it was actually a town in the western foothills of the Judean mountains. The conflict between Eglon and Ehud thus pertained to a Transjordanian town and a Benjaminite clan before it was transposed into a conflict between individuals. Knauf thus helps bridge the gap between 'literature' and 'history' by demonstrating the interpretive potential of toponymic studies.

Jugel and Neef (1999) understand a comment identifying Ehud as left-handed in 3.15 as a medical observation. Ehud's left-handedness was likely remembered by the tradition as a sign of his special manual dexterity. Miller (1996) sees in the background of the Ehud story a 'verbal feud'. It is a Benjaminite riposte, that is, a response to an individual by a rival group. Sexual deviancy is ascribed to Eglon who, the story suggests, invited Ehud into his chamber for illicit purposes.

Jull (1998) seeks to illuminate one of the difficult terms of the Ehud story, מקרה, and adds it to the list of scatalogical vocabulary present in Judg. 3. This word is often translated 'cool roof chamber', but Jull finds literary and archaeological evidence to support a rendering of the word as Eglon's 'royal toilet' (cf. the modern term for the same concept—'the throne'). His literary evidence comes from Judg. 3 itself, as well as Lev. 15, Deut. 23 and the Mishnah. Archaeological evidence comes primarily from Iron Age Jerusalem.

b. *Deborah (ch. 4)*

Matthews and Benjamin (1992) remind us that hospitality is society's oldest form of foreign policy, and they see in Judg. 4.17-22 a protocol of hospitality in the background of the Jael–Sisera episode. While the customs that make up the hospitality code of the ancient Near East demonstrate the intent to maintain the honor of a person or household by offering service and protection to strangers, this episode from Judg. 4 reverses customary expectations as the story moves toward its unexpected resolution. Jael does not show hospitality, but practices heroism by issuing a warning in Judg. 4.18: 'turn aside from your plan'. It is not an invitation to Sisera, who acts as an intruder (not a guest) by demanding things of her. (Cf. the similar treatment in Matthews 1991.)

Van Wolde (1996) studies Judg. 4 from 'textsyntactic' and 'textsemantic' angles as she concentrates on the significance of spatial movements and their relationship to male and female characters. Judges 4 reverses male and female roles as well as the roles of Israelites and outsiders. Yee (1993) draws insight from anthropologists as she investigates the biblical metaphor of the woman warrior. She first reconstructs women's military roles in premonarchic Israel and then shows how the woman warrior metaphor functions for the Israelite author in his portrayal of Deborah and Jael in Judg. 4.

c. *Deborah (ch. 5)*

Two scholars have recently attempted to date the Song of Deborah. Neef (1995b) isolates important 'Charakterzüge der Sprachverwendung' ('char-

acteristic figures of speech') of the Song: repetition, *figura etymologica*, enjambment, anaphora, infinitive constructions and imperatives. He dates the battle to 1150–1125 BCE and the compostion of the Song itself to c. 1025 BCE. Diebner (1995) finds a connection between the Song of Deborah and historical events of the Hasmonean period. He also questions the traditional view that the Song is the oldest part of the Hebrew Bible by pointing to late features of the text, especially the names.

Miller (1998) analyzes the Song as a riposte, a rhetorical form of retaliation against an insult that has gained widespread credibility in the broader culture. He pays attention to a rhetorical form that has not been fully recognized by biblical scholars. He also illustrates the nature of the riposte Song of Deborah and outlines a theory of verbal feud that places this rhetorical form within a broader typology of honor stories. In a redaction-critical study, Becker-Spörl (1998) seeks to resolve grammatical difficulties and isolates an original continuous Song that was later supplemented. She approaches the text from three angles: syntactic (sign forms), semantic (interelationship of speech units) and pragmatic (the grammar of the text).

Schloen (1993) reconstructs the setting of Deborah's war as he attempts to make sense of the apparently unrelated elements in Judg. 5. He finds indications in the Song that the Israelite tribes were allied with Kenite, Midianite and Amalekite caravan operators who traded through the hills of Palestine and the Jezreel Valley. The Song celebrates the victory over Sisera and his Canaanite allies who had attempted to stifle caravan traffic through the Plain of Jezreel. Becker-Spörl (1996) admits that Judg. 5 reports a military event, but claims it stops short of making a direct connection between Yhwh and acts of violence. The power of nature, the torrent at Kishon and the stars all conspire against the enemies, but Yhwh does not get involved. Jael's murderous action is described, but Yhwh is not mentioned.

Fokkelman (1995) focuses on grammar, tenses, modes, syntax and compositional levels as he scrutinizes the Song. He finds an 'amazingly consistent chronological succession underlying the long series' (p. 598) of stanzas. The 864 syllables and 352 words of this Song are distributed over 108 cola and 50 verses, which make up 20 strophes and 7 stanzas: I (vv. 2-5), II (vv. 6-8), III (vv. 9-13), IV (vv. 14-18), V (vv. 19-23), VI (vv. 24-27), VII (vv. 28-31). Ten tribes are listed in the Song of Deborah. De Moor (1993) emends Judg. 5.13-14 to generate a list of all 12 tribes, including the tribes of Judah and Levi. He also rearranges the Song, and finds a regular six-strophe poem, whereby the tribes follow the pattern found in Gen. 49, but his article is ultimately unconvincing, because of the

numerous conjectural emendations. Tournay (1996) provides a detailed exegesis and a new French translation of the Song of Deborah.

d. *Deborah (chs. 4–5)*

Several recent articles explore the relationship between Judg. 4 and 5. Brenner (1990) departs from the traditional question—Which chapter was written first?—and offers an approach that works from two other angles: the structure of the cast of characters and central imagery. While shifting from the chronological relationship to structural and thematic affinities, Brenner discerns superimposed triangles representing the political and military realms. Three pairs of characters—Deborah and Barak, Jabin and Sisera, God and Jael—inhabit the narrative world of Judg. 4. In each pair, the first character initiates the action while the second one implements it. The triangles in Judg. 5 are arranged along sex lines. One triangle is 'female': Deborah, Sisera's mother and Jael; the other is 'male': Barak, Sisera and God [*sic.*]. This structural complement means that the two chapters should be considered as a narrative unit.

Houston (1997b) treats the sections of Judg. 4 and 5 that deal with the murder of Sisera (4.17-21 and 5.24-27). He concludes that the 'bizarre method that Jael chooses to murder Sisera' in 4.17-21 is certainly 'the best proof that the prose account is dependent on the Song of Deborah, for it is hard to imagine how such a bizarre account could have arisen except as an interpretation of 5,25-27' (p. 534). Neef (1994) finds several textual clues to support the view that Judg. 4 is dependent upon Judg. 5, such as the identification of Deborah as 'mother in Israel' (ch. 5). The appellation never occurs in ch. 4, because the narrative there attempts to spell out her performance of that role. In addition, the larger number of vocations in ch. 4 suggests a later attempt to specify the geographical framework of events alluded to in ch. 5.

Fewell and Gunn (1990) propose a unified reading of Judg. 4–5. They pay particular attention to characters' points of view, as well as the work of recent commentators, especially those who deal with the roles played by women in order to ultimately reveal 'a more complex picture of women acting in a patriarchal world' (p. 391). Van der Kooij (1996) embraces the view that Judg. 4 is a M(ale)-text and ch. 5 is a F(emale)-text, a view first proposed by van Dijk-Hemmes (1992). It is an F-text because of the crucial role that three female characters play—Deborah, Jael and the mother of Sisera. The author analyzes the relationship between the two chapters, considering compositional points of view before ultimately con-

templating the function of the Song within the composition of Judg. 4–5. Like the Song of Moses in Exod. 15, the Song of Deborah serves the purpose of underlining an important victory.

Other scholars consider Judg. 4–5 from a number of other angles. Margalit (1995) focuses on these two chapters from Judges and the Ugaritic poem of *Aqht* (c. 1500 BCE), and finds a striking number of similarities between the two stories. Both are set near the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. According to the *Aqht* poem, the king of Hazor makes an alliance with a bedouin chieftain to guard the caravan route. According to Judg. 4.17, Jabin, king of Hazor, also enters into an alliance with Heber the Kenite. In the *Aqht* poem, Pughat gets Yt drunk, he falls asleep, and she kills him. Jael's actions toward Sisera in Judg. 4.19-22 are strikingly similar. Margalit also analyzes the name of Heber's tent and campsite given in Judg. 4.11 and the geophysical nature and geopolitical status of the location during the Bronze Age.

Bedenbender (1997) and Asen (1997) both focus on the significance of proper names in Judg. 4–5 as a starting point in their interpretations. Bedenbender outlines three possible meanings for the name 'Deborah', and builds upon them to outline three different possible understandings of the narrative itself in Judg. 4–5. By focusing on Deborah's name, 'Bee', and the activity of the main characters, Asen discerns the life cycle of a honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) colony as a background to the story of Deborah, 'a mother in Israel' (Judg. 5.7). The author of the 'older' poetic account in Judg. 5, Asen avers, used the bee's life cycle to describe the battle scene. 'Language of the hive' (p. 527) is used to trace the actions of the protagonists in both chapters. Topics include the queen, the drone, the swarm and the parent colony.

After introducing some of the elements of contemporary science's 'chaos theory', Fager (1993) turns attention to the literary structure, history and geography of Judg. 4–5. He finds a common ground in modern physics and the story of Deborah: both ultimately demonstrate the unpredictability of the world.

> The new physics tells us the cosmos is not so tidy—as does the story of Deborah and many other texts from the Bible... [Yet,] as the story of Deborah indicates, divine order may emerge from the chaos of human unpredictability (p. 28).

Block (1994) pays attention to structure and dimensions of the narrative to discover in the book a 'prophetic book lamenting the Canaanization of Israelite society' in contrast to other interpreters who 'continue to interpret

it essentially as a pro-Judean tractate in defense of the Davidic monarchy' (p. 231). Block examines Deborah as deliverer, judge and prophet of Israel, and ultimately concludes that 'her role is realized only when attention is directed away from the human participants in this drama to the real hero, Yahweh himself [*sic.*]' (p. 252). His attempt to find 'authorial intention' (p. 229) proves to be problematic and unconvincing.

e. *Gideon (chs. 6–8)*

Tanner (1992) places the Gideon narrative at the center of the book in his structural approach and isolates 20 episodes in chs. 6–8. A symmetrical inversion pattern is found both in the book of Judges and the Gideon narrative itself, with a focal point at 6.33–7.18. Garsiel (1993) also pays attention to narrative structure. He discusses the midrashic use of paronomasia with proper names in the Gideon narrative. Garsiel focuses on Abiezer (Gideon's clan name), Joash (Gideon's father), Jerubbaal (Gideon's second name) and the names of the enemy leaders (Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna). He also discusses place names: the valley of Jezreel, Gaza and Zur Oreb. Block (1997) advocates a holistic literary approach, which sees ambiguity as a literary device. The story uses two names for the same man, Gideon and Jerubbaal, and blends positive and negative images of Gideon. Van Midden (1999) follows an outline from syntax to the structure of the text, and from there to an exegesis, to arrive at a theological understanding of the Gideon story. Gideon ultimately emerges as a non-hero; though directed by Yhwh, he leads Israel into evil just as subsequent kings in Israel will. The story thus prepares us for the later kings (Saul and David). The two articles by Légasse (1991a, 1991b) are an introduction to early Jewish commentaries on Judg. 6–8. Each episode of the Gideon story is discussed in the light of Philo, Josephus, Pseudo–Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* and rabbinical literature.

f. *Abimelech (ch. 9)*

Steinberg (1995) applies social history concepts to the story of Abimelech and argues that his error is not so much his attempt to assume leadership based on human initiative, as it is his attempt to contravene the rules of patrilinear kinship. In a redaction-critical study, Würthwein (1994) identifies the various stages in the story's formation history. At the final stage, a late deuteronomistic editor turned the Canaanite Abimelech into an Israelite son of the judge Gideon/Jerubbaal.

g. *Jephthah (10.6–12.7)*

Two scholars offer an analysis of the Jephthah story by means of close readings. Claassens (1996) analyzes characters and narrative time, before isolating the ironic consequences of Jephthah's speech. Claassens identifies the theme of the story as 'the dangers of impulsive speech' (p. 107). Craig (1998) also explores the subject of speech, which is mediated discourse in the bargaining scene between the elders and Jephthah. The story's perspectival shifts in narration demonstrate the Bible's art of diplomacy.

Steinberg (1999) works from the premise that 'sacrificial ritual is a symbolic action which communicates information concerning the social construction of reality' (p. 118). In addition, this information is culturally determined. Willis (1996) applies Weber's outline (1947) of authority types ('charismatic', 'traditional' and 'legal-rational') as he examines the authority of Jephthah, who at various points in the narrative embodies all three types. Marcus (1990) explores the issue of how Jephthah's younger half-brothers were able to dispossess him so quickly. He concludes that the disinheriting scene must have had a legal basis and was determined by court proceedings. After Gilead, the adopting father of Jephthah, dies, Jephthah's half-brothers challenge this adoption in court and succeed in having it revoked. Römer (1998) and Neef (1999) agree that the story of Jephthah's vow (11.29-31, 34-40) is either a late, or a post-deuteronomistic, expansion of the original narrative.

h. *Samson (chs. 13–16)*

Several recent articles explore the literary dimensions of the Samson saga. Exum (1997a) focuses on the artistry of the Samson and Delilah story in Judg. 16.4-22. The story is as repetitious as any in the Bible. She investigates the 'effect of minute, subtle alteration within a rigidly fixed form' (p. 39), as well as the interconnections between the four accounts of Samson's attempted betrayal by Delilah (vv. 6-9, 10-12, 13-14, 15-22). Subtle variations are evidence of 'literary sophistication' (p. 46). Alter (1990) is also aware of the subtleties of biblical art. The preponderance of folkloric motif patterns should not blind us, he avers, to the way in which traditional materials have been purposefully nuanced to give the story its aesthetic finish. In a response to Alter, Bynum (1990) argues for recovering Samson along with the oral narrative tradition that underlies it. Yet, he fails to deal with the question and the complex issue of how we recover this ancient oral tradition of which we know so little.

Camp and Fontaine (1990) pay attention to the differences in point of view between the narrator and characters while examining Samson's riddle

in Judg. 14 from the perspectives of interaction situation, riddle situation and context situation. They conclude that Samson uses different 'blocking' devices available to him from 'linguistic' and 'metaphorical' (p. 148) options of his time. Slotkin (1990) responds to their article and adds that Samson's weakness is revealed in the riddle itself: he is unable to distinguish between sex and love. Slotkin asserts that the riddle ultimately calls attention to 'the relationship between physical vigor and emotional maturity' (p. 158). Greene (1991) uses the tools of literary-linguistic methods to survey the Samson story. The tale is a suspense story full of tension, anticipatory details, repeated patterns, ambiguities of language, and reversals and expectations. His argument ultimately proves unconvincing. Does the story have, as Greene avers, a 'central call to holiness and allegiance to God'? Does it 'stand as a warning against the relativism and individualism of our age, a warning of the danger of sexual temptation as a step toward apostasy'? And does this story actually consist of 'variations on the theme of holiness' (p. 77)?

While the Samson story might be regarded as legend, epic or saga, Smith (1997) explores the possibility of the story as a parable concerned with power. Feminist scholars, she notes, have already called attention to the dynamics of power in the story of Delilah–Samson. Smith expands on such previous studies and calls attention to 'the power relationships between the people, the nations, and the deities portrayed' herein (p. 57). After surveying the Samson cycle under the headings of source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism and rhetorical criticism, Kim (1993) moves to the subject of the story as an artistic unit and provides a detailed linguistic analysis of the Samson story, with particular emphasis on parallel structures.

Other scholars have examined the Samson narrative from an intertextual perspective, and at least two articles explore the issue of Samson as 'hero' or 'wild man'. Gunn (1992) compares Samson's story with Deutero-Isaiah, especially the 'servant' passages. Some parallel passages are analagous, some contrastive and some are a combination of both types. Brooks (1996) finds a close resemblace between the Samson story and the Saul story: Samson is undone by Delilah, Saul is undone by David. Despite the succinctness of the presentation in Judges of Samson and Delilah and the complexity of the Saul–David narrative, Brooks does find a number of parallels between the two accounts, including: Nazirite birth, spirit of Yhwh, fighting Philistines, betrayal, and death by suicide. In addition, Samson and Saul's names both begin with שׁ and David and Delilah's name start with ד. Bowman and Swanson (1997) find intertextual connec-

tions between the Samson narrative and the recorded life of Jesus. Both stories are characterized by a violent beginning, a progression of violence, and a violent end inflicted upon the protagonists. Niditch (1990) examines central features of the Samson tale, which are developed according to the traditional 'hero pattern' of narrative. She also describes the adventures of the hero in the light of 'trickster morphology' (p. 609). Mobley (1997) focuses on the folklore element of the wild-man tradition and shows how it conforms to and differs from the wild-man portrait in other literary contexts: traditions in the ancient Near East (including the literary character of Enkidu and the iconographic figure of *laḫmu*). Hairy men hunters and giants from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament are isolated, as well as the medieval wild man.

Two articles focus on redaction-critical matters in the Samson story. Römheld (1992) isolates the work of an early redactor in the framing verses of Judg. 13.1, 5b and the conclusion of ch. 15. Manoah's reaction (13.11b-12) and confirmation of the angel's command (13.14) were also inserted by the same redactor. A subsequent redactor added vv. 7 and 25. Stipp (1995) questions the view that ch. 13, the call narrative, is a redactional composition, which provides a theological framework for the stories that follow. He supports his thesis with numerous observations that show that the Nazirite standard in ch. 13 does *not* provide contrast with Samson's subsequent behavior.

i. *Micah (chs. 17–18)*

Wilson (1995) acknowledges that commentators often distinguish the content of Judg. 1–16 from Judg. 17–21, but he highlights the interconnections between these two sections. For Wilson, the story of Micah and the Danites in chs. 17–18 forms a 'logical sequence' (p. 73) to the prominent cyclical plot pattern of the hero stories in the initial chapters. In the telling of the story of Micah, the reader is led to a deeper level of meaning of what Wilson designates as the 'psychology of idolatry'. In these chapters, readers discover idolatry's unyielding grip upon the lives of the Israelites. Through the unfolding plot and the speech of Micah (18.24), readers see what idolatry meant to the people and how the Israelites were unable to break with it.

Bowman (1995) also questions the traditional view of chs. 17–21 as a secondary supplement to the initial 16 chapters. From a literary standpoint, the story of Micah and the Danites 'continues to develop themes from the Prologue and Era of the Judges' (p. 39) by means of reversal: we see divine power limited and constrained by human attempts to manipulate events.

While Micah makes cult objects (an ephod and teraphim) and designates one of his own sons as priest, his attempts to win Yhwh's favor ultimately fail (note his glee in 17.13). Indeed, there is now no deliverer in Israel (18.28)! Yee (1995) also deals with the literary importance of reversals: 'an idol of stolen silver gets stolen [and] a bought priest gets bought again, for an even bigger price' (p. 160). She demonstrates how the Micah story shows the disintegration of the cult during the tribal confederacy.

j. *The Levite and the Unnamed Woman (ch. 19)*

Ideological critics work by means of extrinsic analysis (investigating the social and historical world of the text) and intrinsic analysis (textual content and rhetoric). Yee (1995) discusses the theoretical implications of ideological criticism, especially that developed by Marxist literary critics, and concludes that the story of the Levite and his 'concubine' is 'a systematic attempt by the Deuteronomist to break up the tribal body in service to the monarchy' (p. 167). Delany (1993) regards the terror at Gibeah as a political allegory, similar in literary type to the stories of 1 Sam. 11 and 1 Kgs 11. She argues that it is a mistake to read this story as if it were a historical account, because the author aims to make a political point about fragmentation. Building on the work of Exum (1990a) and Bal (1988), Hudson (1994) calls attention to the literary feature of anonymity in Judg. 19–21, which 'epitomizes the gradual, downward spiraling disintegration and dehumanization that is occurring increasingly throughout the narrative until it reaches radical anarchy' (p. 49). Hudson focuses on narrative structure and characterization, while highlighting the disintegrating mode of the loss of identity reflected in anonymity. As individuals become increasingly dehumanized, the narrator utilizes a disintegrating plot to exhibit the dissolution of Israel's society.

During the colonization of Korea by Japan (1910–45), approximately 200,000 Korean women were forced to give sexual service to Japanese soldiers. Yoo (1997) juxtaposes the plight of these Korean women with that of the victimized woman of Judg. 19. A Korean psychological term, *han*, is used as a hermeneutical bridge to connect these two groups of women. The article is ultimately a call for liberation for the biblical woman and the Korean 'comfort women', victims of racism, militarism, imperialism and patriarchy. The issue of gender-power and the issue of homosexuality are seen as significant matters in the interpretation of Judg. 19 by many scholars, but little attention has been given to the interrelationship between these two aspects of the story. Stone (1995) makes the conjunction between gender-power and homosexual rape as the nexus object for

analysis. By positing a social framework while considering the interrelationship of gender, power, homosexuality and hospitality, Stone provides an anthropological reading of Judg. 19.

Dividing the social world into two spheres—one public, the other private—has been a trend in Western culture of the post-Enlightenment era, among social scientists and biblical scholars. After examining the woman's location in Judg. 19, Bohmbach's analysis (1999) suggests caution is needed in our use of the public–private construct, especially when assigning gender meanings in these two spheres. Miller (1996) finds an insult story directed against the Benjaminites (i.e. the men of Gibeah) in the background of Judg. 19–21 (see also Miller under 'Ehud' above).

2. *Other Treatments of Judges*

a. *Feminist Interpretations*

Bach (1998) builds on the scholarship of others, such as Bal (1988) and Exum (1990b, 1993), to show what is at stake both in the process of representing rape and in the act of reading violence. The silence and anonymity of the Shiloh women in the story of Judg. 21 gives rise to a literary rape. Brenner's edited two-volume *A Feminist Companion to Judges* (1993, 1999) focuses on the victimization of women, while reading feminine figurations in new ways. The authors focus on a number of matters, such as the treatment of Delilah in biblical scholarship, the disproportionate attention given to Jephthah at the expense of his daughter, the feminine wiles of Achsah, and feminist attitudes towards sexual violence and classicism. Jost (1996b) investigates Samson's prayer of revenge in 16.28 from a feminist perspective, while Exum (1995, 1997b) highlights the psychological and sexual dimensions of the women in Judges by asking questions such as: 'How are women's experiences presented?' 'Are gender roles hidden?' 'Are women's voices suppressed?' Ackerman (2000) also poses a question—'What if Judges had been written by a Philistine?'—and then explores the implications of the hypothetical in the Samson saga (Judg. 13–16). With this table turned, she concludes, 'popular imagination ...almost always remembered Delilah as the evil seductress... Philistine interpreters, though, might well have remembered Delilah as an equivalent of the Israelite hero Jael' (p. 41).

b. *Literary Treatments*

The literary dimensions of Judges have been analyzed recently, particularly from formalist or structuralist perspectives. With voluminous charts

and tables, O'Connell's weighty volume (1996) explores plot structure to show that the book of Judges tries to persuade its readers to support a Judahite king who will maintain loyalty to Yhwh's covenant. Williams (1991) maintains that the book of Judges has been carefully arranged according to the cycle of the solar year. He identifies twelve judges with different tribes and months of the year. Scippa (1991) elucidates Jael's personality and behavior (Judg. 5.23-27; 4.17-23) by means of structural analysis, and Nel (1998) discerns a structural pattern without recourse to 'editorial insertions'. O'Brien's article surveys both synchronic and diachronic approaches to Judges of the past 50 years. Bowman (1995), Fensham (1991), Fokkelman (1992), Jobling (1995), Jost (1996a), Marais (1998), Nel (1995), Niditch (1999), Satterthwaite (1992, 1993), Schibler (1996), Sweeney (1997) and Wilson (1995) also offer structuralist-formalist and reader-response approaches to Judges.

A few articles provide insight from additional perspectives. Fewell (1995) explores the story of Achsah (1.11-15) while showing the influence of translators who share or suppress the names of places and people, the enduring power of Achsah, and the fluid nature of the text with respect to the ethnic affiliations of Caleb, Achsah and Othniel. Penchansky (1992) calls attention to the ideological agendas among biblical interpreters. While appropriating Derrida's concept (1976) of speaking 'under erasure', Penchansky concludes that the reader encounters three distinct stories: (a) the textual story, (b) the critical story and (c) the metacritical story. Wessells (1996) observes that the Canaanites were allowed to remain in the land (Judg. 2.20–3.6) when several previous texts called for their expulsion, and then asks how interpreters reconcile these passages. Some ignore them, some attempt to harmonize them, and some explain them away by means of redaction criticism. Wessells' thesis is that a postmodern reading affirms the texts' polyphonic nature and absolves readers from explaining apparent contradictions. Exum (1990a) identifies the problematic nature of human characters and the deity in Judges, and then concludes that the deconstruction of the literary framework reflects the ambivalent nature of the narrative world of Judges.

c. *Commentaries and Books*

Recent commentators provide insight from a number of different angles. Schneider (2000) proposes that each level of the cyclical plot pattern shows an increase in illegitimate behavior. The result: kingship appears to provide the only political means for survival. Görg's redaction-critical study (1993a) examines a three-stage composition history: pre-Deuteronomistic,

Deuteronomistic, and post-Deuteronomistic. Lindars (1995) approaches the first five chapters of Judges from a historical-critical vantage point as he covers a range of topics (geography, redaction, text, philology). Amit (1999) covers Judges from both historical and literary angles. She also blends relevant references to rabbinic midrash and medieval Jewish commentaries. Hamlin's commentary (1990) is the most eclectic to appear recently. A 'Perspectives' section offers theological insight drawn from the author's personal experiences. Textual, historical, linguistic and literary matters are also addressed.

In addition to the aforementioned commentaries, other books provide insight into Judges. Yee's volume (1995) is a student handbook of current critical methods in biblical studies (narrative, social scientific, feminist, structuralist, deconstructive and ideological criticism). Kaswalder (1990) combines a survey of the redaction history of Judg. 11.12-28 (from 1890 to 1975) with a literary analysis of the same passage. He also analyzes parallel texts and summarizes archaeological discoveries in Transjordan that might shed light on the passage. Smelik (1995) presents the state of research on *Targum Jonathan* by focusing on its language, setting, early history, dating and character. He asserts that *Targum Jonathan* and the LXX are independent translations. Latvus (1998) compares the rendering of God's anger in Joshua–Judges with that in Deuteronomy and Priestly texts. Harlé (1999) examines the multiple text forms in his annotated translation of LXX Judges and concludes that Codex Vaticanus (B) is a later recension of the earlier witnesses of Codex Alexandrinus (A) and the Lucianic Antiochene MSS (L).

d. *Isolated Passages*

Articles that deal with isolated verses within Judges have been published in recent years. These passages, referenced by author, are

1.1-36, Guillaume (1998), Kallai (1998), Younger (1994)
1.1–2.5, Kaswalder (1993), Weinfeld (1993), Younger (1995)
2.1-5, Amit (2000)
2.3, van der Kooij (1995)
2.6-9, Jericke (1996)
3.8-11, Oded (1996)
3.22, Barré (1991)
4.1-24, Layton (1997)
4.1–5.31, Kaswalder (1993)
5.13, Na'aman (1990)

5.23, Neef (1995a)
8.33, Lewis (1996)
9.1-57, Ogden (1995)
9.4, 46, Lewis (1996)
9.8-15, Liss (1997)
9.9, 11, 13, Joosten (1990)
11.36, Ska (1995)
12.6, Ellington (1992), Hendel (1996), Marcus (1992), Tropper (1997)
12.7; 14.11; 16.7, 25, Harlé (1995)
14.12-13, Görg (1993b)
16.6-14, Bader (1994)
17.1–18.31, Amit (1990), Bauer (1996, 1998, 2000), Bowman (1995), McMillion (1999), Wilson (1995), Yee (1995)
18.7, Malamat (1992)
18.13-18, Schmoldt (1993)
18.30, Weitzman (1999)
19.1–21.25, Amit (1994)

e. *Other Articles*

In recent years, articles on Judges have dealt with topics as diverse as the book's 'link' to Haggai, the 'redactor' as author, Qumran manuscripts, the issue of Israelite assimilation of 'Canaanite' culture, and so-called major and minor judges. Tollington (1998) links Judges with Haggai, based upon her perception that the two books share a theological perspective. According to Tollington, the two books were either written (Haggai) or redacted (Judges) in the post-exilic period. Her conclusion: 'the Book of Judges as transmitted in the Hebrew scriptures results from a process of post-exilic exegesis and...was proclaimed alongside and in support of the prophecies of Haggai' (p. 196). In contrast, Guest (1998) is convinced that archaeological and literary evidence suggests that there is actually no early source material within Judges. The stories are interwoven and well crafted to create an impression of a period of judges and, because of the unified literary features of the book, it is quite likely that the hand of the 'redactor' is actually the hand of the 'author'.

Washburn's attempt (1990) to show that the chronology for Israel's judges is historically accurate is ultimately unconvincing. In order to prove the 'accuracy' of 1 Kgs 6.1 and Judg. 11.26, he proposes a time line whereby many of the judges overlap in his chronological scheme. Faiman (1993) also attempts to reconcile 1 Kgs 6.1 with the chronology given in the book of Judges. He fits the various periods of oppression within the

epochs named after the leaders of Israel covered by the 480 years mentioned in 1 Kgs 6.1. His entire argument rests upon a grand hypothetical: In order to reconcile chronology he proposes that the 'X in the term *and the land had rest for X years* includes, in each case, a first part during which the land was not at rest' (p. 37; original emphasis).

Trebolla Barrera (1991) discusses 4QJudg[a] and the light it sheds on the textual and redactional history of the book of Judges: Judg. 6.7-10 is not found in the Qumran manuscript; on two occasions the Qumran manuscript agrees with the Old Greek text of Judges; and in one instance, it corresponds to the Old Latin. Guest (1997) focuses on what he perceives as the book's stylized address to post-exilic Israelites, warning against the dangers of assimilating into 'Canaanite' culture. Topics explored include social boundaries, apostasy and the 'threat' of polytheistic culture.

Schunck (1991), Kaswalder (1991) and Easterly (1997) all explore the title or role of the 'judges'. Schunck proposes a new design for the traditional groups of 'major' judges (deliverers) and 'minor' judges (actual judges). He distinguishes between 'false' judges (i.e. those who were not historical persons or persons who did not actually function as judges, such as Othniel, Tola, Jair, Elon and Samson) and 'true' judges (i.e. actual persons who functioned as judges, such as Joshua, Ibzan, Abdon and Samuel). Kaswalder is also interested in isolating the historical role of judges. He examines the lists of the 'minor' judges found in 10.1-5 and 12.7-15 and discovers a fixed literary uniformity quite distinct from the narratives of the other judges. He concludes that there are indeed two types of judges, whereby one type ('major') serves as liberators. Easterly draws from biblical and extra-biblical linguistic evidence to show that judges are the ones who 'rule' or 'govern'. He prefers the designation 'warrior rulers' over 'judges'.

3. *Conclusion*

This overview of research on Judges during the past 12 years has left much unsaid. The sheer weight of scholarly work on this one book from the Bible during this defined period of time is daunting. O'Connell's one book (1996) is 541 pages in length, and a quick glance at the bibliography also hints at the tremendous interest among scholars in the book of Judges. A couple of observations accrue.

First, research often multiplies around certain characters. Deborah, Samson, and the Levite and the unnamed woman, for example, have stimulated research that has appeared in numerous monographs and

dozens of articles in this twelve-year period. Abimelech and Micah, by contrast, have generated much less attention. One might list reasons for this disparity: narrative length, subject matter, scholarly trends. Perhaps future researchers should pay particular attention to characters and subjects that have garnered less than the lion's share of attention.

Second, researchers almost always gravitate to a particular approach—literary, feminist, social-scientific, ideological, to mention only a few. Yee's volume (1995) is a fine introduction to these and other approaches. Yet, work remains to be done on integrating these ever-burgeoning approaches. I was unable to find an article that applied the tools of multiple approaches to a single text. The last word on Judges has not yet been written.

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